Curating 'Difficult' Knowledge: Examining how museums and galleries should operate concerning the display and recognition of work post #MeToo

HELENA KATHARINE GRIMMER

Abstract

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Helena Katharine Grimmer

This thesis explores the implications of the #MeToo movement for museum curators and exhibition organisers, and considers how museum and gallery professionals should deal with the 'difficult histories' that cultural objects present. It argues that instead of adhering to outdated practices and power structures which negate equality and diversity, museums, galleries and cultural institutions must employ a revised ethical model when presenting such works to the public. In so doing, this thesis reflects upon every aspect of the curator's role: deciding what to show, the use of appropriate textual material, the placement of works within the exhibition space and questions of community involvement and guardianship of heritage. It concludes that in order for museums and galleries to retain their cultural currency, a reconceptualised notion of curation, grounded on a new museum ethics, must be adopted. This model of curation has to be flexible and adaptive in its nature so that museums and galleries reflect the changing context and needs of contemporary society, not only by acknowledging and responding to the past, but also by challenging it.

Curating ‘Difficult’ Knowledge

Examining how museums and galleries should operate concerning the display and recognition of work post #MeToo

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Contents

List of Illustrations

All measurements unless stated are given in centimetres (height x width x depth).

Figure 6: Sonia Boyce*, Lay back, keep quiet and think of what made Britain so great*, 1986, charcoal, pastel and watercolour on paper, 4 parts, each 152.5 × 65, Arts Council England, p. 205.

Figure 7a: Alice Procter, a digital graffitied version of *The Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I,* <www.theexhibitionist.org>*,* p. 206.

Original Image: artist unknown after previously being attributed to George Gower, *The Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I, c*. 1588, oil on panel, 105 × 133, Woburn Abbey.

Figure 7b: Alice Procter, a digital graffitied version of *Queen Victoria,* <www.theexhibitionist.org>*,* p. 206.

Original Image: Alexander Bassano, *Queen Victoria,* 1882, albumen photographic print carte de visite, 32.2 × 18.8, Royal Collection Trust.

Figure 7c: Alice Procter, a digital graffitied version of *Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson 1758 –1805,* <www.theexhibitionist.org>*,* p. 207.

Original Image: Lemuel Francis Abbott, *Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, 1758 – 1805,* 1799, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 63.5, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

Figure 8: Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *'Untitled' (Portrait of Ross in L.A.),* 1991, candies individually wrapped in multicoloured cellophane, endless supply, overall dimensions vary with installation, ideal weight 175 lb, © The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation, p. 208.

Figure 9: Keith Haring, *Safe Sex,* 1988, acrylic on canvas, 305 × 305, The Estate of Keith Haring, p. 209.

Figure 10: Keith Haring, *Ignorance = Fear*, 1989, poster, 61 × 110, The Estate of Keith Haring, p. 209.

Figure 11: Photographer(s) unknown, photographs depicting civilians from the town of Ohrdruf being forced to view dead bodies found in the Ohrdruf-Nord concentration camp, 1945, p. 210.

Figure 12: Eric Gill, *Girl in Bath II,* 1923, portrait of Petra after a drawing from life, wood-engraving on paper, 10.5 × 10.5, Tate, p. 211.

Figure 13: Eric Gill, *The Bath (Petra Bathing),* 1920, stone with added colour, 8 in (height only), private collection, p. 211.

Figure 14: Edgar Degas, *The Tub,* 1886, pastel on card, 60 × 83, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, p. 212.

Figure 15: Eric Gill, *Doll*, 1910, English oak, dimensions unknown, Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, p. 212.

Figure 16a: Pablo Picasso, *Le Gôut du Bonheur,* 1964, published 1970, illustration, print book which includes 31 pages, 68 leaves of plates, inclusive of some colour illustrations, p. 213.

Figure 16b: Pablo Picasso, *Le Gôut du Bonheur,* 1964, published 1970, illustration, print book which includes 31 pages, 68 leaves of plates, inclusive of some colour illustrations, p. 213.

Figure 17a: Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (Balthus), *Untitled, c.* 1990 – 2000, colour polaroid, 10.2 × 10.2, private collection, p. 214.

Figure 17b: Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (Balthus), *Untitled, c.* 1990 – 2000, colour polaroid, 10.2 × 10.2, private collection, p. 214.

Figure 18: Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (Balthus), *Untitled* (posthumously referred to as *Girl with a Mandolin*), *c.* 2000 – 2001, unfinished at the time of death, oil on canvas, 190 × 250, private collection, p. 215.

Figure 19: Eric Gill, *Hound of St Dominic,* 1923, woodcut on paper, 16.5 × 24.2, National Galleries Scotland, p. 215.

Figure 20: Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (Balthus), *Thérèse Dreaming,* 1938, oil on canvas, 149.9 × 129.5, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, p. 216.

Figure 21: Graham Ovenden, *Little Lorraine,* from the *Five Girls* series, 1970, intaglio print on paper, 35.4 × 25, Tate, p. 216.

Figure 22: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Rosie,* 1976, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, 35.5 × 35.5, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, p. 217.

Figure 23: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Jim and Tom, Sausalito,* 1977, photograph from the 'X' portfolio, gelatin silver print on paper, 19.53 × 19.53, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, p. 217.

Figure 24: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Man in Polyester Suit,* 1980, photograph, 45.7 × 35.6, 15 original editions, private collections, p. 218.

Figure 25a: Tracey Emin, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963 – 1995,* exterior view, 1995, appliquéd tent, mattress and light, 122 × 245 × 214, destroyed in May 2004 in a fire at the art storage firm Momart's warehouse, which housed part of Charles Saatchi's collection, p. 219.

Figure 25b: Tracey Emin, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963 – 1995,* interior view, 1995, appliquéd tent, mattress and light, 122 × 245 × 214, destroyed in May 2004 in a fire at the art storage firm Momart's warehouse, which housed part of Charles Saatchi's collection, p. 219.

Figure 26: Jenny Saville, *Propped,* 1992, oil on canvas, 213.5 × 183, private collection, p. 220.

Figure 27: Diego Velázquez, *The Toilet of Venus ('The Rokeby Venus'), c*. 1647 – 1651, oil on canvas, 122.5 × 177, The National Gallery, London, p. 220.

Figure 28: John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs,* 1896, oil on canvas, 98.2 × 163.3, Manchester Art Gallery, p. 221.

Figure 29: Nobuyoshi Araki, *Marvelous Tales of Black Ink (Bokuju Kitan),* plate 68, 2007, photographic book, sumi ink on black and white photograph, p. 221.

Figure 30: Katsushika Hokusai, *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife*, 1814, woodblock print on paper, 19.9 × 26.6, private collection, p. 222.

Figure 31a: Alexander Gardner, *Antietam, Md. Bodies of Confederate dead gathered for burial,* 1862, photograph taken on a stereo camera, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., p. 223.

Figure 31b: Alexander Gardner, *Ditch on right wing, where a large number of rebels were killed at the Battle of Antietam,* 1862, photograph taken on a stereo camera, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., p. 223.

Figure 32: Tracey Emin, *My Bed,* 1998, box frame, mattress, linens, pillows and various objects, overall display dimensions variable, on long term loan at the Tate since 2015 from The Duerckheim Collection, p. 224.

Figure 33: Jeff Koons, *Balloon Dog,* 1994 – 2000, 5 unique versions (blue, magenta, yellow, orange, red), mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent colour coating, 307.3 × 363.2 × 114.3, various collections, p. 225.

Figure 34: Marc Quinn, *Self*, 1991 – 2011, blood (artist's own), liquid silicone, stainless steel, glass, perspex and refrigeration equipment, 205 × 65 × 65, the National Portrait Gallery has the 2006 iteration in their collection, p. 225.

Figure 35: Jeff Koons, *Silver Shoes,* from the *Made in Heaven* series,1990, oil inks on canvas, 243.8 × 365.8, private collection, p. 226.

Figure 36: Jeff Koons, *Violet – Ice (Kama Sutra),* from the *Made in Heaven* series 1991, Glass, 33 × 71.1 × 43.2, 3 editions, private collections, p. 226.

Figure 37: Jeff Koons, *Antiquity 3,* from the *Antiquity* series, 2009 – 2011, oil on canvas, 259.1 × 350.5, private collection, p. 227.

Figure 38: Andres Serrano, *Untitled VII (Ejaculate in Trajectory),* 1989, cibachrome face mounted to Plexiglas, 4 editions, 40 × 60 in, private collections, p. 227.

Figure 39: Gallery view of *The Obligation of Ownership: An Art Collection Under Scrutiny,* (4 May 2018 to 6 January 2020), at the Zeppelin Museum, Friedrichshafen, p. 228.

Figure 40a: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Rape of Proserpina, c.* 1621 – 1622, white marble, 255 (height only), Galleria Borghese, Rome, p. 229.

Figure 40b: Detail from Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Rape of Proserpina, c.* 1621 – 1622, white marble, 255 (height only), Galleria Borghese, Rome, p. 229.

Figure 41: Titian, *The Rape of Europa,* 1562, oil on canvas, 178 × 205, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, p. 230.

Figure 53a: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Beheading Holofernes, c.* 1620, oil on canvas, 146.5 × 108, The Uffizi Gallery, Florence, p. 237.

Figure 53b: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Beheading Holofernes, c.* 1612 – 1613, oil on canvas, 199 × 162.9, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, Naples, p. 237.

Figure 54: Michelle Hartney, *Performance/Call to Action,* 2018, label for Gauguin appropriating words from Roxane Gay*,* p. 238.

Figure 55: Paul Gauguin, *Two Tahitian Women,* 1899, oil on canvas, 94 × 72.4, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, p. 239.

Figure 56: Michelle Hartney, *Performance/Call to Action,* 2018, label for Picasso appropriating words by Hannah Gadsby from her comedy special *Nanette,* p. 240.

Figure 57a: Emma Sulkowicz in collaboration with photographer Sangsuk Sylvia Kang, photograph in front of Chuck Close's *Lucas I* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art*,* New York, 2018, p. 241.

Figure 57b: Emma Sulkowicz in collaboration with photographer Sangsuk Sylvia Kang, photograph in front of one of Chuck Close's *Subway Portraits* at Second Avenue – 86 Street Station, New York, 2018, p. 241.

Figure 57c: Emma Sulkowicz in collaboration with photographer Sangsuk Sylvia Kang, photograph in front of Pablo Picasso's *Les Demoiselles D'Avignon* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018, p. 242.

Figure 58: Pablo Picasso, *Weeping Woman,* 1937, oil on canvas, 60.8 × 50, Tate, p. 242.

Figure 59: Pablo Picasso, *Guernica,* 1937, oil on canvas, 349.3 × 776.6, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, p. 243.

Figure 60: Introductory label for Room 4, Tahiti 1891 – 1893, in *The Credit Suisse Exhibition: Gauguin Portraits,* (7 October 2019 to 26 January 2020) at the National Gallery, London, p. 243.

Figure 61: Paul Gauguin, *Vahine no te vi (Woman with a Mango)*, 1892, oil on canvas, 73 × 45.1 × 3.2, Baltimore Museum of Art, p. 244.

Figure 62: Paul Gauguin, *Manao tupapau (The Spirit of the Dead Watching)*, 1894, print, lithograph on wove paper, 18.1 × 27.2, National Gallery of Canada, p. 244.

Figure 63: The Guerrilla Girls, *3 Ways To Write A Museum Wall Label When The Artist Is A Sexual Predator,* 2018, poster, p. 245.

Figure 64: Banksy, *Gross Domestic Product* store in Croydon*,* UK, 2019, installation, p. 245.

Figure 65: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain,* 1917, porcelain, unconfirmed dimensions 36 × 48 × 61, the original was lost but twelve replicas were made in 1964, one of which is owned by the Tate, p. 246.

Figure 66: Eric Gill, *Mankind,* 1927 – 1928, hoptonwood stone, 241.3 × 61 × 45.7, Tate, p. 246.

Figure 67: Artist unknown, *Aphrodite* known as the '*Venus de Milo', c.* 100 BC, sculpture, 2.02 m (height only), Musée du Louvre, Paris, p. 247.

Figure 68a: Terry Winters, *Set Diagram 9,* 2000, oil on linen, 100.01 × 91.44, The Broad, Los Angeles, p. 248.

Figure 68b: Terry Winters, *Set Diagram 54,* 2000, oil on linen, 100.01 × 91.44, The Broad, Los Angeles, p. 248.

Figure 69: Chuck Close, *John,* 1971 – 1972, acrylic on gessoed canvas, 254 × 228.6, The Broad, Los Angeles, p. 249.

Figure 70: Gallery view featuring Chuck Close's *John* (1971 – 1972) and eight of Terry Winters' *Set Diagram* (2000) works at The Broad, Los Angeles, p. 250.

Figure 71: Terry Winters, *Untitled (I),* 1999, gouache on paper, 112.4 × 77.5, private collection, p. 250.

Figure 72: Don McCullin, title not known*,* 1970, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, 51 × 34, Tate p. 251.

Figure 73: Don McCullin, *Northern Ireland, The Bogside, Londonderry,* 1971, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, 28.5 × 42, National Galleries of Scotland and the Tate, p. 251.

Figure 74: Cathie Pilkington, *Twinkle,* 2014, oil paint on bronze, 150 × 41 × 34, artist's own collection, p. 252.

Figure 75: Gallery view of the introductory room to *Eric Gill, The Body,* (29 April to 3 September 2017) at Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, featuring Eric Gill's *Doll* (1910) and Cathie Pilkington's *Twinkle* (2014), p. 252.

Figure 76: Cathie Pilkington, *Doll for Petra,* 2017, five formal sculptural busts bearing Petra's name placed in a Wunderkammer, amongst dolls, doll heads and other parts, partial image of the installation featuring the artist, p. 253.

Figure 77: Sue Williams, *The Art World Can Suck My Proverbial Dick,* 1992, acrylic and enamel on canvas, 152.4 × 172.7 × 3.81, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, p. 253.

Figure 78: Faith Ringgold, *American People Series #20: Die,* 1967, oil on canvas, two panels, 182.9 × 365.8, Museum of Modern Art, New York, p. 254.

Figure 79: Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907, oil on canvas, 243.9 × 233.7, Museum of Modern Art, New York, p. 254.

Figure 80: Gallery view of 'Around *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon'* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, featuring Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) and Faith Ringgold's *American People Series #20: Die*, (1967), p. 255.

Figure 81: Carl Andre, *Foot Candle,* 2002, leather and black cloth shoe, pressed glass candlestick holder and candle, 35.6 × 8.9 × 26.7, private collection, p. 255.

Figure 82: Photographer unknown, photographs from a protest by the group *No Wave Performance Task Force* on 19 May 2014, demonstrating against the retrospective of Carl Andre's work at the Dia: Beacon, New York, p. 256.

Figure 83: Ana Mendieta, '*Untitled' (Rape Scene),* 1973, photograph, colour on paper, 25.4 × 20.3, Tate, p. 257.

Figure 84: Postcards handed out protesting the retrospective of Carl Andre at The Geffen Contemporary, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, which included the words, **'**Carl Andre is at MoCA Geffen. *¿Dónde está Ana Mendieta?*' (Where is Ana Mendieta?)', p. 257.

Figure 85: Photograph from the Women's March in Washington D.C., January 2017, where many in attendance wore the Pussyhat, p. 258.

Figure 86: Mónica Mayer, *El Tendedero*/*The Clothesline Project,* 1978 – present, participatory installation, pink clothesline, wooden pegs and pink post-it notes, overall dimensions vary with installation, p. 259.

Statement of Copyright

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Dedication

In 2018, I presented my first academic paper at *Visual Intersections III,* a conference run by the *Centre for Visual Arts and Culture (CVAC)* in Durham, which was based on the earliest iteration of this thesis. It was dedicated to the problematic history of sexual harassment and abuse within the art world and how it should be both addressed and curated. After the presentation, one of the other speakers told me 'You're very brave…especially for speaking on such a topic when you didn't know the audience or whether there would be men in the room.' I have since lost count of the number of times people have told me that I am 'brave' in my choice of topic to research. In truth, I do not consider myself, or for that matter any individual or art institution, to be brave for speaking, writing about or exhibiting works associated with a 'difficult' subject or problematic history. Brave must be saved for those who have dealt with real trauma and violation at the hands of others, whose voices were quieted, who were forced into becoming victims and whose own artistic work was either metaphorically, or literally, diminished as a result.

These words are for you.

May you continue to find the courage to speak out, #MeToo.

Introduction

The challenge is in the moment, the time is always now.[1]

~ James Baldwin

In 2008, Scottish performance artist Anthony Schrag created a 'brief but expressive' work at the *Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (GoMA)* entitled *Push*, (2008) (Fig. 1).[2] The piece involved Schrag scrambling up one of the neoclassical columns in the entranceway to the museum, before grappling with its fluting and then extending his legs until they made contact with the neighbouring column.[3] Finding a balance through the application of significant force, Schrag was able to position himself horizontally between two pillars. Visually, *Push* recalls the biblical story of Samson and the Philistines from the *Book of Judges 16: 1-30 KJV*. Betrayed by his lover Delilah and consequently removed of his great strength, the Nazirite leader Samson was handed over to his Philistine enemies 'who blinded, seduced and imprisoned him'.[4] When later taken to the temple of Dagon for public display and humiliation, Samson leaned on a column for rest and was granted a moment to pray to God. Miraculously, his great strength was renewed and Samson tore down the pillars of the temple, killing the Philistines inside, but also sacrificing himself in the process. A representation of this event can be seen in Gustave Doré's engraving entitled, *The Death of Samson,* (1866) (Fig. 2a), where falling Philistines are depicted in the left-hand side of the picture plane, tumbling downwards with their limbs flailing (Fig. 2b), whilst another attempts to flee

[1] James Baldwin, 'Faulkner and Desegregation', *Partisan Review,* 23/4, (1956), p. 573.
[2] Janet Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p. 3.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

from the carnage in the bottom right-hand corner (Fig. 2c). Great force and power emanate from the engraving which connote the amplified sound of pillars crashing down.

If Samson's act is seen as an avenging response to degradation and oppression, then *Push* (Fig. 1) suggests a parallel 'alienation from an oppressive environment' and in so doing, challenges the hegemony of museums and galleries and all they stand for; essentially high aesthetics and establishment culture.[5] Schrag asserts that 'this part of my practice looks at what I think the expectations of art are, and then tries to unsettle them' and so the work invites us not only to question the role of museums and galleries, but also the extent to which their current functions should adapt or change.[6] In seeking to open the eyes of its audience to any failings of the arts establishment, *Push* operates in a similar vein to George Grosz's *The Pillars of Society,* (1926) (Fig. 3), which is powerfully deconstructive and critical of establishment institutions under the Weimar Republic and those who uphold them. In this work, the 'pillars' of society or the establishment are male figures: the priest, the journalist, the army officer and Friedrich Ebert, the President of the Weimar Republic, who represent respectively, the church, media, army and the state. Grosz keenly demonstrates his view that these 'pillars' are corrupt, weak and therefore unreliable, by revealing their failings through his depiction of each character. For example, the priest is shown to be extremely well fed, suggested by his rotund appearance, and equally well watered, with his bright red, shiny nose implying over indulgence in alcohol. As Christian priests are supposed to follow the example of Jesus Christ and eschew greed, Grosz clearly delineates the hypocrisy of institutionalised religion here.

[5] Ibid.
[6] 'Institutional', *Anthony Schrag Website,* last accessed 19 November 2018, <www.anthonyschrag.com>.

In order to highlight the media's flaws, a journalist is portrayed wearing glasses and is noticeably cross-eyed, metaphorically implying that he is unable to see straight and is also short-sighted. He has a chamber pot on his head which suggests that he peddles 'piss', his writing both biased and dogmatically adhering to a singular viewpoint. Around the 'pillars' fire blazes, Germany is burning to the ground. Grosz's intention in this painting was to highlight the failure of establishment forces, and Schrag similarly sought to challenge the established order of things by applying force to the pillars, both literally and metaphorically, in order to bring about change.

Over time, and in any institution, regardless of size, ethical codes, practices and expectations may become entrenched and embedded in a manner that fosters negativity and inadequately serves the needs of contemporary society. Whilst he has neither the desire nor the ability to destroy the 'temple' within which he operates, Schrag implies that there are many reasons why new thinking and ethical changes within the cultural sector are necessary. For example, in the past, museums and galleries have failed to address or challenge problematic or contentious contexts directly, and so have implicitly endorsed certain views as a result or by default. Many curators have been reluctant to re-evaluate what specific objects and artworks mean to us today, when contemporary societal context may confer different values from past narratives, and so they have allowed works to stagnate. This begs the question that if our arts institutions are to remain fit for purpose, how should they proceed in addressing and questioning problematic contexts whilst creating gallery spaces that are inclusive, welcoming and instructive for all, and what structures or support systems need to be in place to help them achieve this?

For over a century, museums and galleries have held an almost 'monolithic status within a cultural landscape' and are respected by the wider public as

'authoritative sources for authentic and reliable information'.[7] This view is corroborated in a report compiled by *BritainThinks* for *Arts Council England*, entitled, *Next ten-year strategy: Evidence Review,* (18 July 2018), which considered how UK museums and libraries have progressed since 2010.[8] As part of research conducted by *ComRes* to monitor and analyse public engagement with arts and culture, 3565 adults were interviewed online between 30 April and 13 May 2014.[9] Two additional surveys were conducted between 7 to 9 October 2015 and 14 to 16 October 2015, with each involving *c.* 1700 English adults aged eighteen and above.[10] When asked the question, 'Thinking about your personal life, in which of the following ways, if any, has arts and culture contributed?' 41 per cent of respondents in 2014 considered 'Educating me as an adult' to be one of the most significant influences of arts and culture on their personal life, with only a marginal drop to 37 per cent in 2015 (Appendix I).[11] Similarly, in 2014, 30 per cent of respondents cited 'Educating me as a child' as one of the most important factors, slightly increasing to 31 per cent in 2015.[12] Finally, in 2014, 25 per cent of people viewed 'Helping me understand other people's points of view' as a key factor, with only a 1 per cent decrease to 24 per cent in 2015.[13] However, it is important to remember that although 'Data were weighted to be representative by gender, age, social grade, tenure, work, car ownership and region', museums and galleries remain exclusionary to a certain extent, and although largely free to enter in the UK, their visitors tend to be educated and comparatively wealthy.[14]

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[7] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 3; Sally Yerkovich, *A Practical Guide to Museum Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), p. 101.
[8] BritainThinks, *Next ten-year strategy: Evidence Review* (London, UK: BritainThinks*,* 2018), p. 7.
[9] ComRes, *Stakeholder focus: General public* (London, UK: ComRes, 2014), p. 3.
[10] ComRes, *Public Surveys: October 2015* (London, UK: ComRes, 2016), p. 4.
[11] BritainThinks, *Next ten-year strategy*, p. 26.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] ComRes, *Stakeholder focus: General public*, p. 3.

In addition, as the arts are being marginalised in the curriculum of many state schools, children are being denied opportunities which were accessible and available to them in the past, and if children do not learn to be visually literate early on, it ceases to be relevant for them in later life.

There are many other complex barriers to participation in the arts, and attempts are being made to break them down. In an article from *The Times,* 3 March 2020, Hattie Garlick reported on the creation of the *Critics' Club*, a programme which aims to encourage a passion for the arts in children from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds, by taking them to exhibitions and theatre performances.[15] They are then taught how to write critical reviews of what they have seen. Garlick focuses on a group of thirteen children visiting *The Royal Academy of Arts* (*RA*) in London. 'Although they are bright, enthused and at a school just a single bus journey from the gallery' they had, until that point, never visited the *RA* previously.[16] Most had never been inside an art gallery at all. Indeed, the concept was so alien to them that one child asked, 'So is there art…everywhere here?'[17] However, notwithstanding the view that in the UK, access to art is, to an extent, dependent on who you are and where you were educated, museums are still clearly valued as 'authoritative and highly trusted sites of knowledge'.[18] Their importance is actually emphasised by the creation of the *Critics' Club* and other programmes like it, which imply that engagement with arts institutions can be academically advantageous. The continued relevance of museums and galleries in this regard, reiterates that they are widely respected as the guardians of history and the story of our collective experience.

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[15] Hattie Garlick, 'Critics' Club – the organisation that's breaking down the gallery walls', *The Times,* (3 March 2020), last accessed 17 April 2020, <www.thetimes.co.uk>.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 143.

The term *history* is derived from the Greek root '*historia*' meaning 'finding out' or 'narrative'.[19] If we agree to take *narrative* to mean 'a spoken or written account of connected events' which form a story, then museums and galleries can be seen as in control of particular narratives; creating, maintaining and shaping stories through the placement and display of specifically chosen objects.[20] That museums and galleries are respected institutions and purveyors of knowledge, recording and guarding the histories of civilisations on our planet is a positive thing. However, by presenting what is perceived to be the truth, they are responsible for 'constructing and communicating narratives which have social consequences beyond the museum'.[21] They possess an agency that, historically speaking, has promulgated 'their capacity to control, to civilise the citizenry and to exclude, marginalise or silence minority groups through representational practices which operate to produce oppressive and discriminatory effects.'[22] Consequently, they must be held accountable for what they put in the public domain and the manner in which it is presented.

Hilde Hein identifies museums and galleries as having, what she terms 'institutional morality,' believing that whilst they 'may not have conscience, they do have moral agency', and must therefore be answerable for what they choose to display and how they impart information.[23] Ostensibly, museums can be regarded as accountable for:

i) what they choose to represent and 'the means by which they do so'

ii) what they do not represent, which can 'add up to exclusions, whether or not intentional'

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[19] OED, 'History', *Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd edn (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 831.
[20] OED, 'Narrative', *Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd edn (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 1179.
[21] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 143.
[22] Ibid., p. 135.
[23] Ibid., p. 5.

iii) what they do not choose to represent but by indirect means end up embodying[24]

Michel Foucault believed this power carries significant implications and that whilst striving 'to order the world according to universal rules and the concept of a total history', museums operate as the 'Enlightenment institution that embodies state power'.[25] Just as prisons, schools and hospitals are seen by Foucault as relics of the eighteenth century, which 'drive to categorize, classify, and order the world into a totality universal in scope and universally intelligible', a museum's role of collecting, displaying and creating narratives for its collections can be seen as, 'a function of capitalism and imperialism,' where power is wielded 'to form individuals' using 'careful and ordered deployment of knowledge'.[26] Such collections reflect only the history, or a version of that history, created by those in power; a distorted or incomplete version of reality. In essence, Schrag's performative piece *Push* (Fig. 1) can be seen as a symbolic criticism of our cultural spaces in relation to this issue. Simultaneously belonging within the system, which is visually represented through the artist's fitting between the two pillars, whilst the force exerted on those columns implies a critique of the system at large, Schrag's action attempted 'to add another, tangential pathway through and around the building' in order to 'disrupt expected modes' and 'find new ways of speaking.'[27] It implies that if museums and galleries remain static, neglecting to analyse, question and interrogate their values and the implications of their practices on a regular basis, then we could end up with the ruins of a temple or a hollow edifice. Instead, Schrag calls for society to imagine museums and galleries which harbour

[24] Ibid., p. 118.
[25] Beth Lord, 'Foucault's museum: difference, representation, and genealogy', *Museum and Society,* 4/1 (2006), p. 1.
[26] Ibid., p. 2.
[27] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 3.

'dynamic and participatory new museum models defined by divergent voices.'[28] This will ensure a constant re-evaluation of their authority, responsibility and content, whilst sustaining both their relevance and development.

Museum and gallery personnel have always been required to make value judgements regarding every aspect of their work, but historically, when collections were smaller and information less globally available, this job was more straightforward. Today, arts institutions rely on robust codes of ethics and the *UK Museums Association (MA)* has issued guidance on a variety of professional issues since the first Codes of Practice and Conduct were published in 1977. Whilst all museums are bound by laws and conventions, in the UK this code is meant to supplement the legal framework and establish an ethical standard. However, it can never be substantive enough to account for and answer every possible ethical dilemma a museum or gallery may face. The *International Council of Museums (ICOM)* Code of Ethics was devised in 1984 to encourage the recognition of shared values amongst international museums and establish a baseline for ethical practice by setting 'minimum professional standards'.[29] The fact that *ICOM's* Code of Ethics was only updated in 2004, twenty years after its first release, implies that professionals have perhaps not paid the code much attention or challenged its scope over the years, which might explain why it was not revised sooner. In addition, whilst encouraging museums to be proactive in seeking good ethical practice and behaviour, the *MA's* detailing of how to apply its own code says that staff should be 'introduced' to it rather than this being an imperative.[30] Whilst both the *MA* and *ICOM* codes are beneficial in encouraging ethical

[28] Ibid.
[29] 'Code of Ethics', *ICOM,* last accessed 15 April 2021, <https://icom.museum>.
[30] 'Code of Ethics for Museums', *Museums Association,* last accessed 15 April 2021, <www.museumsassociation.org>.

reflection as a daily consideration for museums, this can fall by the wayside in both large and small museums, only to be considered more carefully when something brings it into sharper focus, such as the Black Lives Matter protests. Whilst the codes present a simple and effective first step, 'reflection, reasoning, and consultation with others,' alongside consideration of different guidance on museum practice, is also critical.[31] This is because as society has changed and global media ensures that information is available twenty-four hours a day, traditional structures and expectations have become bankrupt, and museums and galleries face new challenges regarding the presentation of exhibits and related material.

At the centre of this dilemma of museum ethics is the role of curator. The root of the word 'curate' corresponds to 'caring for' and 'is etymologically related to "cure": to curate is to cure.'[32] If we adhere to this definition, then we imply that curators have a duty of care that goes beyond the basic selection, presentation and explanation of what is displayed. They have a responsibility to take the past and 'make something of it, to place and order it in a meaningful way' and instead of abandoning what has gone before, present it.[33] Yet this becomes particularly challenging when considering problematic histories and the dissemination of what is perceived to be 'difficult' information. Problematic histories and 'difficult subject matter' as defined by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett include narratives 'related to conflict, violence, loss, and death' amongst others.[34] In fact, as Walter Benjamin stated, 'There is no document of

[31] Ibid.

[32] Erica Lehrer, Cynthia E. Milton, and Monica Eileen Patterson, eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 4; Boris Groys, 'Politics of Installation', *e-flux,* 02 (January 2009), last accessed 27 November 2018, <www.e-flux.com>.

[33] Ibid., Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson.

[34] Jennifer Bonnell, and Roger I. Simon, '"Difficult" exhibitions and intimate encounters', *Museum and Society,* 5/2 (2007), p. 65.

civilisation, which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.'[35] If the word 'barbarism' denotes 'slavery, class exploitation or any other brutal system of social domination', then it implies that one group has power and control over another, and we must consider whether that same group controls the historical narrative.[36] Benjamin believed that the transmission of information was similarly tainted by barbarism, and so we must also question whether museums and galleries are predisposed to using objects and works in their collections for their protection and gain, re-establishing their 'state power'.[37] Certainly, it no longer seems appropriate for museums and galleries to 'simply celebrate history' without questioning it.[38] A more honest approach would involve institutions directly addressing difficult contexts so that previously disregarded knowledge is put back into the public domain for interpretation. This is important because it facilitates more questioning analysis which leads to a better understanding of what constitutes reality. It also allows for society to learn lessons from the past in order to grow and develop in the future.

Tate Britain's exhibition *Artist and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past,* (25 November 2015 to 10 April 2016) addressed a specific problematic history directly. Many argue that Great Britain has repeatedly failed to come to terms with its colonial past, including 'policies causing millions of famine deaths in British India, its running of brutal detention camps in occupied territories, and massacres of civilians by imperial troops.'[39] Former Prime Minister David Cameron is reported as saying that the British

[35] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History, VII', *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 256-257.
[36] Brett Neilson, 'Barbarism/modernity: notes on barbarism', *Textual Practice,* 13/1 (1999), p. 79.
[37] Lord, 'Foucault's museum', p. 1.
[38] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'The museum as catalyst', Keynote address at *Museums 2000: Confirmation or Challenge*, Vadstena, Sweden (29 September 2000), p. 9.
[39] Jon Stone, 'British people are proud of colonialism and the British Empire, poll finds', *The Independent,* (19 January 2016), last accessed 27 November 2018, <www.independent.co.uk>.

Empire should be 'celebrated', with no indication of its significant shortcomings and despite the nation playing a dominant role in the slave trade.[40] Arguably, previously positive or one-sided portrayals of British colonialism might have influenced the results of a *YouGov* questionnaire published in 2016, which revealed that 44 per cent of those asked, 'were proud of Britain's history of colonialism while only 21 per cent regretted that it happened.'[41] It is interesting to note that 2016 is also the year that the UK electorate voted to take Britain out of the European Union (EU) under what came to be understood as Brexit, which perhaps both reflected and promulgated Cameron's patriotic pride in an imperial past, despite such a view being offensive to many.[42] In this political climate, the curators of *Artist and Empire* brought together a collection of artistic works and artefacts from across Britain, in order to demonstrate systematically and anew, how the Empire's 'histories of war, conquest and slavery are difficult and painful to address'.[43] However, this issue must continue to be discussed, in spite of the challenges, as 'its legacy is everywhere and affects us all' to this day.[44]

Artist and Empire featured older paintings such as Sir John Everett Millais' *The North-West Passage,* (1874) (Fig. 4), and Thomas Jones Barker's *The Secret of England's Greatness (Queen Victoria presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor),* (*c.* 1862 – 1863) (Fig. 5), alongside contemporary works by artists including Sonia Boyce, in order to demonstrate 'that the ramifications of the Empire are far from over.'[45] Millais' painting (Fig. 4) is of an old sailor looking directly at the viewer from a desk, upon which there is map showing, we assume, various ways it might be possible

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] David Cameron himself did not support Brexit.
[43] 'What's On: Artist and Empire', *Tate Britain,* (25 November 2015 – 10 April 2016), last accessed 29 November 2018, <www.tate.org.uk>.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

to sail across the top of the North American continent. This particular route was associated with extreme danger and failure, and that the aged and travel weary sailor even contemplates pursuing the journey implies England's status as the brave forger of Empire. Barker's painting (Fig. 5) also assumes England's greatness but associates it with piety rather than heroism. The image depicts Queen Victoria presenting a bible to an East African ambassador simultaneously highlighting and justifying English superiority by implying that it is blessed by Christ. This is reinforced by the ambassador's deferent pose. The clear intention of both paintings is to celebrate England's status as a colonial power, and the *Tate Britain* was not shy about addressing such patriotism directly, emulating the *National Portrait Gallery's* approach to this issue. The *National Portrait Gallery*'s online collection entry emphasises the need to read *The Secret of England's Greatness* (Fig. 5) as reflecting 'the attitudes and viewpoints of the time in which it was made' and that even though attitudes today may be different, the work remains 'an important historical document.'[46] However, galleries of this size and status will have many other artworks in their collections which might be perceived as problematic in the wake of the current momentum to decolonise cultural institutions.[47] Consequently, their seemingly open and honest stance, instilled through both the creation of an exhibition and carefully worded gallery labels, may in fact just be protective; a tactical move to prevent close scrutiny of the rest of their collections, where context may be more unsettling and therefore purposefully either hidden or obscured. As major galleries, it is easier for them to take this step or to withhold problematic objects or artworks, but smaller galleries have less scope to

[46] Online collection entry, 'The Secret of England's Greatness (Queen Victoria presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor)', *National Portrait Gallery,* last accessed 18 April 2020, <www.npg.org.uk>.
[47] The National Trust has recently published a comprehensive report of links to slavery and empire at its sites. Sally-Anne Huxtable, ed., and others, 'Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery', *The National Trust,* (2020), <https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net>.

manipulate their collections and therefore may benefit from adopting an honest and direct approach regardless.

By contrast, in both form and purpose, Boyce's work titled *Lay back, keep quiet and think of what made Britain so great,* (1986) (Fig. 6), presents a very different message. Victorian paintings exemplify a certain type of highly crafted style, and whilst Boyce's work references this, it shows greater concern for the concept behind the painting and less for aesthetic merit. As such, the four panel work simultaneously implies a link to the Victorian paintings on display, whilst suggesting an opposing viewpoint. The background recalls Victorian wallpaper but the charcoal line employed is less refined and almost crude in contrast to that used in many Victorian works. From left to right across the panels, and echoing the Christian content of Barker's painting, a central cross is depicted being slowly overtaken by rambling black roses. In the last image the cross has disappeared altogether, as have most of the roses, to be replaced by the face of a young, black woman. There is the suggestion of an 'English rose [..] inverted,' blackened and stunted in bloom, as the flowers appear fragmented by each of the individual panels or hidden by the crosses.[48] As the crosses are clearly identified with former colonies and the black roses are pushed to the outskirts of each image, the painting implicitly criticises British imperialism. This is emphasised by the background becoming crowded with red dots suggestive of blood. Boyce's identity as a black female artist in a country with a colonial past is reflected by her self-portrait in the bottom right corner of the work. Tellingly, this 'black rose' is moving towards the centre of the final image. Boyce's painting reflects the attitudes of the time in which it was made just as much as Millais' or Barker's (Figs., 4 and 5), but when these

[48] Matthew Collings, 'Artist and Empire, Tate Britain, exhibition review: Face the past', *The Evening Standard,* (24 November 2015), last accessed 4 January 2019, <www.standard.co.uk>.

paintings are displayed together, a new dialogue is facilitated, which adds resonance to the later work. By explicitly addressing the problematic history of colonialism, *Artist and Empire* raised questions concerning 'ownership, authorship and how the value and meanings of these diverse objects have changed through history'.[49] Such an approach does not deny history, nor does it diminish a work's impact, rather it reminds visitors of the need to re-evaluate certain objects and exhibits, as contemporary opinion and societal context imbue them with new meaning and value.

Alice Procter has addressed the problematic history of colonialism and the negative aspects of Great Britain's colonial past more directly through her *Uncomfortable Art Tours,* an initiative operated across six museums in London, including *The National Gallery, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum* from June 2017.[50] During these tours, Procter demonstrates the need 'to resist triumphant nostalgia with art history' and demands museums 'rethink the politics of display in their galleries.'[51] On her website *The Exhibitionist*, she pastes terms such as 'slaver', 'thief' and 'white supremacist' over the faces of 'colonialists' from history such as Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria and Lord Nelson' (Figs., 7a, 7b and 7c). In a variety of ways, and considering choices made about objects for display, accompanying text and even gallery lighting, Procter asks, 'how is ownership created and dissent shut down?' and 'Who is the authorial voice here, and what is considered worthy of inclusion?'[52] She aims to highlight how these narratives of Empire came into being and clarify precisely *who* or *what* has control of power and knowledge. Elsewhere, some institutions have decided to redress the power balance by

[49] 'What's On: Artist and Empire', *Tate Britain*.
[50] Alice Procter, *The Exhibitionist,* last accessed 10 October 2018, <www.theexhibitionist.org>.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

acknowledging how they benefitted from it during the country's imperial past. For example, in 2019, the *University of Glasgow* established a £20 million reparations programme over its former links with the slave trade.[53] Similarly, *Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery* exhibited *The Past is Now: Birmingham and the British Empire,* (28 October 2017 to 24 June 2018), which sought to address the city's role in the context of the Empire. The exhibition was deliberately different, seeking to establish that the history of colonialism must be told in another way and crafted from multifarious perspectives. In order to ensure the establishment of these various perspectives, the museum worked with six external co-curators. These included Shaheen Kasmani and Aliyah Hasinah, who had been significantly involved with the project 'Decolonise not Diversify', and also Sara Wajid, who was already working in the museum as part of the Arts Council Change Makers programme, which seeks to help support BAME and disabled people by providing specialist leadership and development training specifically for these underrepresented groups.[54]

In spite of the difficulties it presents, issues relating to Colonialism must continue to be discussed and addressed by museums and galleries, as 'its legacy is everywhere and affects us all' to this day.[55] This has been highlighted following global calls to remove, deface or destroy statues or monuments that could be perceived as celebrating slavery. Three months after a statue of Edward Colston, a philanthropist who had nonetheless made much of his fortune from the slave trade, was torn down and thrown into Bristol harbour, UK Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and

[53] Marc Horne, 'Glasgow starts £20m plan to atone for slavery links', *The Times,* (1 August 2019), last accessed 19 April 2020, <www.thetimes.co.uk>.
[54] Rachael Minott, 'The Past is Now: the Exhibition is open', *Birmingham Museums,* last accessed 28 August 2019, <www.birminghammuseums.org.uk>; 'Change Makers: Key Information', *Arts Council England,* last accessed 28 August 2019, <www.artscouncil.org.uk>.
[55] 'What's On: Artist and Empire', *Tate Britain*.

Sport, Oliver Dowden, issued a letter to major museums and galleries regarding the 'contested heritage and the removal of historical objects.'[56] Whilst acknowledging the moral difficulties associated with the issue, Dowden stressed that instead of destroying such objects 'we should seek to contextualise or reinterpret them in a way that enables the public to learn about them in their entirety, however challenging this may be.'[57] This commitment to facilitating discourse and to educating the public about all facets of the country's past is commendable. However, it was followed by the statement that the addressed institutions should 'continue to act impartially, in line with your publicly funded status,' and an implied threat to withdraw government funding from institutions they perceived to be 'motivated by activism or politics.'[58] The *Museums Association* has since highlighted their concern over the government's 'perceived interference' particularly concerning matters of Britain's imperial past.[59] They argued that it is 'a cornerstone of museum ethics that our sector should operate at arms-length from the government'.[60]

This question of where control of power and knowledge lies within museums and galleries is also reflected in their response to the AIDS crisis – another problematic history – from the 1980s. Whereas the legacy of colonialism has had significant social and political impact for centuries, the HIV/AIDS crisis is a difficult *recent* history, and one that elicited a different cultural reaction in the first instance, as many perceived it to be a short-term problem relating only to homosexual men. In the USA, it was as late as 2015 that the first major show examining an artistic response to the HIV/AIDS crisis

[56] Oliver Dowden, 'HM Government Position on Contested Heritage', *UK Government,* <www.gov.uk>.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] 'Museum body warns of government interference in contested heritage', *BBC News,* (24 February 2021), last accessed 20 April 2021, <www.bbc.co.uk>.
[60] Ibid.

occurred, taking place at the *Tacoma Art Museum* in the state of Washington. *The New York Times* art critic Holland Cotter let 'out a giant sigh of relief' on the opening night of *Art AIDS America,* (3 October 2015 to 10 January 2016), and in his review of the exhibition exclaimed, 'What took museums so long?'[61] There are several possible answers to that question.

Firstly, the media did much to minimise the true impact of the AIDS crisis, reducing it to a disease suffered only by a minority group, which influenced the wider public's false understanding. In a documentary by Scott Calonico, entitled *When Aids Was Funny*, (2015), soundbites from various press conferences reveal 'Ronald Reagan's press secretary, Larry Speakes, and members of the media joking about the HIV/AIDS epidemic' which they referred to as the 'gay plague' even going so far as 'laughing about one of the reporters potentially having it.'[62] The recording between Larry Speakes and journalist Lester Kinsolving was made in 1982, by which time almost one thousand people had died in the USA as a result of the disease, since the first cases had been reported in 1981.[63]

However, Greg Ellis, curator of the exhibition *Screaming in the Streets: AIDS, Art, Activism*, (3 August to 23 September 2017), at *ClampArt* in New York, offers a different explanation as to why the *Tacoma* exhibition took so long to happen, arguing that those 'who lived through that epidemic experienced in a lot of ways the same kind of trauma that people experience during war times, and it takes decades for people to be able to address that'.[64] Whilst this may have been the case, many artists *were*

[61] Muri Assunção, 'How AIDS Changed Art Forever', *VICE,* (21 August 2017), last accessed 4 January 2019, <www.vice.com>.
[62] *When AIDS Was Funny,* dir. by Scott Calonico (2015), Vanity Fair, 7:43 minutes; German Lopez, 'The Reagan administration's unbelievable response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic', *Vox,* (1 December 2016), last accessed 27 November 2018, <www.vox.com>.
[63] Ibid., Lopez.
[64] Assunção, 'How AIDS Changed Art Forever'.

actually addressing the trauma at the time of the crisis, creating works as a means of focussing attention on those most affected by HIV/AIDS, and attempting to remove or challenge any stigma attached to the disease. For example, Felix Gonzalez-Torres '*Untitled' (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, (1991) (Fig. 8), allegorically represents the artist's partner, Ross Laycock, who had died from an AIDS-related illness that year. It features a 175 lb pile of wrapped sweets stacked high in the corner of a room, which visitors are encouraged to partake of and enjoy. On a superficial level, such a work might seem trivial and kitsch, yet the symbolic message it conveys is much more harrowing. The diminishing pile of sweets mirrors Laycock's slow deterioration and disappearing body, by paralleling his weight loss before his AIDS-related death. It also foreshadows Gonzalez-Torres' own death from the same disease just five years later.

Keith Haring, a contemporary of Gonzalez-Torres, also produced many works in support of HIV/AIDS related causes, often in association with the activist group *ACT UP*.[65] On finding out he was HIV positive, Haring devoted much of his art to AIDS prevention or employed it as a means of drawing attention to the epidemic, which is evidenced in his works *Safe Sex,* (1988) (Fig. 9) and *Ignorance = Fear*, (1989) (Fig. 10). Haring's graphic style, with its limited use of line and a negation of spatial depth, is deliberately simplified as a means of best advertising his activist views in a manner accessible to all. His work was often constructed on the street itself or on subway billboards, which also facilitated a significant outreach. Easily recognised, its clear iconography allowed for difficult social and political themes, such as the need for gay men to utilise safe sex methods, to be directly and effectively addressed.

[65] *AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power* (*ACT UP)* is an activist group made up of 'diverse, non-partisan […] individuals' who through 'direct action', aim to draw attention to, and subsequently end the AIDS crisis. The group was formed in the 1980s in reaction to 'social neglect, government negligence and the complacency of the medical establishment'. Act Up, 'About: Our Mission', last accessed 10 May 2020, https://actupny.com>.

Consequently, Haring was important in battling attitudes of ignorance and fear associated with the disease, at the outset of the AIDS epidemic. In this way, his work supports Erin Mosely's argument that artists must be viewed as 'conspicuous agents of change'.[66] The very nature of art and its 'inherently partial and free-flowing mandate makes it a privileged site for working through challenges and layers of subjective complexity not amenable to more neutral or regimented official venues of truth telling.'[67] It is clear that Haring worked hard to challenge conventional thinking and prejudices, using his art as a means to provoke dialogue to instigate action and change.

It is likely that the most significant reason for delay in exhibiting artistic responses to the AIDS epidemic was funding. The AIDS crisis occurred at the beginning of the global media phenomenon when tabloid journalism spread half-understood theories about the disease, which frightened many. Consequently, galleries concerned about how best to deal with the issue, may have ultimately decided not to promote related art, as they were unsure of what the real truth was. Elsewhere in the world, national governments support museums and galleries financially in different ways but the majority of the larger USA institutions rely on a variety of funding sources, including philanthropic and individual donations. As a result, institutions might not have risked an exhibition on the subject of HIV/AIDS for fear of losing that funding, suggesting again that those in power implicitly control a gallery's agency, and that those with financial control also control an institution's output and effect.

[66] Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson, eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge,* p. 15.
[67] Ibid.

Problematic history or knowledge also raises the question as to whether there are some things that the wider public should not be allowed to see, and whether censorship of any sort, is justified. Photographs depicting atrocities that occurred under the Nazi regime in Germany during World War II, with particular attention given to the genocide of the Holocaust, are generally viewed as horrific reminders of something that must never be allowed to happen again. These include striking images from 1945 of American soldiers forcing German civilians to view the newly liberated concentration camps (Fig. 11). In his book *Legacies of Dachau*, (2008), Harold Marcuse recalls how on 8 May 1945, Dachau Nazi officers were made to visit Dachau crematorium, and those who had perpetrated genocide crimes or were otherwise complicit in some way, were forced to stand metres from mass graves full of emaciated figures.[68] Photographs of this event are seen as 'emblematic of an era in which we have faced not only previously unimaginable episodes of mass violence, but have been consternated by how we might engage with these pasts'.[69] It was General Walton Walker who, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, began the practice of taking German civilians inside local concentration camps so they saw first-hand what had happened there. However, when he ordered the Mayor of Ohrdruf and his wife to visit Ohrdruf labour camp, a subcamp of Buchenwald concentration camp, the couple were so distraught by what they saw, they returned home and took their own lives. This forces us to question not only what should be presented for display but also who should look and for what reason or ultimate purpose. It also requires us to consider whether curators are in fact 'the rightful gatekeepers of what we should see'.[70]

[68] Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 80.
[69] Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson, eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge,* p. 1.
[70] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 221.

Political events in the USA and UK over the course of the past five years, including the successful election campaigns of both Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, suggest that we are operating in a 'post-truth world', that is one where 'objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.'[71] If this is truly the case, then it could be argued that there is now an even greater need for society as a whole, including 'reluctant publics' to be 'forced to confront horrific realities with which we may be somehow complicit – if only in our desire not to really know.' [72] Janet Marstine believes museums and galleries have a responsibility to their public in this regard, and she argues for reconceiving 'museum ethics as a contingent discourse'.[73] Instead of regarding contingency as it is frequently defined, as dependent on other factors in the future, Marstine uses the Latin root '*contingere*', as meaning 'to have contact with, from *tangere*, meaning to touch.'[74] She proposes that by reconfiguring museum ethics into 'a contingent discourse', one can 'emphasise its dependence – the way it touches – upon social, political, technological and economic factors and to acknowledge its changeability.' [75] This allows for 'possibilities for systemic transformation' and the creation of a museum agenda driven by 'social responsibility, radical transparency and shared guardianship of heritage.'[76] Utilising Hilde Hein's feminist perspective as a foundational structure for her revitalised ethical model, Marstine argues that these factors are not to be seen 'as circumscribed or universal principles' but instead 'from a feminist viewpoint, as constantly evolving

[71] 'Word of the Year 2016: post-truth', *Oxford Languages*, last accessed 18 July 2019, <https://languages.oup.com>.
[72] Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson, eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge,* p. 1.
[73] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 8.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., p. 10. Marstine's three structuring concepts of social responsibility, radical transparency and shared guardianship of heritage are referred to regularly throughout this thesis and will be taken to be understood after this first usage. They will be identified in the main body of the text using inverted commas, but will be excluded from the footnotes hereafter.

ideals representative of human rights.' [77] If museums and galleries become increasingly involved with both their local communities and the wider world, and are willing to adapt their services as required, this is likely to result in them becoming structured spaces which better reflect contemporary society and are sympathetic to its needs. This is beneficial because, as museums and galleries develop in the twenty-first century, they are beginning to focus less on their collections *per se,* and more on their relationship with the audiences who visit them. Consequently, they are re-evaluating and adapting the ways in which they engage with their public. This means that those institutions are well placed to embrace controversial topics and to use them to encourage dialogue about contemporary issues.

Considering the differing examples of problematic histories evidenced above, it is clear that truth-telling can be multi-layered in its impact. As Tamar Katriel believes, by making the invisible, visible, museums and galleries can be 'confrontational' and 'suggestive,' instil 'a "call to action" or a documentation of present and past injustices for future memory'. [78] But to what extent is it the curator's responsibility to address these *difficult* histories and in what format should this be achieved? What information should they share regarding contentious subject matter or artists that are problematic? The key issue here is how knowledge of challenging subject matter currently is, if at all, being 'packaged and instrumentalised – politically, commercially, or otherwise' and whether there is an ideal model of how it should be done.[79] Is there, or can there ever be, a 'curatopia' of curating – either 'in the form of a utopia or dystopia?'[80] Can an ideal model of curating exist if we consider ethics to

[77] Ibid.
[78] Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson, eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge,* p. 9.
[79] Ibid., p. 11.
[80] Philipp Schorch, and Conal McCarthy, eds., *Curatopia: Museums and the Future of Curatorship* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2018), back cover.

be at the heart of curation, when ethics may be a contingent category, which is constantly evolving? Or in fact, can there be 'a plurality of approaches, amounting to a cultural heterotopia' in the sense that Michel Foucault used the term to describe a space which presents 'society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down'?[81]

In this thesis, I aim to explore these questions through the context of the #MeToo movement, which started in the USA as a response to the historical and ongoing problem of sexual harassment and abuse. It was begun by activist Tarana Burke in 2006, as a means of ensuring survivors' stories were heard. In 2017, the second wave of that movement was instigated by actress Alyssa Milano, who encouraged women and the queer community to speak out against the sexual harassment and violence to which many had been subjected. This proliferated throughout the media and awareness about the magnitude of the problem grew. As a direct result, although much of the initial focus was on cases in the film industry, questions were soon raised about every other cultural and creative domain. A letter from the campaign group *Not Surprised,* which was published in *The Guardian,* (30 October 2017) (Appendix II), highlighted issues in the art world:

> We are not surprised when curators offer exhibitions or support in exchange for sexual favours. We are not surprised when gallerists romanticise, minimise, and hide sexually abusive behaviour by artists they represent. We are not surprised when a meeting with a collector or a potential patron becomes a sexual proposition. We are not surprised when we are retaliated against for not complying. We are not surprised when Knight Landesman

[81] Ibid; Michel Foucault, 'Des Espaces Autres (Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias)', *Architecture/ Mouvement/Continuité,* 5, (1984), translated by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics,* 16/1, (1986), p. 24.

> gropes us in the art fair booth while promising he'll help us with our career. Abuse of power comes as no surprise. […] We will be silenced no longer.[82]

Signed by a wide range of artists including Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman, the letter became a rallying cry to engage others in speaking out loudly and publicly about sexual harassment and abuse in the art world. Whilst the issue is by no means a new phenomenon, since October 2017 several allegations have brought increased visibility to the problem. Collector François Odermatt has been accused of rape by one individual and sexual harassment by eleven others.[83] British gallerist Anthony d'Offay has been similarly accused of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour by three women, and art dealer Aaron Bondaroff resigned from the gallery he co-owned, after receiving accusations of sexual misconduct from three women.[84] At the time of writing, none of these men have faced disciplinary action regarding these matters and it appears there have been no formal police investigations. However, on Friday 4 September 2020, the *Tate* released a press statement saying that the gallery and Anthony d'Offay had agreed to end their relationship, which will include the removal of public signage and the return of all loaned works.[85]

Yet, it is not just the power players who have been accused of sexual harassment, artists themselves have also come under fire. In January 2018, the *National Gallery of Art* in Washington D.C. cancelled a scheduled exhibition of work by the artist Chuck Close, *In the Tower: Chuck Close,* which was due to open on 13 May that year, as a direct result of similar accusations. This reignited debate about

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[82] Not Surprised, 'We'll stay silent no more over sexual harassment in the art world', *The Guardian,* (30 October 2017), last accessed 28 December 2017.
[83] Nadja Sayej, 'See change: the battle against sexual harassment in the art world', *The Guardian,* (20 February 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <www.theguardian.com>.
[84] Ibid.
[85] 'Press Release: Joint statement by Tate and Anthony d'Offay', *Tate,* (4 September 2020), last accessed 5 October 2020, <www.tate.org.uk>.

censorship and whether one can, or indeed should, separate the artist from the work they produce, and how museums and galleries should respond concerning the display and recognition of art by controversial artists. Focusing primarily on the work of Eric Gill, Pablo Picasso, and Chuck Close, this thesis will consider the extent to which museums and galleries must 'understand the moral framework in which nearly everything we consume has been made' and impart that information to visitors.[86] It will explore options concerning the display and recognition of potentially controversial art, and for responding to the inappropriate behaviour of some artists. It will also question whether censorship can ever be justified.

Certainly, aesthetics and ethics are now 'more ineluctably entwined than ever' and as James Rondeau, the current President and Eloise W. Martin Director of *The Art Institute of Chicago* has said, 'The typical "we don't judge, we don't endorse, we just put it up for people to experience and decide" falls very flat in this political and cultural moment.' [87] Consequently, the role of curator has become increasingly important and demanding. Curatorial decision-making now involves exploration of how certain works might elicit different responses, or be instilled with different meanings, be that to positive or negative effect, depending on the context of the time and space in which they are displayed. Problematic histories must be addressed in a manner that reflects the needs of contemporary society, and whilst acknowledging the past, museums and galleries must take responsibility for choices they make which have impact beyond the gallery space. Thus, in order to consider whether there can be a

[86] Wendy Steiner, 'Artists' models are real people – we mustn't forget this when we look at art', *Apollo,* (14 February 2018), last accessed 6 April 2018, <www.apollo-magazine.com>.
[87] Ibid; Irina Aristarkhova, '#MeToo in the art world: Genius should not excuse sexual harassment', *The Conversation,* (3 May 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://theconversation.com>.

'curatopia,' the subject matter, artists, scenarios and works caught up in the wake of #MeToo must all be considered.[88]

In relation to the issue of sexual harassment and abuse, this thesis aims to assess the role of the curator and explore the decision-making process involved in creating an exhibition, including: what should be displayed, how it should be presented, the textual environment accompanying artworks and artefacts and any associated learning or community programming. Considering these curatorial judgements in turn, it will show that curation can be utilised with a 'new museum ethics', which goes beyond the basic framework provided by the *Museums Association* and the *International Council of Museums*. In shifting focus onto 'social responsibility, radical transparency and shared guardianship of heritage', museums and galleries are opened up 'to outside forces' which in turn will create 'systemic transformation'.[89]

In Chapter I, the difficulty of deciding *what* to display in the era of #MeToo will be explored. In accordance with a new museum ethics, the extent of a curator's 'social responsibility' in the current sociopolitical environment will be examined, alongside whether it is acceptable to display, or indeed withhold from presentation, particular works or artists. In considering whether censorship is ever justified, the work of artists who have been convicted of sexual harassment or abuse, such as Graham Ovenden, will be explored alongside those whose behaviour - although not in all cases criminal - is understood to be unacceptable or inappropriate with regard to present-day standards, including Pablo Picasso. In this vein, and in terms of exhibitions, it will consider 'whose knowledge should be privileged and whose interests served'.[90]

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[88] Schorch and McCarthy, eds., *Curatopia*, back cover.
[89] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 10.
[90] Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson, eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge,* p. 11.

Chapter II focuses on the textual environment of an exhibition and suggests that for a society which cares about the provenance of most things, from eggs and coffee to the clothes on our backs, we really should be asking where our 'entertainment' in the form of fine art is coming from.[91] Again, utilising the terms of a new museum ethics, it demonstrates that there is a need for 'radical transparency' and questions whether artworks can be considered as separate entities from the artist who created them. It asks whether an artist's biography can ever be detached from the art itself. Object and image labels, catalogues and other written media are considered in order to explore how effective use of context can bring new meaning and vitality to works, leading to the conclusion that 'radical transparency' in terms of the textual environment, can operate as 'a liberatory antidote to the assumed alignments and readability of knowledge.'[92]

Chapter III will centre on the use of gallery space, and the placement of objects and works within it. Again, it examines the role of the curator and considers how objects can elicit different responses and carry different meanings depending on how and where they are presented, and what other works are in their locale. The concept of how physical agency operates, which can work to elucidate, derive or change perspective, will also be explored.

Finally, Chapter IV will focus upon the need for a collective 'guardianship of heritage' and demonstrate that through careful exhibition programming, there is potential to achieve what Richard Sandell refers to as 'moral activism'.[93] This being 'a direction for museums to realize their potential as change agents in promoting social

[91] Pahull Bains, 'Can We Still Separate Art From Artists in a Post-Time's Up Era?', *Fashion,* (12 February 2018), last accessed 14 October 2018, <https://fashionmagazine.com>.
[92] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 14.
[93] Ibid., p. 5.

inclusion and human rights both inside and outside the museum.'[94] Essentially, this harks back to the feminist notion of 'shared authority' and demonstrates that whilst museums should be initiating conversations and content for debate, they should not dominate or govern that conversation. This concept of the collective, whereby museums and galleries co-operate with the greater public, helps to facilitate the consideration of multiple perspectives, and so more clearly elucidates our understanding of reality.

Generating exhibitions centred on difficult subject matter or sensitive material, such as sexual harassment and abuse issues, is undeniably challenging. It is also difficult to address and question the context of artistic production in some cases, especially when historical understanding of abuse is at odds with contemporary views. Yet, by advocating an amalgamation of aesthetics and contingent ethics to work in parallel, institutions may embrace rather than avoid controversy. Encouraging the framing of controversial issues in a considered manner allows museums and galleries to be seen as places where honest and open conversations can be had about difficult subject matter, which facilitates greater understanding and a wider range of emotional responses. Ironically, displaying sensitive material or work by artists with a contentious or problematic history but in a responsible context, can challenge people's thinking and lead to greater debate. This can in turn 'help reshape the contentious, divided societies in which we now live.'[95] Foucault deemed museums to be great 'heterotopic warehouses of knowledge', which are 'past masters at giving accumulative space to the diversity of this world and all the different ways of accessing it.'[96] In this regard,

[94] Ibid.
[95] Yerkovich, *A Practical Guide to Museum Ethics*, pp. 107-108.
[96] e-flux, 'Measuring the World: Heterotopias and Knowledge Spaces in Art', *e-flux,* (6 June 2011), last accessed 16 November 2018, <www.e-flux.com>.

arts institutions have the potential both to mirror society and positively transform it. As Schrag implied in *Push* (Fig. 1), there is no need to tear down these warehouses or temples of knowledge but the pillars upholding them should be continuously questioned and challenged in order to ensure they successfully serve contemporary society.

I

Social Responsibility

Exploring *what* should be displayed post #MeToo

What they put on view says a lot about a museum, but what they don't put on view says even more[97]

~ Fred Wilson

Curators face many challenges when deciding what to display post #MeToo, and particularly when considering figurative art. This is because art which uses a model or figure replicates the artist's gaze, and consequently often the male gaze, which in the current context 'places ethical interactions in high relief'.[98] In feminist theory, the male gaze presents women for the sexual pleasure of men.[99] This practice was accepted in the past, but as women have gained independence in western culture and their social and political status has changed as a result, it has impacted on society's perception of them and their potential objectification. Whereas part of what makes art so enjoyable is the value derived from 'the endless relays of looking', undertaking a prolonged examination can be problematic if the work is figurative because the model is simultaneously both 'real and virtual, subject and object' and this 'conflates and confuses ethics and aesthetics.'[100] This becomes particularly challenging in the wake of #MeToo because where, when and how we view a work of art will always affect our response to it. And the context has changed post #MeToo. Philosophers have failed to define beauty objectively because it is determined by the eye of the beholder, as is

[97] Elisabeth Ginsberg, 'Mining the Museum', in Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell, eds., *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* (London, UK: OR Books, 2012), p. 335.
[98] Steiner, 'Artists' models are real people'.
[99] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, 1989), p.19.
[100] Steiner, 'Artists' models are real people'.

acceptability. Consequently, what one viewer considers acceptable or beautiful, another might classify as pornographic or offensive, because in both cases, their response will be affected by their own personal history and cultural experiences. However, changing societal perception of what is, and what is no longer, acceptable, must impact on the decisions curators make regarding artistic works for display, and specifically on how potentially problematic objects or histories are presented.

In recent decades, galleries have staged exhibitions of art that had been overlooked or avoided in the past because the material was considered unimportant, indecent or offensive. *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power,* (12 July to 22 October 2017), at the *Tate Modern* displayed work by African American artists who had 'remained in the shadows of the art world, largely unrecognized by mainstream audiences.'[101] The exhibition, through its 'dynamic stylistic range of artistic responses to the question of what "Black art" means', demonstrated the show's 'importance and relevance […] not just for understanding the past but for understanding this present moment too.'[102] The works, shown in this new context, argued powerfully for inclusivity and equity. Exhibitions like this, which focus on previously overlooked subjects and artists, encourage 'the visitor to understand judgements of taste and evaluations of community standards as historically contextualized phenomena that change or evolve through time.'[103] This is particularly relevant in the present cultural and political moment, and specifically in the context of the treatment of women. As a result of #MeToo and extensive testimonies from women documenting their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse, many museums and galleries worldwide are realising

[101] Colony Little, 'At the Broad Museum, the Groundbreaking "Soul of a Nation" Puts a Refreshed Focus on the Struggles of Black Artists in LA', *artnet news,* (11 April 2019), last accessed 15 October 2019, <www.news.artnet.com>.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 404.

that they are significantly invested, both financially and intellectually, in the work of men deemed to be abusive. As a direct consequence, several artworks have taken on new and problematic meanings. Curators are now finding that they must consider precisely *what* they display in new ways, or indeed whether to display some work at all, given the nature of the artwork itself or the problematic context in which it was created. In turn, this leads to a consideration of whether censorship, including self-censorship, is ever justified.

In 2017, the *Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft* faced a challenging decision to make on rediscovering a particular object in its archive: a singular envelope from 1921, belonging to the artist Eric Gill. Gill co-founded an arts and crafts guild in the village of Ditchling in the early twentieth century, and his work features prominently in the Museum's collection. On the back of the envelope is written what at first appears a seemingly harmless list of the body measurements of two of Gill's daughters, presented in separate columns, one for Elizabeth and another for Petra.[104] Yet, on closer observation it becomes evident that adjacent to these figures, the artist has noted his own measurements, including those of his penis when erect and flaccid. Nathaniel Hepburn, who was then Director of the *Ditchling Museum*, considered the envelope to be an extremely 'powerful object' that 'very quickly tells the story' of Eric Gill.[105] This story was uncovered by Fiona MacCarthy in her 1989 biography of the artist, which detailed a series of extramarital affairs, an incestuous relationship with his sister, the abuse of his daughters when they were teenagers and sexual activity with his dog. Until the creation of the exhibition *Eric Gill: The Body,* (29 April to 3

[104] Permission was requested from Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft to reproduce an image of this item but a response was never received.
[105] Rachel Cooke, 'Eric Gill: can we separate the artist from the abuser?', *The Guardian,* (9 April 2017), last accessed 19 November 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.

September 2017), the Museum had kept Gill's biography under wraps, refraining from detailing this information to their visitors. Such practice was not in any way unusual. On 7 November 2016, Hepburn had attended the *Museums Association's* conference in Glasgow and was a speaker at the session entitled, *Free to Speak: Confronting Censorship and Controversy*. During this session, attendees were asked to vote in response to the question, 'Have you ever consciously withheld information from audiences due to its controversial nature?'[106] 51 per cent of the sixty-three participants said they had, with 49 per cent voting no.[107] Whilst this may be the case, for Hepburn, the discovery of the envelope meant there could be no glossing over the reality of the object and its implications, and that this was something the *Ditchling Museum* should certainly address. He did not see it as something that could be easily dismissed by saying, Gill 'was a sculptor, of course he was interested in measurements and form.'[108] Rather, the envelope became a catalyst in the Museum's realisation that it should stop being dishonest and concealing 'difficult' information from the public. It had to be open about the works in its collection.

This issue leads us to question whether curators or arts institutions have a social responsibility to display – or withhold from displaying - particular items because they are contentious or problematic in their capacity to cause distress to a visitor, irrespective of their innate artistic value. For example, *Girl in Bath II,* (1923) (Fig. 12), is a beautiful and simplistic print on paper from a wood engraving, which details with minimal lines, the sinuous curves of a woman's body. Even through the use of limited marking, Gill manages to create a sense of energy and movement in the piece,

[106] Patrick Steel, 'Eric Gill exhibition to confront child sex abuse', *Museums Association,* (12 April 2017), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.museumsassociation.org>.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Cooke, 'Eric Gill'.

enabling the viewer to visualise the act of the woman washing herself. However, the woman's gaze is averted, tellingly unengaged with the artist and therefore with the viewer also. The letter 'P' visible in the bottom right-hand corner of the image suggests that this drawing is of Petra, Gill's daughter, and our biographical understanding of her intimate relationship with Gill makes our response to it uneasy, especially given that 'within weeks' of producing artworks for which she had modelled, 'he was abusing her.'[109] We must ask ourselves whether such an image should be displayed at all, despite its beauty and artistic merit, if in doing so, a curator allows the individual who made it to be lauded and celebrated, despite him engaging in paedophilia and incest. Gill's stone sculpture *The Bath* (*Petra Bathing),* (1920) (Fig. 13), is likely to elicit a similar uncomfortable response from viewers. Superficially, it depicts a young girl who is squeezed into a bathtub. However, upon learning that this work is also of Gill's daughter Petra, the viewer promptly registers the voyeuristic angle, as if the artist is encouraging them to peep through a keyhole, inciting the male gaze as a result. The work recalls Edgar Degas' depictions of women at their *toilette*, particularly *The Tub,* (1886) (Fig. 14), with its obsessive attention given to the female body and its intrusive point of view. By delving into this private sphere, both Gill's and Degas' work exude a sense of eroticism.

Just as Degas enjoyed the immediacy of working with pastels, something similar can be said of Gill. Modernist sculpture focused on working with the source material without trialling an idea in the first instance, and Gill took pleasure from this direct carving, which he perceived gave him 'total control' as a sculptor.[110] In fact, he detested anything he believed adulterated the final product, whatever that might be.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Fiona MacCarthy, 'Eric Gill: "Mad about sex"', *The Guardian,* (17 October 2009), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.

For example, he was known to 'castigate Bird's Custard Powder as a travesty of "custardness", just as he poured scorn on contraception as interfering with the natural pleasures of penetrative sex.'[111] This is epitomised in his 'diatribe against the iniquity of trousers' for being 'so concealing of "man's most precious ornament".'[112] Through sculpting, Gill's love of physicality was made manifest, by carving 'things seen in the mind' as an expression of 'his most secret thoughts and longings.'[113] However, this is also disturbing given that a vast proportion of his works are nude renderings of his daughters, and therefore depictions of something we know was not just 'seen in the mind'. In 1910, Gill carved the small wooden *Doll* (Fig. 15), as a toy for his daughter Petra, and it could be argued that in the making of this object, Gill experienced some degree of sexual catharsis. This much is suggested by the fact that the doll does not possess a neck as such, and a ridge has been carved in the back of its head, leading some to conclude that the doll 'is a very potent object' and others to deduce that it looks 'just like a penis.'[114]

Of course, we have to be careful in our judgments of *Doll* (Fig. 15) because as a sculptor, Gill was interested in 'primitive' art, which as a result of associations with fertility, is often seen as sexual or phallic in nature. Roughly-carved wooden dolls made by Russian peasantry, folk artists across Europe, and by so-called 'primitive' societies across the world also possess very similar features to Gill's *Doll*. Made out of wood, these peg dolls tend to be simplified, with rounded heads and little or no attention paid to crafting facial features. However, whilst *Doll* could be explained from different points of view, awareness of the context in which Gill's art was created poses

[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Cooke, 'Eric Gill'.

a number of questions for a curator. Again, should that artwork be displayed at all? Secondly, if it is displayed, what, if any, of its context should be shared? And finally, with regard to both previous questions, whose story should be considered more important when making these judgements? Is it that of the artist, or the perceived 'victim' of that art, who has suffered in the process of its creation, or the viewer who seeks to appreciate and understand it?

With an understanding that many of Gill's works came about through the physical abuse of those close to him, it becomes difficult to separate that knowledge from our appreciation of the art he produced, and this 'affects our enjoyment of that work – it's as good as it was, but we bring something to it. It does spoil it.'[115] This leads us to question whether or not curators should have authority to choose what should be displayed, or indeed withheld from public view, in order to protect not only the viewer but the sitter. For example, Michèle Woodger writes that Gill's daughter, Petra Tegetmeier, was considered to be 'apparently a happy and well-balanced woman'.[116] That she donated her father's smock to the *Ditchling Museum* implicitly suggests she wanted to protect and contribute to his reputation as an artist. Similarly, an obituary published after Tegetmeier's death, revealed 'that she was never made to feel shame' and assured Patrick Nuttgens 'that she was not at all embarrassed' by her father's actions.[117] Nuttgens further noted that she seemed 'to have been undamaged by the experience'.[118] Whilst that is his subjective opinion, given that both artist and model were seemingly content, does the controversial context remain an issue? Should it still

[115] Ibid.
[116]Michèle Woodger, 'Ditchling comes clean about Gill', *The RIBA Journal,* (12 May 2017), last accessed 12 November 2019, <www.ribaj.com>.
[117] Ibid; Patrick Nuttgens, 'Petra Tegetmeier obituary: Unorthodox liaisons', *The Guardian,* (6 January 1999), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[118] Ibid., Nuttgens.

be shared, or how much of it should be shared with the viewer? What seems important here is that in presenting any narrative associated with an artwork, museums should attempt to be honest, even more so when the context is difficult. This is because whilst we all look at art through the lens of our own preferences, dislikes, views and histories, avoiding some works and lingering over others, that does not mean we should be protected from any context that we might find personally challenging. Rather, by detailing full context and allowing multiple voices of 'authentic historical evidence' to be heard, curators can help interpret problematic knowledge or context in a way that allows viewers 'to make connections that are both ethical and empathetic responses' to it.[119]

A multifaceted approach such as this undermines 'the preserve of the curatorial "voice of god"', by suggesting that a museum or gallery should operate as 'a forum for diverse competing voices' where a multiplicity of views is offered.[120] As Hannah Gadsby clarifies in *Nanette,* when Picasso developed Cubism, he was exploring the idea that 'we could paint a better world if we learned how to see it from all perspectives, as many perspectives as we possibly could' (1:03:57).[121] Cubism - as Gadsby suggests - operates as a metaphor, which through its heightened and varied perspectives demonstrates that 'diversity is strength, difference is a teacher' (1:04:04) and if you 'fear difference […] you learn nothing' (1:04:11). However, awareness of other perspectives should not imply superior understanding. For example, if an individual white, male curator were to put on a show about sexual harassment and abuse of women, there is an arrogance assumed, a belief that they can know and

[119] Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), p. 36.
[120] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 276.
[121] *Hannah Gadsby: Nanette*, dir. by Madeleine Parry and Jon Olb (2018), Netflix, 67 minutes.

understand the whole remit of experience. As a human, you cannot ever know another person's lived experience, by default of it being theirs. In the same vein and as Gadsby attests, Picasso was also arrogant because 'he assumed he could represent all of the perspectives and our mistake was to invalidate the perspective of a seventeen-year-old girl because we believed her potential was never going to equal his' (1:04:17); the girl referred to here being Marie-Thérèse Walter. Items from Picasso's print book *Le Goût du Bonheur*, (1970) (Figs., 16a and 16b), corroborate the idea that whilst appearing to offer a kaleidoscopic perspective, Picasso's view of women is ironically one-dimensional. Several of these works feature a male and female in close embrace, but although they differ marginally, each image depicts the male figure's hands firmly grasping the female's breasts, whilst the female shields her face from view with one hand and often covers her pudenda with the other. Minimal, if any, consideration is afforded to the female's perspective. Whilst Picasso's contribution to art history is undeniable, and his works continue to impact on developing artists today, the 'voice of god' approach would facilitate that single point of view being passed on to the visiting public.[122] However, adopting a multi-layered approach to curation would ensure diverse stories are shared and many other perspectives considered, including that of the female.

Curating that explores different perspectives is important when we consider the position of women in art, particularly as artists' muses and models, and especially post #MeToo. Whilst Gill's daughter Petra normalised the nature of her relationship with her father, stating, 'We just took it for granted' and she continued to admire and appreciate her father's work, other females who have been sexually harassed or abused may feel differently about whether or not the work of an abuser – particularly

[122] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 276.

when it details the victim – should be displayed.[123] Today, western women are less likely to take sexually abusive behaviour 'for granted'. When the *Gagosian Gallery* in New York curated an intimate exhibition titled *Balthus: The Last Studies,* (26 September 2013 to 18 January 2014), *Hyperallergic* magazine called it 'a denouement that disentwines the cultured from the creepiness in Balthus' work, leaving only the latter intact.'[124] The exhibition featured a series of 155 polaroid images (Figs., 17a and 17b) made between *c.* 1990 and 2000, which are primarily of Balthus' last model and muse Anna Wahli, alongside a singular painting, *Untitled* (*c.* 2000 – 2001, posthumously referred to as *Girl with a Mandolin*), unfinished at the time of the artist's death (Fig. 18). The photographs of Wahli were taken over a period of eight years, from when she was eight until sixteen, and so record her growth and development through puberty to womanhood. Balthus took *c.* 2000 images, the majority of which depict a child under the age of consent, partly nude, and in a series of poses that might be intended to capture innocence, but which could equally be described as sexualised (Fig. 17b). The lighting in these photos often works to highlight Wahli's flesh and occasionally, her head is left out of the frame of the shot, which reduces her to the status of object. The *Gagosian* explained why it was 'delighted' to exhibit these images, claiming they exemplified Balthus' creative approach in later life when frailty meant he struggled to paint.[125] However, consideration must also be given to the model's perspective of the process if the gallery is to recognise the context of Wahli's participation and the extent to which the relationship between artist and model represents a sort of power play. This is because whilst Balthus is not alive to comment

[123] Nuttgens, 'Petra Tegetmeier obituary'.
[124] Thomas Micchelli, 'The Cultured and the Creepy: Balthus's Parting Shots', *Hyperallergic,* (26 October 2013), last accessed 16 September 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com>.
[125] 'About: Balthus: The Last Studies', *Gagosian,* (26 September 2013 to 18 January 2014), last accessed 26 April 2020, <https://gagosian.com>.

on these works, which interestingly he never intended for display (they were studies for future paintings), Wahli, appears ambivalent in her reaction towards them.

As Michelle Hartney indicates in the podcast *State of the Art: Art & Morality with Michelle Hartney & The Guerrilla Girls,* Wahli seems to have 'mixed feelings' (00:37:07) about Balthus' polaroids of her, moving 'between being okay with the work but also feeling like perhaps her father forced her to do this a little bit' (00:36:57).[126] When Hartney requested an interview with Wahli to explore this issue, Wahli declined to speak to her.[127] However, in an essay she wrote for the book accompanying the *Gagosian* exhibition, Wahli shares that although she came to understand and appreciate Balthus' artistic process, she was also uncomfortable with various aspects of it, saying:

> The process was painfully slow. It took such a long time to change what seemed to be a minute detail and, from my point of view, all the photographs looked alike. I wondered why I had to return, week after week. On the one hand, I did realize that in addition to taking pictures, he also needed to observe me and bask in a contemplative atmosphere so as to be able to fashion a mental image, which he would then strive to render on canvas in his painting studio.[128]

There is some suggestion here that Balthus spent a disproportionate amount of time simply gazing at his model. Today, evidence of an older man taking partially nude images of a child would generally be considered enough to instigate a police enquiry, and it could be argued that Balthus was toeing a precarious line between art and criminal action. However, many male artists seem to be afforded protection by the

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[126] *State of the Art: Art & Morality with Michelle Hartney & The Guerrilla Girls* (4 July 2019), Episode 98, <https://sotapodcast.com>.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Nicolas Pages, and Benoît Peverelli, eds., *Balthus: The Last Studies*, vol 1 (Germany, Steidl Verlag, 2013), p. 100.

legacy of their artworks, and the title of 'artist' itself – a protection that becomes more fixed if the artist also has the term 'genius' ascribed to him. In February 2014, shortly after the *Gagosian* exhibition in New York closed, *Museum Folkwang* in Essen, Germany, cancelled a show of Balthus' works scheduled for that April, after national newspaper *Die Zeit* had called them 'documents of paedophile greed'.[129] The polaroid images of Wahli (Figs., 17a and 17b), are contentious because whilst something that is painted 'is a fantasy' (00:35:55) and can only ever be a representation of reality, a photograph that is 'not manipulated' (00:36:00) is a snapshot and 'that act existed' (00:36:04).[130] If that act is contentious or problematic in any regard, then there is a need to discuss and consider it further, especially as these images were sold for financial gain, perpetuating a market where images of partially clothed young girls are exchanged.

In the same podcast, a member of the Guerrilla Girls using the pseudonym Frida Kahlo, stated that there needs to be a dialogue on this particular matter and that Wahli should 'be encouraged' (00:37:26) to speak 'in whatever way is comfortable for her' (00:37:28).[131] Certainly, there are wider implications here because evidence points to an older, more powerful man abusing his position as an artist, to manipulate a younger, more vulnerable female. This is corroborated by Nicholas Fox Weber in *Balthus: A Biography*, (1999), where he highlights the significance of prepubescent girls in Balthus' art, stating:

> Early adolescence is the period of life on which Balthus would dwell forever after. The leitmotif of his art has been children — mostly girls — just at the onset of puberty, full of anticipation and uncertainty. His artistic approach, like his subject matter, would also have

[129] Steiner, 'Artists' models are real people'.
[130] *State of the Art: Art & Morality with Michelle Hartney & The Guerrilla Girls.*
[131] Ibid.

> the primary characteristics of that time of latency. Emotions are intense without being clear. Like the nubile girls he repeatedly chose to portray, Balthus as a painter appears possessed by overwhelming yet dormant yearnings. The ardor is palpable, but its sources disguised, perhaps even to its bearer.[132]

'Kahlo' made clear that Larry Gagosian himself, the Gallery's founder, needed to be more open about the Balthus exhibition and to explain the context behind the works, as the accompanying literature simply lauded praise on the artist, with no discussion of his personal biography or the specific nature of the exhibition's content.[133] Furthermore, 'Kahlo' also stated, that should the *Gagosian* display or sell those works again, then the Guerrilla Girls would be there to protest.[134] This is not simply about a visitor responding to an artistic work in isolation, there are societal issues that cannot be ignored. In this regard, the art here cannot be separated from the artist who created it and has agency beyond the gallery space which cannot be dismissed. It is impossible to view works like these without what Fiona MacCarthy has described as 'a frisson'.[135] Similarly, one cannot read Gill's record of how he sexually experimented with his dog, and then fail to note that the animal depicted in his *The Hound of St Dominic,* (1923) (Fig. 19), has 'some distinctly disconcerting features.'[136] The dog has a prominent penis, and as the animal is looking backwards whilst running, the viewer is made to question what is outside of the image. What we know does affect our response to the work, yet as MacCarthy clarifies, 'Gill is too good an artist, too ferocious and intrepid a controversialist, to be protected and

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[132] Nicholas Fox Weber, *Balthus: A Biography* (London, UK: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), p. 19.
[133] *State of the Art: Art & Morality with Michelle Hartney & The Guerrilla Girls.*
[134] Ibid.
[135] Fiona MacCarthy, 'Written in Stone', *The Guardian,* (22 July 2006), last accessed 2 November 2018, <www.theguardian.com>.
[136] Ibid.

glossed over. We need to see him whole.'[137] Indeed, the works of Gill, Balthus and Picasso should never be hidden away or censored, but an artist's story is inextricably linked with what they choose to create and use for inspiration. Curators must be aware of these stories and their agency, both positive and negative, on any visitor to the gallery space, and those stories should be shared, because to do otherwise diminishes the value of other perspectives.

Essentially, in their selection of works, curators are deciding, either consciously or subconsciously, whose story they believe or which story matters the most. Problematically, throughout the history of art, the cultural sphere has operated as 'a meritocracy' (00:04:26), meaning 'whatever art the museum filtered out in an exhibition had to be [..] the most significant art that was being made at the time' (00:04:28).[138] In the past, this has been further complicated by the power structures of many museums. In the USA, arts institutions are often privately funded by philanthropists. By contrast, most major museums in Europe were built on the foundation of Royal Collections, and so were, and still are to a great extent, publicly funded. Whilst the systems differ, most Western museums operate under Capitalism which dictates what is displayed, and what has been exhibited in the past. This is because in theory, operating in a democracy affords arts institutions significant freedom to display what they choose, but in reality, they are limited by having to compete for funding to ensure commercial sustainability. In many cases, those at the top of the museum hierarchy, including the board committee, collectors and donors, are those who control what information is being presented. As a result, the stories that have been told in the past, were often either ones that were destined to bring in the

[137] Ibid.
[138] *State of the Art: Art & Morality with Michelle Hartney & The Guerrilla Girls.*

most money or those that retained the status quo and power structures, that which we now regard as 'pale, stale and male'. This is further highlighted when we consider Ernst Gombrich's seminal text *The Story of Art*, (1950), which has drawn criticism for ignoring women artists and for its predominantly Eurocentric view.[139] Historically, the story that galleries collectively told was one dimensional, which facilitated the curatorial voice of authority. However, the reality now is that whilst curators may be responsible for selecting objects for display, they cannot solely define their meanings. This is because any individual who enters a museum 'is a storyteller with authority' and any object being exhibited is, according to Robert Archibald, 'a mnemonic device', in that such objects form memories for the viewer and can remind them of others.[140] Each interaction with an artwork 'is story making as visitors fit portions of our collections into personal frames of reference, most often in ways we neither intended nor anticipated.'[141] This demonstrates that regardless of the selection of works, 'museum professionals can no longer claim ultimate authority' and neither can they 'assert interpretative control over the past.'[142] Instead, curators share an obligation to operate as 'preservers, facilitators, conveners so that the conversations can take place and the stories be told and, more importantly, shared.'[143] Again, this facilitates a multiplicity of perspectives and an opportunity for visitors to engage more deeply with exhibited works.

However, not all galleries are equal in their efforts at being responsible in this role, or in their commitment to acting ethically. For example, Balthus' *Thérèse*

[139] E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art,* 16th edn (London, UK: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995). This text has been revised sixteen times, the last revision being in 1995, when the artist Käthe Kollwitz became the first and only female artist to be included in the seminal text of more than 600 pages.
[140] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 276.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.

Dreaming, (1938) (Fig. 20), part of *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* collection in New York, has been the subject of particular attention in this regard. People have protested against its display, distressed by the fact that in order to get to this finalised image hanging in the walls of a prominent gallery, 'a real girl below the age of consent had to sit in a seductive pose day after day, watched by the artist', whilst the image itself fails to provide an indication of her thoughts or feelings.[144] A petition was organised by Mia Merrill, asking the Museum either to remove the work from display or to replace it with the work of a female artist from the same period. Failing that, she suggested that the Museum provide context by adding to the accompanying wall text, and proposed, 'Some viewers find this piece offensive or disturbing, given Balthus' artistic infatuation with young girls.'[145] Importantly, Merrill stressed she did not want the work or indeed any others by Balthus to be destroyed or removed from their galleries, but simply for the context in which it was created to be acknowledged. However, the museum refused on all counts.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art defended their decision to retain *Thérèse Dreaming* (Fig. 20) without any additional text, by stating:

> Moments such as this provide an opportunity for conversation, and visual art is one of the most significant means we have for reflecting on both the past and the present and encouraging the continuing evolution of existing culture through informed discussion and respect for creative expression.[146]

The problem here is that the museum did nothing to encourage wide ranging and 'informed discussion' by facilitating the sharing of different perspectives through

[144] Steiner, 'Artists' models are real people'.
[145] Lauren Elkin, 'Showing Balthus at the Met Isn't About Voyeurism, It's About the Right to Unsettle', *Frieze,* (19 December 2017), last accessed 20 April 2020, <https://frieze.com>.
[146] Peter Libbey, 'Met Defends Suggestive Painting of Girl After Petition Calls for Its Removal', *The New York Times,* 4 December 2017, last accessed 20 April 2020, <www.nytimes.com>.

accompanying wall text or other media. It could be argued that gallery visitors have the right to view and respond to a work freely and independently without guidance. However, the issue is not simply about the artwork itself but the wider societal context within which it operates. Post #MeToo, Balthus' work resonates in a different way. It has the potential to offend those who have been abused, especially those who were abused as children, or to validate taking photographs of children in sexualised poses, and at a time when society is still addressing historic but systemic abuse in the Catholic church and by sports coaches. Merrill's petition has gathered a total of 11,601 signatories at the time of the submission of this thesis, with many using it as a vehicle for sharing their own views about the work. An anonymous contributor from Florida writes, 'I'm an abuse victim. I find Balthus' work very offensive and hurtful.'[147] Other comments include, 'Art is part of the problem' and 'I am sick and tired of the constant sexualisation of women. I do not care if the Met thinks it's an opportunity for discussion. School shootings are also an opportunity for discussion, but which diabolical person wants the shootings to happen so that a conversation can begin?'[148] These comments clearly support *The New York Times* critic Ginia Bellafante's belief that *The Metropolitan Museum of Art's* choice fundamentally 'contradicts the ethos of an age in which we have increasingly sought to understand the moral framework in which nearly everything we consume has been made.'[149] As Wesley Morris and Jenna Wortham posited, just as 'we think about where our fruit comes from or where our potatoes come from' there is the same need to ask 'where your entertainment is coming from. Who's making it?'[150] Responsible consumerism must apply to art as well, even more so

[147] Mia Merrill, 'Metropolitan Museum of Art: Remove Balthus' Suggestive Painting of a Pubescent Girl, Thérèse Dreaming', *Care2 Petitions,* (2017), last accessed 8 October 2020, <www.thepetitionsite.com>.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ginia Bellafante, 'We Need to Talk About Balthus', *The New York Times,* (8 December 2017), last accessed 25 November 2019, <www.nytimes.com>.
[150] Bains, 'Can We Still Separate Art From Artists'.

because 'ethical art, unlike cruelty-free meat, won't be more expensive.'[151] Of course, the counter argument is that great art might be lost as a result, but the alternative involves detriment to the 'safety, dignity and agency' of women.[152] Some might suggest that such an approach is politically motivated to satisfy a feminist agenda, but museums and galleries must commit to acting ethically and representing all of society, if they are to remain relevant and fit for contemporary use.

Conversely, Kevin Childs has argued that there is something intrinsically 'wrong with a culture that refuses to allow itself to be shocked, that denies arousal, that rejects beauty in favour of politics.'[153] He worries that too much focus on issues related to the objectification of women will lead to audiences responding to artworks in a way that is 'merely reactionary' and so in some way diminish it.[154] He also suggests that some art may even 'provide a safe space in which to indulge our darkest fantasies and thereby help us behave better'.[155] Whilst there may be some truth in this, it is often not the case, especially where an individual's human rights have already been compromised in the creation of the work. For example, Graham Ovenden's *Little Lorraine*, (1970) (Fig. 21), is a beautiful photograph, with a play of chiaroscuro that is compelling for the viewer. In particular, the controlled use of light delicately highlights the newly formed curves of Lorraine's body and her long Pre-Raphaelite style hair which cascades down her back. However, Ovenden was convicted of paedophilia on 9 October 2013, after a jury heard he had abused young girls who had posed for him

[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Kevin Childs, 'With a Manchester gallery removing an "objectifying" painting, why are we in such a hurry to erase the past?', *The Independent,* (3 February 2018), last accessed 17 November 2018), <www.independent.co.uk>.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.

at his homes in London and Cornwall.[156] In response, the *Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)* decided to remove the online records of three of his works, 'as the people depicted in the works may have been directly connected to [his] crimes.'[157] The *Tate* also decided to remove most of Ovenden's works from its website, stating, 'It would not be possible to establish whether such a connection exists, and the works therefore remain unavailable to view online', but they can still be seen in *Tate Britain's* Prints and Drawings Room on request.[158] Disturbingly, Ovenden said that 'This hasn't embittered me. My reputation is impugned, but in the art world fame and infamy are the same thing – look at Oscar Wilde.'[159] He emphasised that his conviction had, in fact, a positive impact in that it appeared to have increased the value of his art – 'One of my paintings sold well at auction three weeks ago. It hasn't buggered up my market at all.'[160] And so the curator is presented with another ethical challenge: to decide whether or not to remove from public view any work by an artist who has been convicted of abuse or serious sexual assault, for fear of raising both the artist's profile and the value of their work, which in turn might diminish the stories of those affected by its creation.

Arguably, censorship never works as it is often desired. As Judith Butler explains, censorship or the 'certain kinds of efforts to restrict practices of representation in the hopes of reining in the imaginary, controlling the phantasmatic' actually often 'end up reproducing and proliferating the phantasmatic in inadvertent

[156] Steven Morris, and Ryan Hooper, 'Artist Graham Ovenden sexually abused young girls, court told', *The Guardian,* (11 March 2013), last accessed 19 November 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[157] Maurice Davies, 'Self-censoring museums have to be braver', *The Art Newspaper,* (24 July 2015), last accessed 19 November 2019, <www.theartnewspaper.com>.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Steven Morris, 'Graham Ovenden remains defiant and compares himself to Oscar Wilde', *The Guardian,* (4 June 2013), last accessed 19 November 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[160] Ibid.

ways, indeed, in ways that contradict the intended purposes of the restriction itself.'[161] In this way, censorship, ironically leads to greater rather than less exposure for the subject, artist or museum in question.[162] For example, in 1989, the then *Corcoran Gallery of Art* in Washington D.C. decided to cancel their showing of the exhibition *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment* three weeks before it was due to open, as it was worried about reaction to the 'number of homoerotic and sexually explicit images including nudes of young children' which were due to be shown.[163] The exhibition of work by the photographer, who had died due to HIV/AIDS related complications on 9 March that year, was made up of three portfolios; the 'Y' portfolio comprised mostly still life images of flowers, the 'Z' nudes of black men and the 'X' portfolio included depictions of sadomasochism. Two images that were of particular concern were *Rosie,* (1976) (Fig. 22) and *Jim and Tom, Sausalito,* (1977) (Fig. 23). *Rosie* (Fig. 22) depicts a young girl sitting on a stone bench in her grandfather's garden. She is wearing a gingham dress that is naturally hitched up to accommodate her bent knees, which in the absence of knickers, reveals a glimpse of her genitalia. The expression on the child's face is inquisitive and doe-like, engaged with the photographer and any subsequent viewer. In complete contrast, *Jim and Tom, Sausalito* (Fig. 23) features a sadomasochistic sex act, composed to emphasise the light and shade, or chiaroscuro, present in the scene. Both images are striking but given the nature of their content, were likely to clash with traditional American morals and values at the time. *The Perfect Moment* exhibition had already visited other cities within the USA and received good reviews but it came to be 'at the centre of an intense storm - swirling censorship,

[161] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 397.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Roxanne Roberts, '900 Protest Corcoran Cancellation', *The Washington Post,* (1 July 1989), last accessed 19 November 2019, <www.washingtonpost.com>.

federal funding of the arts and charges of homophobia into a convoluted mass.'[164] This uproar ultimately led to the *Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Centre (CAC),* the exhibition's next stop, and its director Dennis Barrie, being charged with 'pandering obscenity and illegally displaying the images of nude children', after the opening night preview.[165] The *CAC's* victory in the ensuing court case, which originally concerned seven specific images including both *Rosie* (Fig. 22) and *Jim and Tom, Sausalito* (Fig. 23), came to be seen as a significant one for freedom of expression and brought issues of censorship into sharp focus.

It is important to stress that Mapplethorpe was guilty of no crime. Parents had been willing to have their children photographed by him and supported him. This was confirmed when the mothers of the respective children gave signed statements evidencing their authorisation of both the creation of the photographs, and their subsequent use, which meant they could not be used as evidence in the trial. Rosie's mother had actually been present when the photograph of her daughter had been taken (Fig. 22) and in 1996, Rosie herself, then twenty- three years old, described it as a 'very, very sweet picture' which 'captures childhood innocence' and so confirmed her support of the image.[166] Likewise, there has never been any suggestion that Mapplethorpe's adult models were abused or coerced into participation. The *Corcoran's* response in cancelling their showing of *The Perfect Moment*, was likely to have been driven by traditional American attitudes towards Christianity and morality. Paris art dealer Harry Lunn Jr., who had lent two of his own Mapplethorpe photographs to be exhibited referred to the WASP, stupid Corcoran board running – not walking –

[164] Ibid.
[165] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 398.
[166] Online collection entry, 'Rosie', *LACMA,* last accessed 18 May 2020, <https://collections.lacma.org>.

to the door at the first hint of any controversy.'[167] By specifically mentioning the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) make-up of the board in charge of the museum, Lunn clearly intended to emphasise its narrow and illiberal view.[168] However, at this time, the 'liberals knew where they stood: unequivocally on the side of artistic freedom.'[169] Consequently, whilst the museum 'wrestled with the right's pressure to close the "obscene" Mapplethorpe exhibit,' the left, with more than 900 supporters and artists, took to the streets on what would have been the opening night of the exhibition, and protested against censorship by projecting enlargements of Mapplethorpe images onto the facades of nearby buildings.[170] Roxanne Roberts reported in *The Washington Post* that these projections 'drew appreciative whistles and applause from the decidedly partisan crowd and curious stares from passing motorists.' [171] The projections protest spiralled into an intense media event. Journalists crowded at the entrance to the gallery 'as the protesters, wearing "Freedom for the Creative Mind" T-shirts, waved works by the artist under the words "Dedicated to Art" carved above the gallery's door.' [172] This reaction, in turn, led to other artists cancelling their own exhibitions at the *Corcoran* and eventually to the museum director, Christina Orr-Cahall resigning from her post.[173] It is clear that the decision to close the exhibition, together with the Cincinnati court case, ultimately exposed Mapplethorpe to much greater media coverage. As a result of this controversy, the *Corcoran* found it difficult

[167] Roberts, '900 Protest Corcoran Cancellation'.
[168] The acronym *WASP* was believed to have first been used in the 1960s. It refers to White, American Protestant upper classes who were deemed to be 'the most powerful group in society'. 'WASP', *Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd edn (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 2003.
[169] Jonathan Jones, 'Arguing over art is right but trying to ban it is the work of fascists', *The Guardian,* (7 December 2017), last accessed 2 November 2018, <www.theguardian.com>.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Roberts, '900 Protest Corcoran Cancellation'.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Amy Argetsinger, 'Here's what the dazzling 1989 Robert Mapplethorpe protest at the Corcoran looked like', *The Washington Post,* (5 April 2016), last accessed 15 October 2019, <www.washingtonpost.com>.

to regain its reputation and to secure funding, which eventually led to its closure in 2014. By contrast, Mapplethorpe's works increased in value over the following years. On 7 October 2015, *Man in Polyester Suit,* (1980) (Fig. 24) which was included in *A Perfect Moment,* was sold at auction by *Sotheby's* New York for $478,000, significantly above the Lot estimate of $250,000 to $350,000.[174]

It is important to understand that some art is deliberately created with the specific intention of unsettling the viewer, and we may agree with Jonathan Jones' assertion that 'Creativity has never been morally pure.'[175] In particular, *Sensation* held at the *Royal Academy of Art (RA),* in London, (18 September to 28 December 1997), caused a media frenzy and incited outrage in many of the visiting public, who were 'duly shocked to visit galleries and be shown Myra Hindley, unmade beds and toy Nazis.'[176] The exhibition featured Tracey Emin's *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963 – 1995,* (1995) (Fig. 25a and 25b), which consisted of a tent appliquéd with the names of the 102 people the artist had slept with prior to its creation. The work was considered controversial because of its sexual subject matter, but Emin argued that it was intended to be more inclusive than that, claiming the names referred to 'some I'd had a shag with in bed or against a wall. Some I had just slept with, like my grandma.'[177] The tent also featured the names of 'family, friends, drinking partners, lovers' and perhaps most shockingly, 'two numbered fetuses.'[178] Consequently, it is reductive to consider the work to be simply about sexuality when it is equally

[174] 'E-catalogue for Photographs auction sale: 7 October 2015, 10:00AM EDT', *Sotheby's New York*, Lot 144, 'Man in Polyester Suit', last accessed 31 May 2020, <www.sothebys.com>.
[175] Jonathan Jones, 'Why have mildly erotic nymphs been removed from a Manchester gallery? Is Picasso next?', *The Guardian,* (31 January 2018), last accessed 3 November 2018, <www.theguardian.com>.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Caroline Elbaor, 'The 10 Most Controversial Art Projects of the Last Century', *artnet news,* (27 July 2016), last accessed 29 April 2020, <https://news.artnet.com>.
[178] Balasz Takac, 'Inside That Tracey Emin Tent of Everyone She Ever Slept With', *Widewalls,* (21 January 2020), last accessed 29 April 2020, <www.widewalls.ch>.

concerned with all forms of intimacy and human relationships in a wider sense. Although the exhibition intended to grab viewers' attention by utilising a shock factor, the works on display at *Sensation* explored many traditional themes of art such as identity and death.

Sensation also dealt with subject matter which previously might never have been addressed or shown on such a significant stage, including realistic depictions of the female nude. For example, Jenny Saville's self-portrait *Propped*, (1992) (Fig. 26), made an incredible impact in the gallery space, where visitors were confronted by a vast canvas displaying the nude female body in a dogmatically new way. No longer presented as desirable, objectified or pretty according to traditional conventions, Saville's nude is unappealing in its fleshiness but also through its abject nature, beautiful. Scribbled across the work backwards (perhaps aimed for the subject rather than the gallery viewer) is a paraphrased section of an essay by the feminist writer Luce Irigaray, which reads:

> If we continue to speak in this sameness – speak as men have spoken for centuries, we will fail each other. Again, words will pass through our bodies, above our heads – disappear, make us disappear

The implication here being that women should be presented in an honest way, utilising a new language, and not one predicated on ideas of femininity perpetuated and controlled by men. The museums and galleries which displayed this exhibition, were perhaps for the first time, giving the public a female nude released from the male gaze and phallocentric control, that through its vastness and heavy-handed brushstrokes, both demanded attention and inverted expectation.

Significantly, despite initial controversy, *Sensation* was also popular. During its run in London, 284,734 visitors attended the exhibition. In addition, a *Mori* survey

commissioned by the *RA* indicated 'that 33 per cent of those who visited said they enjoyed the exhibition much more than they thought they would and 91 per cent felt the RA should show art even if it shocked or caused offence.'[179] Clearly, there is a difference between provocative or controversial art, and art that a given society at a given time may consider morally depraved or damaging in any way. Art should not be censored simply because it is shocking, problematic or causes offence, otherwise it would be reduced to nothing more than a purely decorative form. However, awareness and sensitivity should be shown to those who are hurt or affected by it, which will in turn, impact on how it is presented. It is important for museums and galleries to remember their social responsibility in this regard, despite any attendant difficulties, and especially as the UK *MA's* Code of Ethics section on public engagement and public benefit states that everyone should be treated 'equally, with honesty and respect.'[180]

It is difficult to argue the case for censoring problematic art which was produced in the past, when cultural mores and attitudes were different. If we were to get rid of Balthus' *Thérèse Dreaming* (Fig. 20), for example, it 'would open the floodgates to further censorship.'[181] This is because, by extension, all paintings portraying females in a manner that is unacceptable and offensive to contemporary women would have to be removed from gallery walls around the world. And if we start censoring art by those whom Western culture may consider morally reprehensible at the present time, then where does it end? Picasso treated women in a manner that many would consider unacceptable today, but does this mean his work should be

[179] Louise Jury, 'Royal Academy's "Sensation" proves to be a shockingly good crowd-puller', *The Independent,* (30 December 1997), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.independent.co.uk>.
[180] 'Code of Ethics for Museums', *Museums Association.*
[181] Jones, 'Arguing over art is right'.

hidden from view? If we remove Picasso from our gallery walls, then by default, Egon Schiele must also be withdrawn, having spent twenty-four days in jail on charges of both kidnapping and statutory rape, and Gauguin, who had three child brides. When Jerry Saltz heard about the request to remove *Thérèse Dreaming* (Fig. 20), he was shocked and argued taking down that particular work would mean that then, 'you pretty much have to remove ALL art from wings of India, Africa, Asia, Oceania, Greece, Rome, Renaissance, Rococo, and Impressionism, German Expressionism, Klimt, Munch, and all Picasso & Matisse. #ArtWorldTaliban' (Instagram, @jerrysaltz, 5 December 2017). If we only display art that meets contemporary standards, then many of our major museums will be left with defunct collections and smaller institutions with little to present at all. This cannot be a positive step; it rids the world of significant art, disorders our understanding of art history and crucially, limits the possibilities for debate. It is important to remember that these artists were of a different time and we must refrain from looking at the past solely through the prism of the present. However, it is essential to discriminate between art that objectifies women and was produced at a time when this was the norm, and art which was created under circumstances which were damaging to the muse or model on which the image is based. In this regard, a painting such as *The Toilet of Venus ('The Rokeby Venus')*, (*c.* 1647 – 1651) (Fig. 27), for example, does not pose the same questions for a curator as any work by Gill or Balthus, where sensitivity must be shown towards those who might be hurt by knowledge of the conditions in which it was created today.

It is important to consider whether there is ever a time or case when censorship could, in fact, be justified. Historically, works of art have been condemned for reasons that at the time many considered to be entirely reasonable. During the Reformation, 'works were destroyed for being Catholic' and 'in Nazi Germany

modernist art was classed as “degenerate” and museums were ordered to take it off view.’ [182] In 2001, the Taliban used dynamite to blow up two statues of Buddha which were carved into a cliff in the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan and most recently, ISIS destroyed Palmyra, tearing down and apart, statues, shrines and manuscripts that were cultural relics of Syria. The question is, ‘Do we really want modern liberalism to ape such illiberal precedents?’[183] To what extent can it ever be justified to remove or destroy works of art that are valuable, not just in terms of money but with regard to what they tell us about art history and the social context in which they were made? Significantly, if we choose to remove and censor artworks, then surely, as a consequence, we are eliminating any opportunity for debate, discussion and learning the works might provoke, when surely the function of galleries and museums is to encourage this. *Manchester Art Gallery* temporarily removed John William Waterhouse’s painting *Hylas and the Nymphs,* (1896) (Fig. 28), on 26 January 2018 in order ‘to prompt conversation’, about what is actually displayed in galleries and why.[184] However, the ensuing debate centred on whether museums should censor works of art on political grounds. Sonia Boyce, who instigated the removal of the work, deliberately wanted to focus attention on the decision making behind what is shown in galleries, and who is in charge of it. However, what followed was a *furore* about censorship itself, much of it directed specifically against Boyce, rather than a consideration of the sexual expression of the nymphs or anything else.

Crucially, artworks not only give a snapshot and an understanding of the artist’s creativity and imagination but also the time and circumstances in which they

[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] ‘Presenting the female body: Challenging a Victorian fantasy: Press release’, *Manchester Art Gallery,* (3 February 2018), last accessed 29 April 2020, <https://manchesterartgallery.org>.

were made. As a result, they may possess both historical as well as artistic value, and this is another argument against censorship. Many deplore the content of Hitler's anti-Semitic speeches today, but they are nevertheless, significant historical sources and art operates in the same way. We also need to appreciate that art such as Picasso's serves as a great source material for other artists, and many have questioned whether Henri Matisse would have been the same 'without Gauguin's revolutionary use of undiluted color'.[185] Moreover, if we dismiss works by these men, unbridgeable gaps would remain, but by retaining and embedding them with greater context, we can create a larger and more significant conversation around the issues involved. As the *National Coalition Against Censorship* opined, acting in this way can help 'offer insights into difficult realities and, as such, merits vigorous defense.'[186] As humans, we all have the capacity for both light and dark, good and evil, and essentially that is what defines humanity. Awareness of this allows us to address difficult contexts and encourages us to question what we are prepared to overlook in the power of creation.

Whilst arguments against censorship are convincing, *The Observer* journalist Rachel Cooke has claimed that contentious works of art are 'increasingly […] being pulled from public view at the last minute, either because of advice from the police, who may demand huge sums from galleries in order to guarantee the public's safety (£36,000 was one figure mentioned to me), or because the institution involved simply ran scared of responses to it.'[187] It may often be easier to decide not to exhibit an artwork or object rather than tell its full story, but galleries have a moral duty, particularly in the current political climate, to tackle and expose these hidden histories

[185] Cody Delistraty, 'The Problem With Chuck Close', *The New York Times,* (30 January 2018), last accessed 20 April 2018, <www.nytimes.com>.
[186] 'NCAC Applauds the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Refusal to Remove Painting', *National Coalition Against Censorship,* (4 December 2017), last accessed 25 November 2019, <https://ncac.org>.
[187] Cooke, 'Eric Gill'.

and to be more honest and respectful of content. Maggie Mustard argues that this is the most sensible approach because 'the worst thing a museum can do is plug its ears and hope it'll go away'.[188] Mustard co-curated the exhibition *The Incomplete Araki: Sex, Life and Death in the Works of Nobuyoshi Araki*, (8 February to 3 September 2018) at the *Museum of Sex* in New York. This was a solo exhibition exploring the Japanese photographer's body of work, which often depicts women in a Japanese bondage form known as *kinbaku-bi*, loosely translated as 'the beauty of tight binding'.[189] One image exemplifying this style is plate 68 from *Marvelous Tales of Black Ink (Bokuju Kitan)*, (2007) (Fig. 29), in which the model is depicted in bindings and suspended from above with her legs aesthetically splayed, whilst the photographer himself appears in the bottom right-hand corner. Both Araki's gaze and that of the model are focused on the viewer, in a manner which suggests they are questioning the intrusion into this intimate scene.

The exhibition explained how Araki's work has been, and continues to be, informed by Japan's history surrounding sexuality, and how sexuality has been portrayed in Japanese art. It is certainly possible to see a relationship between Araki's works and certain *ukiyo-e* shunga prints by artists such as Kitagawa Utamaro and Katsushika Hokusai. The bondage of plate 68 in Araki's *Marvelous Tales of Black Ink* is reminiscent of Hokusai's *The Dream of a Fisherman's Wife,* (1814) (Fig. 30), where a woman appears in ecstatic reverie whilst two octopuses drape and entwine her body with their tentacles, mimicking the patterns and formations that ropes might employ in *kinbaku*. However, whilst preparing for the Araki exhibition, the curatorial team learnt

[188] Jillian Steinhauer, 'Museums too: what should institutions do when artists are accused of abuse?', *The Art Newspaper,* (7 June 2018), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.theartnewspaper.com>.
[189] Joseph Delaney, 'Tracing the roots of Araki's obsession with the erotic image', *Dazed Digital,* (8 February 2018), last accessed 30 September 2019, <www.dazeddigital.com>.

that an allegation of sexual misconduct had been made against the artist by one of his previous models, which Mustard decided to address directly by contacting the woman and ensuring that her accusation was included in the wall text.[190] At a later date, Araki's most famous muse Kaori, told the museum that 'the photographer had emotionally bullied her for over a decade'.[191] Consequently, the curators installed an interactive tablet with Kaori's blog post about the issue, available to view in both Japanese and English (Appendix III), so that her story was also included in the show. Furthermore, the Museum incorporated new wall narrative in order to explain why these decisions had been made, as Mustard believed the public had a right to know about the relevant and crucial conversations that had taken place which had contributed to them.[192] Such critical consideration about precisely what should be displayed and how it should be presented is important because it fosters a pro-active approach to curatorial decision making. This is because it challenges both the curator and visiting public to rely less on past precedent and to think differently.

Certainly, through education and discussion, controversial topics can be addressed in a way that encourages society to learn from mistakes or regretful behaviours of the past and amend them going forwards. For example, the USA Civil War photographer Alexander Gardner spoke of his bloody images depicting wounded and slaughtered soldiers such as those taken in the aftermath of the Battle of Antietam, (1862), including *Antietam, Md. Bodies of Confederate dead gathered for burial* and *Ditch on right wing, where a large number of rebels were killed at the Battle of Antietam,* (Figs., 31a and 31b) as having a political message. He stated, 'Here are the

[190] Steinhauer, 'Museums too'.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.

dreadful details! Let them aid in preventing such another calamity from falling upon the nation.'[193] Both Gardner's works and his accompanying words are 'like the command from survivors and witnesses of so many tragedies to "never forget!"' and are 'framed by ethics, education, and hope', calling for 'future generations to remember in order to improve society.'[194] This is particularly significant considering that these images are believed to be the first recorded photographs of casualties of war. By illustrating something that is so dreadful, Gardner hopes to prevent it ever happening again.

If by including a variety of cultural perspectives on challenging subjects, a museum or gallery creates controversy, then this should be considered a success in the institution's ability to open up lines of communication. We can still learn something from viewing and considering work by artists who have committed immoral or criminal acts, because it allows us to 'grapple with grander questions that go beyond the artist himself.'[195] The place wherein 'these questions might be dealt with, in which the viewer gets to contend with the many facets of the art and the artist, is in these very institutions.'[196] As Nathaniel Hepburn believes, museums and galleries have a societal and moral duty to address contentious and problematic issues because they offer a specific and safe 'place where society can think' and irrefutably, the 'public benefit in organisations like ours not turning a blind eye to abuse.'[197] Moreover, if work is censored, then the institution is essentially being reactive rather than proactive and is attacking in order to protect itself from any controversy. This is counterproductive because again, open and honest conversation and debate around difficult histories

[193] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, p. 27.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Delistraty, 'The Problem With Chuck Close'.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Cooke, 'Eric Gill'.

and contexts is stifled, which means that the issues they raise are not confronted and addressed.

Ultimately, censorship can operate in a variety of ways, manifesting in different forms within the museum or gallery context. These range 'from overt, restrictive government actions to block the exhibition of certain images or ideas, to the most subtle and covert forms of manipulation, alteration or self-editing.'[198] However, regardless of the type of censorship, it is often the case that whatever has been pulled from view or banished to the depths of a museum's archives and hidden away, 'generally survives the incident and reappears years (or even generations) later', and on discovery, is used and exposed 'to tell a different story'.[199] This 'different story' revolves around the morals and standards of the time in which it was rediscovered and demonstrates 'the capacity of museums to protect what is controversial so that it can be reassessed with the wisdom of hindsight.'[200] This is particularly relevant post #MeToo. Our knowledge and appreciation of art has always been 'shaped by the very culture that kept it as the plaything for rich, straight, white men.'[201] Therefore, to produce another exhibition of work by an artist accused of sexual misconduct would, in the current climate, seem both insensitive and inappropriate. However, choosing not to display work by artists who have been accused of sexual harassment or abuse does not always constitute an act of censorship, nor is it always 'an attack on the freedom of art and artists'.[202] Choices may sometimes be made that these works should be exhibited in the future rather than at the present moment, and at a time

[198] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 408.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ashleigh Kane, Chris Hayes, and Elise Bell, 'What do we do with art made by bad people?', *Dazed Digital,* (30 January 2018), last accessed 9 April 2018, <www.dazeddigital.com>.
[202] Ibid.

when the context is right, that is, when a museum can address related issues in an open and appropriate manner, and also where the decision has been motivated by reason rather than fear. Presenting them in a considered time and context will allow viewers to gain the utmost meaning and power from artworks. Most significantly, acting in this way affords museums the opportunity to be socially responsible, which is particularly relevant in the present climate where there exists a culture of urgency to address issues of sexual abuse directly.

Robert Janes has argued that museums must 'take seriously their responsibility towards global issues, including human rights'.[203] In fact, he clarifies that 'social responsibility' has been at the heart of 'the museum's agenda since the first great public museums were born in the early years of the French Revolution.'[204] With 'social responsibility' arguably informing 'many of the innovative museological thinkers of the twentieth century, from John Cotton Dana to Marshall McLuhan', museums and galleries must continue adapting to face the challenges of problematic contexts by facilitating structured spaces that engage different contemporary communities and modes of thinking, and which in turn allow for a plurality of perspectives and responses.[205] Museums should not shy away from addressing the contentious issues associated with exhibiting art by those accused of sexual misconduct. Rather, by carefully choosing what to display, and then how and when to display it, they will be able to deal with the problematic context directly in a manner that benefits society as a whole.

[203] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 276.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.

II

Radical Transparency

Examining the importance of an honest textual environment

The museum has to function as an institution for the prevention and cure of blindness in order to make works work. And making works work is the museum's major mission.[206]

~ Nelson Goodman

An unmade bed, (1998) (Fig. 32), a shiny balloon sculpture of a dog, (1994 – 2000) (Fig. 33) and a sculpture of a head made from frozen blood, (1991 – present) (Fig. 34), are just some examples of contemporary exhibits which demonstrate that art retains its ability to shock, and that 'art museums can evoke confusion and disorientation', in the mind of a visitor to the gallery space.[207] When confronted by any artwork, shocking or otherwise, after an initial perusal and an immediate emotional response to the piece, visitors will normally operate in either of two ways. Some challenge themselves to work out what the piece is really about, adopting a corporeal and individual response after engaging in 'a test of critical thinking'.[208] Others, especially if they are not as confident or are somewhat inexperienced in this particular type of art or cultural form, will seek out guidance from any accompanying literature or other information system, which in the first instance, 'is often a blunt text on a label', fixed on the gallery wall.[209] In either case, the textual environment of an exhibition is extremely significant to gallery

[206] Nelson Goodman, *Of Mind and Other Matters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 179.
[207] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 298.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.

attendees, as most visitors will read accompanying wall text anyway, even if they have tried to analyse the work for themselves initially.

A report conducted by the Interpretation team at the *Tate Modern*, which evaluated the textual material used in the Mark Rothko exhibition, *ROTHKO,* (26 September 2008 to 1 February 2009), highlights the crucial role these wall texts play. A questionnaire completed by fifty randomly-selected visitors prior to attending the exhibition, revealed that '43 out of 50 (86 per cent) were planning to read the wall texts', alongside '31 out of 50 (61 [*sic*] per cent)' who planned to read the accompanying booklet, and '16 out of 50 (32 per cent)' planning to use the multimedia guide.[210] This suggests that when seeking information to enhance their visit to a gallery and their understanding of any individual work, most visitors rely on wall texts rather than other media. This predilection for gallery labels 'was to some degree supported by […] observation findings: on entering the exhibition 77 per cent of visitors read the introductory text, with 70 per cent doing this before engaging with anything else'.[211] Obviously, whilst such statistics may differ from one institution to another, or vary depending on the exhibitions and artists on show, these findings certainly underline the generic importance of the textual environment in museums and galleries. And if we allow that they are popular with visitors, then by extension we might assume that this is because, on the whole, gallery labels help the viewer gain a deeper understanding of an exhibit on display. Consequently, their importance cannot be undervalued.

[210] Renate Meijer, and Minnie Scott, 'Tools to Understand: An Evaluation of the Interpretation Material used in Tate Modern's Rothko Exhibition', *Tate Papers,* 11 (2009).
[211] Ibid.

It is the curator's responsibility to include wall text that will facilitate understanding for the visitor, but also 'transmit insights, inspire interest, and to point to the fact that choices have been made.'[212] Consequently, if these texts are not considered carefully and purposefully employed, then it is better that they are not used at all. This is because in practice, not all wall text is helpful, and gallery labels can often fall short in offering a true reflection of the context in which a piece was created, or in creating either awareness or a denial of other agencies that might be at work in facilitating an appreciation of the form. Weaker examples of wall texts are an issue when they act 'as if a mallet has pounded flat the ideas behind the art or released a smoke bomb of complex notions that hover in a foggy haze.'[213] In the latter case, labels will often hyperbolise about the work on display or the artist who created it in a manner that emphasises the curator's superior knowledge, employing what Christian Demand refers to as a 'mass of linguistic strutting'.[214] As such, they are rendered inaccessible to the viewer and do little more than preserve curatorial authority. An example of this is summarised in the introductory text created for the *56th Venice Biennale*, (9 May to 22 November 2015), which read as follows:

> Rather than one overarching theme that gathers and encapsulates diverse forms and practices into one unified field of vision, All the World's Futures is informed by a layer of intersecting filters, namely Garden of Disorder, Liveness, On Epic Duration and Reading Capital. These filters in their iterative choreography across the exhibition represent a

[212] Ingrid Schaffner, 'Wall Text' in Paula Marincola, ed., *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* (Philadelphia, PA: The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2015), p. 156.
[213] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 298.
[214] Christian Demand, 'Inflated Phrases', *Sign and Sight,* (28 May 2008), last accessed 17 July 2020, <www.signandsight.com>.

> constellation of parameters that circumscribe multiple ideas, which are touched upon to both imagine and realise a diversity of practices.[215]

The language used here is distinctly isolating. It is difficult to imagine it appealing to a general audience and particularly to someone who knows significantly less about the subject than the person who wrote the text. As such, it exists more for the curator than for viewer. Gallery texts similar to this example often utilise 'an uncertain kind of scholarly museum language, characterised by such phrases as "thought to have been" or "there is evidence to suggest" or "it is likely that," which serves to detach the authorial voice but also distances the reader from narrative engagement.'[216] In reality, these texts fail to provide viewers with the same knowledge curators possess. They are too verbose to be useful to the majority of visitors, and obfuscate rather than clarify ideas.

Conversely, some labels and *in-situ* texts within museums and galleries are too blunt and offer very limited explanations regarding when a work was completed, its artist, and the media employed in its construction. These labels, known as tombstones, 'leave many ideas bruised or ignored, neglected or maligned.'[217] Thus, despite it being the means by which most visitors to a gallery gain understanding of an exhibit, the real agency of a wall text becomes significantly reduced. If not considered more seriously and continuously revaluated in new contexts, then such wall texts may 'become, like wallpaper, something of a dreary necessity, taken for granted even by the curators that write them.'[218] This leads to museums and galleries proliferating what Pamela Z. McClusky refers to as 'innocuous label domination

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[215] Susan Jones, 'Galleries: let's ditch the artspeak and artybollocks', *The Guardian,* (30 July 2015), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[216] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 247.
[217] Ibid., p. 298.
[218] Schaffner, 'Wall Text', p. 156.

syndrome' (ILDS) whereby such texts become useless in any real sense.[219] This is damaging in a variety of ways but particularly impacts on visitor experience because it disrespects the viewer and may ultimately lead to them regarding the exhibited works less favourably.

ILDS, or a bad textual environment, may develop for a variety of reasons, but most likely it is the direct result of museums and galleries adhering to older habits and operating at a distance from the present, encouraging 'the borders of accountability' to 'appear increasingly blurred'.[220] Again, this recalls Anthony Schrag's *Push* (Fig. 1) and the artist's assertion that, in terms of our museums and galleries, we are currently in a period of 'alienation from an oppressive environment', chained to the model of the past, which is as if 'an ethical as well as a legal statute of limitations has become embedded in attitudes to cultural equity.'[221] A bad textual environment can also develop when museums and galleries are led by those who are afraid of the price they might pay for being honest about the works in their collections, or of what would happen if they attempted to create 'dynamic and participatory new museum models defined by divergent voices.'[222] Understandably, they fear public funding cuts or the loss of significant financial input from stakeholders, the ramifications of which could be damaging. They also fear potential boycotting and injury to their reputation. All of this directly impacts on decisions arts institutions make about the information they share with visitors, and is a particular issue with regard to problematic histories or contexts.

The labelling for *Jeff Koons: A Retrospective* at the *Whitney Museum of American Art* in New York, (27 June to 19 October 2014), offers an example of ILDS.

[219] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 299.
[220] Ibid., p. 241.
[221] Ibid., p. 3 and p. 241.
[222] Ibid., p. 3.

The exhibition elicited anger from many, given the overtly sexualised nature of some of Koons' work, but also regarding the accompanying textual material. Peter Plagens did not even think it was worth reading, stating, 'You can give the Whitney Museum's Jeff Koons retrospective due diligence in about 35 minutes.'[223] That is, 'without pausing for the wall texts and explanatory labels (which read like advertising copy),' as he believed this literature offered nothing that would in any way benefit the viewer, only those involved with marketing Koons' works.[224] Similarly, Eric Gibson believed that, 'the labels in the Koons show were a kind of disinformation campaign on the part of…the museum'.[225] In his view, the curators were 'telling you what you're supposed to be seeing […] a kind of mind control, almost' whilst glossing over issues he considered should have been addressed.[226] Specifically, Gibson referred to the *Made in Heaven* series which mostly featured Koons and his then-partner, Italian porn star Ilona Staller engaging in sexual activities. These works, including *Silver Shoes* (1990) (Fig. 35) and *Violet-Ice (Kama Sutra)* (1991) (Fig. 36), would be considered pornographic by many, but accompanying wall text asserted that they were not, and should instead be seen as 'a vulnerable form of self-portraiture' without any consideration or exploration as to why they might be perceived differently.[227] The textual material accompanying Koons' *Antiquity 3* (2009 – 2011) (Fig. 37), establishes that 'All of the source images are themselves representations of other things'.[228] Yet whilst the text clarifies what most of these representations are - 'a photograph of an

[223] Peter Plagens, 'Confectionary Overload', *The Wall Street Journal,* (21 July 2014), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.wsj.com>.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ann Landi, 'Wall Talk: Do We Even Need Museum Wall Labels?', *ARTnews,* (21 December 2015), last accessed 15 October 2019, <www.artnews.com>.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] 'Jeff Koons: A Retrospective, June 27 – Oct 19, 2014: Antiquity: Antiquity 3, 2009-11', *Whitney Museum of American Art,* last accessed 17 March 2020, <https://whitney.org>.

actress playing someone else, a toy in the shape of a dolphin […] statues in the guise of women serving as goddesses' – it neglects to note that the 'marker drawing of a sailboat', looks remarkably like Staller's genitals in *Silver Shoes* (Fig. 35).[229] Similarly, Paula Marincola notes that when the *Institute of Contemporary Art* at the *University of Pennsylvania*, exhibited *Andres Serrano: Works 1983 – 1993*, (12 November 1994 to 15 January 1995), gallery labelling compared one 'Andres Serrano photograph to an abstract expressionist painting, while delicately failing to mention that the photo was a picture of cum', *Untitled VII (Ejaculate in Trajectory)*, (1989) (Fig. 38).[230] In these two instances, both galleries neglected to tell the whole truth to the visitor, perhaps concerned over their sensibilities. Given that most viewers would clearly be able to decipher the duality of the subject matter in both cases for themselves, it seems patronising to describe it for them in such a disingenuous way.

The examples of wall texts from the Koons retrospective demonstrate that ILDS continues and dishonesty is still prevalent in many galleries. This is particularly noticeable 'in galleries without voices, music and an alternative placement of objects', where the institution has dogmatically adhered to its initial model, unaware of the time or context in which it is operating.[231] Writing for *The Guardian,* Susan Jones argued that in order 'to attract wider and more diverse audiences, the verbosity' and indeed the dishonesty, must be banished.[232] Moving forward, museums and galleries must seek to assume a space that aims to 'uniquely occupy a contemporary, historic and future place'.[233] That means acknowledging the past whilst respecting the present context, particularly with regard to labelling exhibits. And, where the context is difficult

[229] Ibid.
[230] Schaffner, 'Wall Text', p. 165.
[231] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 312.
[232] S. Jones, 'Galleries: let's ditch the artspeak'.
[233] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 241.

or problematic, it behoves curators to furnish visitors with information that facilitates a deeper understanding of such works. As Julia Rose has said,

> In the wake of devastating global wars that demonstrated no nation was able to make an unsullied claim to being "civilized," in the wake of international freedom movements that cast a brilliant but unforgiving light on brutalizing representatives of the state, and in the wake of radical transformations of how we interact with technology and thus each other, we find ourselves in a new moment in which we are wrestling with our pasts, our ethics, and our obligations to share our most painful stories with our present and future.[234]

Rose elaborates by saying that whilst the interpretation of difficult histories and problematic context is undeniably challenging, our nature as humans is to be 'curious, […] hungry to better understand the human condition through the process of peeling away at the storied layers'.[235] These 'storied layers, which are filled with meaning […] support how each of us has come to understand the present' and it is through being aware of many narratives that the viewer discovers what they understand as real meaning.[236] The challenge for those working in museums 'is to relinquish the comfort of old certainties and embrace the richer, more egalitarian territory of productive confusion, the very antithesis of the taxonomies of knowledge and hierarchies of authority that have been the cornerstones of the Western museum for so long.'[237] This view is corroborated by Nelson Goodman who believes that a 'museum has to function as an institution for the prevention and cure of blindness in order to make works work. And making works work is the museum's major mission.'[238] By detailing all that is known surrounding a work or object – and refusing to neglect particular voices or

[234] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*, p. ix.
[235] Ibid., p. xiv.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 252.
[238] Goodman, *Of Mind and Other Matters*, p. 179.

stories – more is revealed, which leaves the viewer with all the information necessary to craft their own decision and response to an artwork. This approach makes 'works work' as a result of 'stimulating inquisitive looking, sharpening perception, raising visual intelligence, widening perspectives, bringing out new connections and contrasts, and marking off neglected significant kinds'.[239] As a result, the works can become involved in changing any individual's experience and views, which in turn can effect real change in society.

In the case of all problematic histories, but particularly in the wake of #MeToo, with its revelatory testimonies regarding sexual harassment and abuse, we must consider whether some institutions are making best use of the information they have about certain artworks and artists in their collections. In particular, are they withholding or obscuring significant context relating to an artist's biography and personal behaviour, or any other relevant information about an exhibited work? By extension, we must also consider if there are ever circumstances when it is acceptable to do this, and whether art can be considered purely in the domain of 'art for art's sake', fundamentally separate from its maker.[240] Janet Marstine argues that in order to eradicate the need for this type of questioning, and to achieve a 'socially responsible museum', then a 'new museum ethics' must be utilised, which has a prevalent focus on 'radical transparency'.[241] Marstine sees 'radical transparency' as 'a liberatory antidote to the assumed alignments and readability of knowledge' and whilst being descriptive, it also encourages the analysis of 'behavior and considers its significance', operating as 'a mode of communication that admits accountability – acknowledgement

[239] Ibid., pp. 179-180.
[240] The phrase 'l'art pour l'art' first emerged in nineteenth-century France. Théophile Gautier defined it in English as 'art for art's sake' meaning that art's purpose is singularly concerned with beauty and aesthetics, detached from everything else.
[241] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 10.

and assumption of responsibility for actions.'[242] This approach considers all the ethical implications involved in displaying a work, and assumes responsibility for presenting its full context. For example, a transparent wall text might simply inform the viewer that a work is of unknown provenance, whereas a radically transparent text would consider the ethics behind displaying works where little is known about their background or origin.[243]

The *Zeppelin Museum* in Friedrichshafen, Germany, is an example of an institution that is engaging meaningfully with radical transparency. From 1933 to 1945, but particularly during World War II, the Nazi Party either forced museums and galleries around Europe to sell them a vast number of artworks, or deliberately stole them. Jewish collectors were also put under pressure to release valuable works. The number of looted paintings over this period is estimated at 650,000, which would constitute 'a fifth of all paintings in Europe at the time.'[244] It was as late as 1998 that an international set of principles was created to deal with this issue. Now, viewers are likely to be told more clearly about a work's provenance in this regard. Using funds made available through the *German Lost Art Foundation,* as part of a programme of restitution, the *Zeppelin Museum* began investigating works in its own collection.[245] This resulted in the exhibition, *The Obligation of Ownership: An Art Collection Under Scrutiny,* (4 May 2018 to 6 January 2020) where works were colour-coded (Fig. 39) to indicate the likelihood of them having been stolen under the Nazi regime. Works were

[242] Ibid., p. 14.
[243] Ibid.
[244] J. T. J., 'A German museum puts the questionable provenance of its art on display', *The Economist,* (25 May 2018), last accessed 2 May 2020, <www.economist.com>.
[245] The *German Lost Art Foundation* was established on 1 January 2015 in order to address issues in relation to items 'unlawfully seized', particularly by the National Socialists, which are now situated in the collections of many museums and galleries both in Germany and internationally. 'The Foundation: Responsibilities and specific tasks of the German Lost Art Foundation', *German Lost Art Foundation,* last accessed 7 June 2020, <www.kulturgutverluste.de>.

attributed either a green, yellow, orange or red sticker in order to signpost this to the gallery visitor, with red indicating the greatest likelihood of a work being looted and green the least.

The *Worcester Art Museum* in Massachusetts has also realised the need to review their wall texts and gallery labelling in order to address problematic histories and in so doing, become radically transparent. In June 2018, it created new labels for paintings in the early American portraits gallery, in order to recognise and clearly identify individuals who had benefited from the slave trade. A line from the Museum's new introductory label to this gallery reads, 'These paintings depict the sitters as they wish to be seen […] Yet a great deal of information is effaced in these works, including the sitters' reliance on chattel slavery'.[246] Nevertheless, whilst the *Worcester Art Museum* and the *Zeppelin Museum* have been honest and forthcoming in exposing difficult context regarding art from the past, and have made efforts at restitution, other museums and galleries continue to hide, or intentionally keep undisclosed, problematic information regarding their collections. When it concerns the abuse of women, some arts institutions elect 'to look the other way, to choose the expedient over principle', rather than address the contentious issues involved directly.[247]

Following #MeToo, the decision to withhold sensitive or contentious information has the potential to create a raft of problems, such as those experienced by the *Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft* in Sussex, in relation to the works of Eric Gill. When Nathaniel Hepburn arrived at the *Ditchling Museum* in 2014, he named six

[246] 'Do Museum Wall Labels Hide Artists' Misogyny? Gauguin and Picasso Protested at Met', *Frieze,* (8 November 2018), last accessed 25 November 2019, <https://frieze.com>.
[247] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 287.

issues which he believed had arisen as a direct result of the museum failing to be informative and honest about Gill's works and the artist himself. The six factors were:

- *Inconsistency*. Whilst some members of staff were comfortable with talking about Gill's 'disturbing behaviour,' others found it troublesome.[248]
- *Inappropriateness.* A text panel which was on display described Gill as 'controversial'. This language would be considered inappropriate by many, given Gill's biography and the fact that there can be no 'moral ambiguity' regarding the sexual abuse of children.[249]
- *Unpreparedness*. The museum did not have an answer if a visitor, 'the media or any other organisation were to question its moral or ethical standpoint regarding Gill.'[250]
- *Self-censorship*. There were objects in the collection that were deliberately and intentionally left off show, as 'there was not necessary language, or confidence, to engage with the issues which would emerge.'[251]
- *Failing in Duty*. The Museum did not 'provide proper contextual information about a nude of Petra, or a torso of Elizabeth' and therefore 'risked visitors trust in the museum.' This is because they either 'visited with prior knowledge and felt DMAC was disingenuous; or they enjoyed Gill's work and discovered later about his sexual abuse of his daughters, and then felt misled.'[252]

[248] Julia Farrington, 'Case Study: Eric Gill/The Body', *Index on Censorship,* (15 May 2019), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.indexoncensorship.org>.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.

- *Complicity*. Many members of staff were concerned that their own silence, and that of the museum, could be 'taken as complicity' or understood as tacit acceptance.[253]

Whilst the issues at *Ditchling* clarify why any museum might fail to be radically transparent at the present time, we must consider how such a situation developed in the first instance, and why institutions have been reluctant to address the mistreatment of women by male artists directly.

Withholding information relating to the mistreatment of women has arisen due to a number of factors, but primarily as a consequence of how women have been perceived historically in the context of Western civilisation. Since the story of Eve's transgression in the *Bible* in the *Book of Genesis 3: 1-24 KJV*, women have been framed by a culture in which violence and abuse against them has been, to some extent, normalised. Arguably, today's twenty-four hour and widespread availability of pornography portraying women in a narrow and submissive way, is a development from the way in which rape has been portrayed in Western culture over time. Representations of mythological stories involving violence against women have long featured in the collections of major public galleries around the world. Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculpture of *Rape of Proserpina,* (*c.* 1621 – 1622) (Fig. 40a) at the *Galleria Borghese* in Rome, is based on the tale that originally explained our understanding of the seasons. When Proserpina was abducted by Pluto and dragged down to Hades as his sexual slave, her mother Ceres, devasted by grief at her daughter's fate caused a drought that stopped plants growing (winter). Jupiter interceded with Pluto to allow Proserpina to return to her mother for six months every year and plants started to grow

[253] Ibid.

again, (spring and summer). Bernini's sculpture is a remarkable depiction of human forms, and critics have praised the artist's mastery in bringing 'a thumping life force and unprecedented realism' to the subject.[254] However, its accompanying text fails to adequately address that the subject matter is rape, and merely states that this work 'represents the culminating moment of the action.'[255] The sculpture is detailed enough for the viewer to appreciate Pluto's 'muscles so taut in the effort to hold the writhing body'.[256] His hands grapple with 'Proserpina's waist and thigh so forcefully that her skin bulges between the gaps in his fingers like dough' (Fig. 40b).[257] However, no mention is made of Proserpina's physical violation or her emotional exploitation in the Museum's online collection entry. This is difficult to understand when it has been suggested that Bernini actually 'took a risk by accentuating the extreme violence of subject matter that many of his peers regarded as entertainment.'[258]

In the Renaissance and Baroque periods, depictions of what Susan Brownmiller calls 'heroic' rape, like *The Rape of Proserpina* (Fig.40a), were extremely popular with artists and were often commissioned to be given as marital gifts, reminding women of their duty and expected place.[259] Instead of constructing images of rapists as 'ordinary men', artists preferred to base images on the 'very gods and heroes of classical civilization, whose acts of violence they exalt.'[260] Over time, this contributed towards violence against women becoming so normalised in Western art, it was accepted by default and reduced to aesthetic 'entertainment.' As a result,

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[254] Alexxa Gotthardt, 'How Bernini Captured the Power of Human Sexuality in Stone', *Artsy,* (13 April 2017), last accessed 15 October 2019, <www.artsy.net>.
[255] Online collection entry, 'Rape of Proserpina', *Galleria Borghese,* last accessed 2 May 2020, <https://galleriaborghese.benicultarali.it>.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Gotthardt, 'How Bernini Captured the Power of Human Sexuality'.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Diane Wolfthal, *Images of Rape: The 'Heroic' Tradition and its Alternatives* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 7 and p. 12.
[260] Ibid., p. 26.

Proserpina's singular tear traced through the marble remains unnoticed, and unremarked upon, as does so much other violence against women, expressed in all forms of art throughout our galleries.

The rape of Europa is another example of a myth that has embedded itself in Western cultural history, and is interesting to consider at the present time, as the UK charters its way through Brexit and reconsiders its ties to Europe. It tells of a young princess from Lebanon who is abducted by the Greek god Zeus after he appears to her in the form of a bull. Zeus carries her away to Crete where he rapes her, before using her to mother the new nation state, which eventually became Europe. In Titian's representation of this story *The Rape of Europa,* (1562) (Fig. 41), Europa is depicted in a distinctly passive way, reclining with her legs slightly spread upon the bull who is wearing a floral garland. Attention is drawn to this seemingly eroticised image through the 'playful cupids, dynamic composition and rich colors', which distract from the fact that it is a depiction of rape, something that many art historians have also neglected to mention in the past.[261] On closer inspection, Europa's friends can be seen in the left-hand side of the painting, appearing distressed with their arms raised, whilst dark clouds cast a shadow over Europa's face, suggestive of tragedy to come.

A variation of this image features at the centre of the Greek two euro coin (Fig. 42). Mary Beard suggests that the Greeks might have deliberately wanted this because 'the emblem of the myth on the coin amounted to the claim that without Greece there would have been no Europe – that Greece had invented the continent.'[262] However, it is disconcerting that an image associated with rape, or a

[261] Vivien Fryd, 'A Half-Century Before #MeToo, Female Artists Confronted Sexual Assaults Through Their Work', *HuffPost,* (26 March 2019), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.huffpost.com>.
[262] 'A Point of View: The euro's strange stories', *BBC News,* (18 November 2011), last accessed 20 November 2019, <www.bbc.co.uk>.

pictorial euphemism for it, is on currency in use today and employed as a form of exchange. Also troubling is that this same imagery is also used on the residence permit for the UK issued to visa holders (Fig. 43). The permit features both the European stars and the mythical bull, but Europa herself has disappeared, and 'it's just the rapist that now guarantees the foreigner a right to live here.'[263] Clearly, images involving violence against women not only feature in our galleries, but have also seeped into our everyday lives and even into the money in our pockets. Proudly and prominently hung in public institutions, they are seen as important by virtue of their context, and have become aspirational because of their cultural value. In this respect, galleries have normalised subjects and behaviour that some would find unacceptable outside of gallery walls and in everyday life, which may well have influenced their curatorial practices in a negative way over time. By extension, it is not difficult to understand why museums and galleries have failed to address issues relating to violence towards women when the history of art has conspired to render this normal by default.

Some institutions may find it difficult, inconvenient, or a great deal of extra work to address contentious issues and problematic contexts. They may lack the resources, staffing or time to change their approach. However, in today's society, and where galleries are competing with other more immediate forms of media delivery, it is vital that they do so and consider ways in which their information delivery systems can become increasingly 'radically transparent'. This is especially important when contemporary artwork depicting violence towards women is exhibited, or when its creators have been associated with violent, misogynistic behaviours, because galleries and museums run the risk of normalising such violence in a contemporary context, when this is no longer appropriate or in line with current societal expectations.

[263] Ibid.

Recent statistics pertaining to violence against women remain very high. According to the *UN Women* website, in November 2019, it was 'estimated that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner (not including sexual harassment) at some point in their lives.'[264] In addition, 'approximately 15 million adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) worldwide have experienced forced sex (forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts) at some point in their life.'[265] Finally, 'twenty-three per cent of female undergraduate university students reported having experienced sexual assault or sexual misconduct in a survey across 27 universities in the United States in 2015.'[266] Continuing sexual violence towards women across the globe obviously cannot be directly attributed to the display of artworks which either detail violence against women or were created by an artist who was abusive towards women in any way, or at any time. However, the fact that we normalise these works as a society now, and continue to support their relationship to high culture and value, is problematic, and arts institutions should be resisting this or offering a more balanced perspective.

Given that museums and galleries are trusted and respected as centres of knowledge, it is vitally important that they are radically transparent, otherwise they present a version or reality that is skewed. Shielded by the notion that they were perceived as 'sites of celebration and stand as marvels to humankind's ability to innovate and explore,' institutions have often been complicit in protecting the artists within their collections.[267] As a result, their choice of what to include in the textual environment has frequently either omitted the fact, or at least diminished its impact,

[264] 'Facts and figures: Ending violence against women', *UN Women,* (November 2019), last accessed 25 November 2019, <www.unwomen.org>.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History,* p. ix.

that humankind is capable of harm, which is at the core of all problematic histories. Behaviour that is considered immoral, abusive or criminal by today's standards should neither be ignored by museums and galleries, nor completely excused on account of the mores of the age in which an artist operated or an artwork was produced, as to do so would be to ignore a contextual truth. This is a pertinent issue with regard to art history generally, where the myth of creative genius has become associated with the production of great art. Amanda Hess believes that a tendency to behave badly is 'built right into the mythos of the artistic genius – a designation rarely extended to women.'[268] Martin Jay terms this 'the Aesthetic Alibi'.[269] He argues that from the nineteenth century onwards, the artistic 'genius was often construed as unbound by non-aesthetic considerations, cognitive, ethical or whatever' which encouraged artists to believe that the art came above everything and everybody else, and excused any crimes of its creators.[270] Being considered a genius, therefore, afforded some artists licence to behave however they wished.

Of course, to succeed in any field, and the creative arts is no exception, requires great focus and dedication. Such determination could be perceived as a form of selfishness, which requires artists to be self-absorbed 'in a way that's a little inhuman.'[271] This is particularly relevant when we consider the work of Pablo Picasso, who is described by his granddaughter Marina as someone who 'never had time to think about the fate of those close to him. The only thing he cared about was his

[268] Amanda Hess, 'How the Myth of the Artistic Genius Excuses the Abuse of Women', *The New York Times,* (10 November 2017), last accessed 17 October 2018, <www.nytimes.com>.
[269] Martin Jay, 'The Aesthetic Alibi', *The Salmagundi Reader,* in Robert Boyers, and Peggy Boyers, eds., (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), p. 294.
[270] Ibid., p. 298.
[271] Charles McGrath, 'Good Art, Bad People', *The New York Times,* (21 June 2012), last accessed 2 May 2020, <www.nytimes.com>.

painting'.[272] Picasso saw himself as the Minotaur; that half-man, half-bull mythical creature to which maidens had to be sacrificed. As Marina recounts of the women in his life, 'They were his prey. He was the Minotaur. These were bloody, indecent bullfights from which he always emerged the dazzling winner.'[273] Picasso's negative treatment of women is well documented but rarely mentioned in the gallery environment, despite being reflected in much of his work. For example, his painting *Woman with Dagger,* (1931) (Fig. 44), depicts one woman stabbing another through the chest, a stream of blood-red splayed across the bottom corner of the canvas. Whilst no obviously crafted faces or colour palettes are used to indicate a particular woman, it is known that around the time of the painting's creation, Picasso had been having an affair with Marie-Thérèse Walter for five years, about which his wife, Olga Khokhlova, remained unaware. In this image, the artist simultaneously depicts the broken façade of his marriage and surrenders to his painterly desires. Having lost interest in Khokhlova, who no longer inspired his work, he moved on quickly. On the same day he painted *Woman with Dagger*, Picasso also produced a large painting entitled *Woman in a Red Armchair,* (1931) (Fig. 45). Although the subject's face has been replaced with a figurative heart, which meant that Khokhlova could not be sure of Picasso's infidelity as the painting could be of anyone, we see for the first time the lavender hue which Picasso continued to utilise when depicting Walter. Khokhlova only learnt about her rival when Walter turned up at their door and claimed that the child that she was carrying was – 'the work of Picasso.'[274]

These paintings, alongside many others which depict his feelings towards his wife, lovers or mistresses, testify that Picasso crushed the lives of the women in

[272] Marina Picasso, in collaboration with Louis Valentin, *Picasso: My Grandfather,* translated by Catherine Temerson (London, UK: Vintage, 2002), p. 80.
[273] Ibid., p. 81.
[274] Ibid., p. 34.

his life firmly into the weave of his canvas. His works can be read as evidence of his exploitative ways and complex relationships with the opposite sex, where we can see the artist putting his women on a pedestal before knocking them off it, creating a 'series of destructions.'[275] In this sense he is both manipulative and selfish, determined that his art comes first. Notwithstanding the mores of the age in which he was painting, Picasso saw no need for any moral consideration or behaviour check regarding his treatment of women. Some may argue that his behaviour was typical of the time but undoubtedly, shades of the common mnemonic associated with King Henry VIII – *Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*, ring true with Picasso. Out of his six muses, both Marie-Thérèse Walter and Jacqueline Roque took their own lives, and Dora Maar suffered a nervous breakdown. However, we must guard against assuming that Picasso was directly responsible for the fate of his partners, who were similarly creative types, just as it is wrong to assume Ted Hughes was directly responsible for the suicide of his first wife, the poet Sylvia Plath or his partner, Assia Wevill. It may be that Picasso was attracted to women who exhibited some form of instability or vulnerability in their character, which made them more likely to suffer in any relationship with him.

The attendant issue here is that the voices of women involved with Picasso were unfairly quieted. Destitute after her relationship with the artist dissolved, Fernande Olivier began to write a serialised memoir for *Le Soir* but Picasso's lawyers stopped its publication after the sixth edition. When Françoise Gilot left him, Picasso told every art dealer that he knew, not to buy her work. As Amanda Hess has identified, 'Whenever a creative type (usually a man) is accused of mistreating people (usually women), a call arises to prevent those pesky biographical details from sneaking into

[275] Ibid., p. 54.

our assessments of the artist's work', both their 'critical acclaim and economic clout' protecting the alleged perpetrators 'from the consequences of their behavior.'[276] In a conversation with Christian Zervos published in *Cahiers d'Art,* (1935), Pablo Picasso seemingly mocks such a situation when he states,

> We might adopt for the artist the joke about there being nothing more dangerous than implements of war in the hands of generals. In the same way, there is nothing more dangerous than justice in the hands of judges, and a paintbrush in the hands of a painter. Just think of the danger to society! But today we haven't the heart to expel the painters and poets from society because we refuse to admit to ourselves that there is any danger in keeping them in our midst.[277]

Here, Picasso clearly demonstrates his own awareness of the ease with which artists have been protected, when their lives are perceived as separate from the work which they produce. Over time, this has allowed the myth of the creative genius to become conflated with great art and has given rise to a canon that is historically, almost exclusively male. Consequently, it is easy to see why the walls of major galleries are 'often decked by artists whose biographies read like a who's who of misogyny and dangerously predatory (often) male "geniuses".'[278] Yet these biographies very often remain hidden, as if such contextual information threatens an artwork's power or status in some way, or 'the importance and criticality of the work is predicated entirely on its misogyny.'[279]

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[276] Hess, 'How the Myth of the Artistic Genius'.
[277] Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (London, UK: University of California Press, 1968), p. 266.
[278] Kane, Hayes and Bell, 'What do we do with art made by bad people?'.
[279] Shannon Lee, 'The Picasso Problem: Why We Shouldn't Separate the Art From the Artist's Misogyny', *Artspace,* (22 November 2017), last accessed 2 November 2018, <www.artspace.com>.

If we do not have context, then many of Picasso's works, particularly those created in the early 1930s, simply appear as beautiful and languid in both colour and style, depicting the great loves of his life in lyrical expression. For example, *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust,* (1932) (Fig. 46), is another portrayal of Marie-Thérèse Walter, this time depicted as a reclining figure, her arm thrown back over her head in a fashion similar to many other paintings of a sleeping Venus, with limited black lines crafting the sinuous shape of her profile, breast and thigh. However, contextual knowledge reveals that this painting is based on a bondage photograph by Man Ray *White and Black (variant),* (1928 – 1929) (Fig. 47).[280] Knowing this allows us to perceive the bondage-like black stripe that twists and ties the subject's body to the white bust above as strangling and restraining. As the shadow behind the bust alludes to Picasso, we can infer that Walter is being suppressed, metaphorically for the sake of Picasso and his work.[281] Whilst this may be the case, it is also important to remember that works can be read in different ways and that the aesthetic context is obviously as relevant as the artist's biography. At this time, Picasso was deeply interested in the Surrealist movement, for which extreme and sexualised images were a particular point of interest. As Virginie Perdrisot-Cassan has noted, you can witness 'the osmosis between sexuality and creativity' in Picasso's work, with 'the sexual act and the act of creation becoming interchangeable metaphors'.[282] The Minotaur, a favoured theme of Picasso's, was also explored by the Surrealists. Whilst Picasso never joined the Surrealist group, it is important to make these links and consider the wider range of influences on his art. Picasso's focus on sexual imagery is perhaps unlikely to have

[280] John Richardson, and Diana Widmaier Picasso, eds., *L'Amour Fou: Picasso and Marie-Thérèse* (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2011), p. 28.
[281] In 1927, Picasso took a photograph of his shadowed profile in front a drawing from his *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* period. The silhouette subsequently appeared in many of his works.
[282] Lara Marlowe, 'Sex on the canvas: Picasso's most erotic year laid bare', *The Irish Times,* (17 February 2018), last accessed 27 June 2018, <www.irishtimes.com>.

arisen solely from his interest in Surrealism but additional contextual information allows us to consider his painting in a different way. This allows for a multiplicity of responses and imbues the work with greater meaning.

Whilst some labels may ignore or withhold biographical information, other examples show a deliberately positive and uncritical bias towards the artist. The online collection entry for Picasso's *Minotaur Caressing the Hand of a Sleeping Girl with his Face,* (1933) (Fig. 48), comments upon how the Minotaur figure was 'emblematic for Surrealists, who saw it as the personification of forbidden desires' and how 'for Picasso it expressed complex emotions at a time of personal turmoil.'[283] It is protective of Picasso and emphasises that his work 'is mostly lauded as an expression of man's virility, power, and vulnerability, culminating in a guilty appeal to our sympathy' with Picasso being both 'the self-mythologized (and self-aware) monster' the 'victim of both himself and of the women he regarded as "either goddesses or doormats"'.[284] As Picasso famously remarked, 'If all the ways I have been along were marked on a map and joined up with a line, it might represent a Minotaur.'[285] He seemed well aware that through his hundreds of representations of this specific mythological creature, 'monstering himself was both a boast and a confession.'[286] If gallery labels pertaining to his work were to - under Marstine's terms - be 'radically transparent', then from the outset, Picasso's catalogue of Minotaur images would be 'considered a very detailed psychological account of toxic masculinity.' [287] However, whilst this figure of 'monstrous hybridity' appears time and again in Picasso's work and 'speaks to almost

[283] Online collection entry, 'Minotaur Caressing the Hand of a Sleeping Girl with his Face', *MoMA,* last accessed 2 May 2020, <www.moma.org>.
[284] Lee, 'The Picasso Problem'.
[285] Tim Smith-Laing, 'What the Minotaur can tell us about Picasso', *Apollo,* (2 May 2017), last accessed 20 November 2019, <www.apollo-magazine.com>.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Lee, 'The Picasso Problem.'

everything he did, both in and out of the studio', its full context is frequently absent from gallery labels, and so the complex truth is shrouded by the myth of genius.[288] To this day, museums and galleries continue to focus on primarily academic interpretations of Picasso's work, frequently citing his influence on other, mostly male artists. Of course, it is important to acknowledge Picasso's artistic achievements and the significance of his contribution to art history. However, being honest about Picasso's treatment of women, does not necessarily diminish him as an artist, nor threaten the importance and value of the work he produced. It is perfectly possible to appreciate his place in art history and deplore his treatment of women, so there is no reason to deny the biographical context of his work in any accompanying gallery literature.

On occasions, when a detailed biography has been offered as part of a wall text, it often refers to the sitter for the image exhibited, rather than the artist who created it. For example, in 2014, when the Smithsonian's *National Portrait Gallery* was preparing text to accompany an image of the boxer *Floyd Mayweather Jr.*, (2005) (Fig. 49) by Holger Keifel, the Museum decided to note its subject had been 'charged with domestic violence on several occasions' and been given 'punishments ranging from community service to jail time'.[289] Similarly, the online collection entry and gallery label for Chuck Close's portrait of *President Bill Clinton,* (2006) (Fig. 50) reads, 'Clinton's denial of his sexual relationship with a White House intern, while under oath, led to his impeachment, but he was not convicted in the Senate trial.'[290] However, until very recently, nothing was said about the artist himself and the accusations of sexual

[288] Smith-Laing, 'What the Minotaur can tell us'.
[289] Online collection entry, 'Floyd Mayweather Jr., *National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.,* last accessed 23 June 2018, <https://npg.si.edu>.
[290] Online collection entry, 'William J. Clinton', *National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.,* last accessed 23 June 2018, <https://npg.si.edu>.

harassment made against him. Close is a leading exponent of photorealism and this striking image undermines Clement Greenberg's view that 'with an advanced artist […] it's now not possible to make a portrait.'[291] Close certainly challenges the conventions of portraiture here, constructing his subject's features from geometric shapes which create a clearly recognisable image of Clinton, but with the effect that the viewer is looking at the work through a piece of frosted glass. Like Picasso, Close is similarly focused on the centrality of his art, overcoming a variety of disabilities to produce work that remains much sought after, including some compelling images of women.[292] The large format figurative painting *Big Nude,* (1967) (Fig. 51), is another prominent example of the artist's photorealist technique, with each individual mark on the subject's body, including her tan lines, meticulously detailed. However, viewers might be troubled by Close's assertion that, 'No one makes a nude if they're not going to get turned on, and if they claim that they are making it for other reasons it's an absolute lie', especially given the allegations of sexual misconduct made against him in 2017 and 2018.[293] It makes us question his artistic process, which is supported by one model's claim that Close positioned his wheelchair so 'his head was inches away from her vagina,' before stating it 'looks delicious.'[294] Another woman claimed that the artist asked her to masturbate in front of him. Thus far, Close has denied the accusations of sexual harassment, saying during an interview in December 2017, 'If I embarrassed

[291] Wil S. Hylton, 'The Mysterious Metamorphosis of Chuck Close', *The New York Times Magazine,* (13 July 2016), last accessed 27 July 2018, <www.nytimes.com>.
[292] Close has lived with muscle weakness, dyslexia and prosopagnosia (an inability to differentiate between human faces), since childhood. From 1988, when he suffered a spinal stroke, he has also been confined to a wheelchair.
[293] Hailey Gates, 'Nudes: Chuck Close', *the Paris Review,* 207, (2013), last accessed 17 July 2019, <www.theparisreview.org>.
[294] Robin Pogrebin, 'Chuck Close Apologizes After Accusations of Sexual Harassment', *The New York Times,* (20 December 2017), last accessed 3 November 2018, <www.nytimes.com>.

anyone or made them feel uncomfortable, I am truly sorry, I didn't mean to. I acknowledge having a dirty mouth, but we're all adults.'[295]

In 2019, *The Smithsonian* did amend their online listing and gallery labelling, adding 'The National Portrait Gallery acknowledges that, in 2017, several women accused Chuck Close of sexual harassment. The museum recognizes the positive and negative impacts that individuals represented in our collections have had on history.'[296] It has been subsequently amended to include that 'no charges were brought against him.'[297] This 'invigorated' text can therefore be seen as reflecting contemporary societal and ethical concerns regarding the collection and interpretation of art.[298] Such honesty is both fundamental and essential if museums and galleries are to continue as trusted and respected guardians of our cultural heritage, but it also allows the visitor 'freedom to make informed choices in order to experience what they wish and to participate as they'd like.'[299] The modified section of the listing for Close's portrait of President Clinton has now also been placed alongside *Chuck Close Self-Portrait,* (1989) (Fig. 52). Whilst this does not detract from the museum's honest approach, arguably it focuses attention on the subject of the painting once again rather than its artist. It is still the case that whilst context is increasingly provided for controversial subjects in art, less information is given about the artists themselves, which has enabled the work of those known for mistreating women to 'hang in prominent museums without any asterisks.'[300] When museums and curators deliberately withhold information about sexual misconduct then, in effect, they are in control of the

[295] Ibid.
[296] Online collection entry, 'William J. Clinton'.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p.302.
[299] Ibid., p. 14.
[300] Robin Pogrebin, and Jennifer Schuessler, 'Chuck Close Is Accused of Harassment. Should His Artwork Carry an Asterisk?', *The New York Times,* (28 January 2018), last accessed 3 November 2018, <www.nytimes.com>.

narrative about male artists that is presented to their visitors, which ultimately protects those artists.

Whilst the notion or myth of 'genius' has excused the biographies of some men from being fully divulged to the gallery visitor, generally women are not afforded the same treatment. From the Renaissance onwards 'genius' became a gendered term, with women perceived as being artistically inferior to their male peers because of 'a deficiency in *ingenium*: those inherited mental and physical talents that helped an artist conceive and execute his projects.'[301] According to Christine Battersby, women at this time 'were fated to lack wit, judgement and skill simply by virtue of the fact that they were born female.'[302] Thus, 'cultural inferiority became linked with a lack of *genius* as such…a lack of that aspect of maleness that made men divine.'[303] From the Renaissance onwards 'what made a human being great was what made him distinctively *not-female*.'[304] In a similar regard, the concept of 'art for art's sake' is not always applied in the same way to both sexes.[305] Art created by female artists who have suffered abuse or been mistreated by their male counterparts, is thereafter often construed as a direct result of their harrowing experience, and is rarely considered separately from their creator's victim status. Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi is an example of this. Gentileschi was raped by her teacher Agostino Tassi (who had been hired by her father, Orazio Gentileschi), during one of her tutoring sessions. This case went to trial in 1612 and during the process, under the duress of torture, Gentileschi described her suffering,

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[301] Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (London, UK: The Women's Press Ltd, 1994), p. 40.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid.
[305] See footnote 240.

> He then threw me on to the edge of the bed, pushing me with a hand on my breast, and he put a knee between my thighs to prevent me from closing them. Lifting my clothes, he placed a hand with a handkerchief on my mouth to keep me from screaming.[306]

Gentileschi's artistic skill was never fully appreciated in the patriarchal world within which she existed, and some of her first works were even attributed to her father Orazio, despite them bearing Gentileschi's own signature. Over time, interest shifted from the aesthetics of her art and focused more on what had happened to her: she became the 'shamed' artist.[307] Tanya Klowden remarked recently, that if you did not know her works, but had heard the name Artemisia Gentileschi then you would have done so 'as "the Italian painter who was raped."'[308] There is, as Wagatwe Wanjuki elucidated, an 'invisible cost' to being a survivor of sexual violence, whereby you become 'best known for enduring the worst experiences of your life', and this appears to have happened to Gentileschi.[309]

Interpretations of Gentileschi's artwork have often focused on her experience of being the victim of rape. For example, the second version of her masterpiece *Judith Beheading Holofernes,* (*c.* 1620) (Fig. 53a), depicts Judith cutting into the neck of Holofernes with great power, grasping at his hair whilst blood seeps into the vivid white of the bedsheets beneath, her expression clearly conveying both determination and anger to the viewer. Although obviously a depiction of a biblical story, the painting is often presented as the means by which Gentileschi achieved 'the

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[306] Jonathan Jones, 'More savage than Caravaggio: the woman who took revenge in oil', *The Guardian,* (5 October 2016), last accessed 20 October 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Tanya Klowden, '400 years ago, an Italian artist risked everything to publicly accuse her rapist', *Quartz,* (7 October 2018), last accessed 20 November 2019, <https://qz.com>.
[309] Parul Sehgal, 'The Forced Heroism of the "Survivor"', *The New York Times Magazine,* (3 May 2016), last accessed 10 January 2020, <www.nytimes.com>.

revenge she was denied in reality.'[310] Gentileschi herself becomes the image of Judith, which is a simple reading of an image that is arguably much more complex. Michael Palin wrote that 'Gentileschi – "a modern woman in a patriarchal world" channelled her rage into many of her paintings of wronged women such as Cleopatra, Lucretia or Bathsheba' using 'her own suffering and sense of oppression to give her subjects the psychological subtlety denied to many male counterparts.'[311] More recent readings suggest that Gentileschi focused on painting strong women. Certainly, her depiction of them in both *Judith Beheading Holofernes* paintings (*c.* 1612 - 1613 and *c.* 1620) at the *Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte* and *The Uffizi Gallery* (Figs., 53b and 53a) implies that if women work together, then they can be strong enough to 'fight back against a world ruled by men'.[312] However, it is important to remember that this is only one interpretation and neglects that Gentileschi had any kind of life or creativity before the trauma of her rape. It presents a positive appreciation for Gentileschi's skills and her ability to use a negative experience as a force for good in her art, but it still reduces her to always being perceived as a product of that experience. It also fails to acknowledge the importance and impact of patronage and how that would have directly influenced what an artist produced. Recently, this autobiographical view has been challenged by readings of both *Judith* paintings in terms of theological issues relating to the Counter Reformation.[313] Whilst Gentileschi was painting the first *Judith* composition (Fig. 53b), the Catholic Church was trying to regain followers after the establishment and rise of Protestantism. One way they sought to achieve this was by

[310] Stuart Jeffries, 'Michael Palin's Quest for Artemisia review: rape, torture and sexism – all in a day's work for a 17th - century artist', *The Guardian,* (29 December 2015), last accessed 20 November 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Jones, 'More savage than Caravaggio'.
[313] H. Brown, *Heavenly Bodies: Exploring Artemisia Gentileschi's "Judith Slaying Holofernes" in the Context of the Counter-Reformation and Medici Florence,* (2019), unpublished dissertation, Durham University.

using art with a theological theme, as a visual aid to persuade individuals to convert. This image certainly could have been made at the request of her patron, Grand Duke Cosimo II de' Medici, of the ruling Florentine family which produced four Popes, in support and partnership with the Catholic Church.

Interestingly, Gentileschi's story has recently gained new relevance, as it was shared widely on social media when Christine Blasey Ford testified in the Supreme Court of the United States that she believed Brett Kavanaugh (then nominee for Associate Justice of the Supreme Court) had tried to rape her when they were teenagers. It was employed in the presentation of a canon of women who fought back, rather than being destroyed by traumatic events they had endured. Anne Louise Avery directly connected events at the Supreme Court to Gentileschi when tweeting,

> Today is a day for Artemisia Gentileschi & her ever relevant portraits of Judith beheading Holofernes, precisely painted testimony of her fury at a society who [*sic*] would allow Agostina [*sic*] Tassi to skip his punishment for her rape, whilst utterly destroying her reputation. #Kavanaugh. (Twitter, @AnneLouiseAvery, 28 September 2018)

In this way, Gentileschi's reputation is becoming associated with a movement that perceives women as strong survivors rather than passive victims. Ironically however, this once again presents an autobiographical view being favoured, rather than one which focuses on Gentileschi as an artist in her own right.

It has been said that curators often shy away from wall texts, or at least particularly extensive texts, when dealing with controversial material, for fear of not having the appropriate language or knowledge with which to address it. Female artists have begun to respond to this issue directly. Inspired by #MeToo, Michelle Hartney called for 'a re-examination of the information contained within some museum wall

labels to reflect the problematic nature of the artist being featured'.[314] In November 2018, Hartney marched into *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* in New York and without prior permission, positioned her own, detailed wall label, (2018) (Fig. 54) parallel to Paul Gauguin's painting, *Two Tahitian Women,* (1899) (Fig. 55). This painting focuses on the beauty of the native women of Tahiti, and as such is very typical of Gauguin's work from the period in which it was created. In it, the artist has carefully crafted the curves, forms and gestures of the female body to depict the idealised Tahitian woman, as being 'very subtle, very knowing in her naïveté' and at the same time still 'capable of walking around naked without shame.'[315] However, nowhere in the work's online collection entry is it mentioned that Gauguin left behind his wife and five children when he went to live in the Pacific Islands, nor that he had three child brides and passed syphilis onto several adolescents thereafter. If this 'difficult' information is not shared with the viewer, they are left to appreciate Gauguin's work solely on aesthetic grounds, something not always afforded to Gentileschi.

By contrast, Hartney's label (Fig. 54) sought to contextualise Gauguin's work and the first paragraph reads:

> We can no longer worship at the altar of creative genius while ignoring the price all too often paid for that genius. In truth, we should have learned this lesson long ago, but we have a cultural fascination with creative and powerful men who are also "mercurial" or "volatile," with men who behave badly.

Hartney's action forms part of her project, *Separate the Art from the Artist* (2018 – present), which involves placing wall labels next to works by artists such as Picasso,

[314] Nadja Sayej, '"The art world tolerates abuse" – the fight to change museum wall labels', *The Guardian,* (28 November 2018), last accessed 20 November 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[315] Online collection entry, 'Two Tahitian Women', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art,* last accessed 6 October 2020, <www.metmuseum.org>.

Gauguin and Balthus, in order to 'call out sexist, misogynist and abusive artists when museums will not.'[316] These labels offer often previously ignored context, by utilising extracts from Roxane Gay's essay *about the need to separate the art from the artist* and comedian Hannah Gadsby's comedy special *Nanette* (Figs., 54 and 56). Wall labels such as these can encourage museums and galleries to become 'a place to spark debate, rewrite history and acknowledge untold stories' and consequently, it is to be hoped that including controversial information surrounding an artwork or artist will become standard practice.[317] Such an approach still allows for work to be appreciated for its own sake but it facilitates further discussion regarding the context of artistic creation and related problematic issues.

When performance artist Emma Sulkowicz became aware of coverage in the American press implying that some museum directors believed adding contextualising notes to gallery labelling 'would be a concession too far' – even if the note were 'short and anodyne', simply warning a visitor that they might find a particular work offensive - she responded with a performance aimed at calling this attitude into question.[318] Sulkowicz stood in front of various works by Chuck Close at *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Fig. 57a) and at *Second Avenue – 86 Street Station* (Fig. 57b), and also in front of Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, (1907) at *MoMA* (Fig. 57c) wearing black underwear and asterisks placed all over her body, referencing the asterisks that might be used in a contextualising addition to a wall text. Her actions implied that the viewing public should no longer unwittingly engage in voyeurism or that galleries be complicit in protecting artists. Sulkowicz stated that her work stemmed from the concept that 'an asterisk is such a small punctuation mark compared to the magnitude of how sexual

[316] Sayej, '"The art world tolerates abuse"'.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Bellafante, 'We Need to Talk About Balthus'.

abuse affects these women,' and that she was appalled 'that museum directors weren't even interested in speaking about it on those terms'.[319] Her performances were an implicit criticism of the view that having minimal texts allows the viewer to think critically for themself, hopefully inspiring 'the reflective perceptions that come of creative encounters.'[320] It is surely to be hoped that anyone viewing a work of art will reflect upon its meaning and impact, alongside a consideration of the artist's intention and skill, separate from whatever background context is given about their life. However, there are circumstances where that context should still be shared in order to facilitate more holistic responses and to enhance viewer experience and understanding. It would be reductive to say that knowing too much about an artist can spoil one's appreciation of the work they produce. In fact, gaining knowledge of an artist's biography can provide the viewer with opportunities to reflect upon and reconsider their work and in this particular case, knowing Sulkowicz herself was a victim of campus rape adds resonance to her art.

Women and minorities are already significantly 'accustomed to managing the cognitive dissonance of finding meaning in art that ignores' them.[321] Identifying connections 'between art and abuse can actually help us see the works more clearly, to understand them in all of their complexity, and to connect them to our real lives and experiences – even if those experiences are negative.'[322] In this regard, parts of the work can seem even more remarkable. Picasso's *Weeping Woman,* (1937) (Fig. 58), depicts Dora Maar at a point where the artist was maintaining a public relationship with

[319] Sarah Cascone, 'Artist Emma Sulkowicz Wore Asterisks – and Little Else – to Protest Chuck Close at the Met (and Picasso at MoMA)', *artnet news,* (2 February 2018), last accessed 25 November 2019, <https://artnet.com>.
[320] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics,* p. 298.
[321] Hess, 'How the Myth of the Artistic Genius'.
[322] Ibid.

her whilst continuing to see Marie-Thérèse Walter in private. The composition uses a careful arrangement of colour and line to split the face up into jarring sections, whilst the mixture of vibrant, acid greens and purples reinforce the appearance of both frailty and loss. The anguish and pain clearly visible in the subject's face should not surprise the viewer, given it is understood that Picasso physically beat Dora Maar until she was unconscious at least once and even enjoyed watching the brawl he encouraged between her and Walter, claiming it one of his 'choicest memories.'[323] It is also known that Picasso frequently insinuated that Maar was 'unfeminine', perhaps because of her inability to have children, which was 'rarely spoken of'.[324] This is significant given that *Weeping Woman* and all his other paintings derived from this theme, stem from aspects of the iconography employed in *Guernica,* (1937) (Fig. 59), where a woman is depicted holding a dead child, a child Maar was unlikely ever to have. This adds a cruel note to the painting, especially as Picasso was aware of Maar's pain, stating, 'For me she's the weeping woman […] It was the deep reality, not the superficial one.'[325] Knowledge of this context might make the viewer think less of Picasso as a man, but it does not negate the impact of his painting. A viewer can appreciate a work of art whilst knowing facts about the artist's biography that disturbs them. Similarly, they may like an artist based on what they know about them, but be disappointed by work they produce. Greater knowledge facilitates a more complex response and a deeper understanding of a work being viewed. Whether it makes the viewer like the artist or not, is not the issue.

[323] Françoise Gilot, and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso* (London, UK: Virago Press, 1990), p. 201.
[324] Mary Ann Caws, 'A tortured goddess', *The Guardian,* (7 October 2000), last accessed 9 May 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.
[325] Gilot and Lake, *Life with Picasso,* p. 116.

The Credit Suisse Exhibition: Gauguin Portraits, (7 October 2019 to 26 January 2020) at *The National Gallery* in London recently demonstrated how effective use of context can enhance visitor experience, allowing viewers to achieve a fuller understanding of the artist's work. Aware that Gauguin's art and personal life had become the subject of intense scrutiny, particularly with regard to the time he spent in South Polynesia, the gallery sought 'to join conversations now taking place that consider Gauguin's relationships and the impact of colonialism through the prisms of contemporary debate.'[326] Before entering the room displaying works from the artist's time in Tahiti (1891 – 1893), viewers were able to read an introductory label (Fig. 60) which delved into 'Gauguin and *vahine* ("women")'. The text placed Gauguin in the context of his time, when 'European colonial and misogynist fantasies about Polynesian women were widespread' but it also clearly established that 'the artist did more than most in acting these out', fostering repeated sexual relations with young girls and marrying three of them. It clarified that he 'undoubtedly exploited his position as a privileged Westerner to make the most of the sexual freedoms available to him.'

Knowledge of this additional and more challenging context informs viewers' understanding of Gauguin's work on display in this section. For example, if *Vahine no te vi (Woman with a Mango),* (1892) (Fig. 61), were displayed in isolation and with no accompanying background information, viewers would most likely focus on the artist's proficient use of pure colour, with the density of pigment shining through. They might appreciate the yellow grounding which changes in tone throughout the work before it is used to highlight the face of the painting's subject, namely Teha'amana, Gauguin's first Tahitian child bride. However, contextual knowledge of the artist's treatment of

[326] 'Press releases: The Credit Suisse Exhibition: Gauguin Portraits', *The National Gallery,* (July 2019), last accessed 3 May 2020, <www.nationalgallery.org.uk>.

women inspires more intricate readings of this work. In his letters, Gauguin often described Teha'amana as being a passive, melancholic figure of 'quiet servitude' and yet here, she seems depicted 'perhaps with some agency of her own'.[327] Her pose is more dynamic than Gauguin's usual renderings of women, particularly if you were to compare it to *Manao tupapau (The Spirit of the Dead Watching),* (1894) (Fig. 62)*,* where, as Stuart Jeffries suggests, the subject seems 'poised to be sodomised by the spectator' whilst her facial expression indicates 'that this might not be the marvellous consensual hedonistic experience Gauguin wants to suggest.'[328] Instead, in *Woman with a Mango* (Fig. 61), Teha'amana's eyes are 'sidelong' and therefore unable to hold the viewer's stare, so that her expression seems more defiant than coy.[329] When Gauguin returned to Paris, this was one of very few works he sold, perhaps frightened by the slight air of agency Teha'amana possesses on the canvas. This could imply that he was keen to keep her as a passive, unchallenging figure, and not a fully grown woman with character and individualism of her own. Knowledge of background context here potentially enhances rather than diminishes understanding of the work. As with Picasso, the artist's reputation has not been destroyed by knowledge of biographical detail and the success of the exhibition itself is testament to that, with 127,699 visitors attending over its sixteen week run.[330] In addition, as Amanda Hess suggests, 'If a piece of art is truly spoiled by an understanding of the conditions under which it is made, then perhaps the artist was not quite as exceptional as we had thought.'[331] Moreover, if one is going 'to mourn the loss of the esteem […] had for a certain piece

[327] Gallery label for *Vahine no te vi (Woman with a Mango)* at *The Credit Suisse Exhibition: Gauguin Portraits* (7 October 2019 to 26 January 2020).
[328] Stuart Jeffries, 'Paradise lost', *The Guardian,* (13 October 2003), last accessed 3 May 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.
[329] Ibid.
[330] 'The National Gallery Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020', *The National Gallery*, (October 2020), last accessed 15 April 2021, <www.nationalgallery.org.uk>.
[331] Hess, 'How the Myth of the Artistic Genius'.

of work' on being informed that its creator is 'a horrible person,' then we must also seek to 'mourn what's been lost as a result of his behavior, and fight to improve the broken system that let him get away with it.'[332]

There are many other ways in which considered labelling can address problematic contexts. Whilst visiting Washington D.C. in February 2018, a member of the Guerrilla Girls who uses the alias 'Käthe Kollwitz', became aware that the official portrait of President Clinton was painted by Chuck Close and considered the irony of 'One accused sexual predator painting another!'[333] In reaction to this, 'Kollwitz' said, 'In every museum there are probably debates going on right now about how to respond to the #MeToo movement' and as a result, 'we decided to help them figure it out'.[334] Using Close's portrait of Clinton as a case study, the Guerrilla Girls created *3 Ways To Write A Museum Wall Label When The Artist Is A Sexual Predator,* (2018) (Fig. 63), to accompany the image. This was intended for:

i) museums afraid of alienating billionaire trustees and collectors who donated the artist's work
ii) museums conflicted about disclosing an artist's abuse next to his art
iii) museums who need help from the Guerrilla Girls

Visually, the labels appear in a regular gallery format but are presented in the form of a poster, using their typical graphic style. The first text is targeted at those institutions failing to address allegations of harassment or abuse and talks simply about the

[332] Caroline Framke, 'Instead of mourning great art tainted by awful men, mourn the work we lost from their victims', *Vox,* (13 November 2017), last accessed 20 April 2018, <www.vox.com>.
[333] Javier Pes, 'The Guerrilla Girls Are Helping Museums Contend With #MeToo. Read Their Proposed Chuck Close Wall Labels Here', *artnet news,* (26 September 2018), last accessed 25 November 2019, <https://news.artnet.com>.
[334] Anna Cafolla, 'The Guerrilla Girls want to help museums respond to #MeToo', *Dazed Digital,* (28 September 2018), last accessed 25 November 2019, <www.dazeddigital.com>.

grandiose influence of Close as an artist, protected by the myth of genius. The second label, subtly references his models as discontented employees, whereas the final text clearly outlines and acknowledges the accusations made against Close, and implicitly criticises the art world for reinforcing the idea that rules and restrictions 'don't apply to "genius" white male artists'.[335] The Guerrilla Girls' action suggests that labelling of this kind opens up discourse and debate rather than shutting it down. It facilitates 'radical transparency' which allows for diverse views and voices to be heard.

Ultimately, what must be remembered by museums and galleries in this current period of time, is eloquently delineated in Jeanette Winterson's book of essays, *Art Objects,* (1995), where she states, 'Art cannot be tamed, although our responses to it can be'.[336] With regard to gallery labelling, it is not about creating trigger warnings in order to protect people's sensibilities or even getting rid of wall texts completely. It is about revision, which acknowledges why works might be problematic in a contemporary context and makes some attempt to address that. When radically transparent, museums and galleries show that they are aware of a multiplicity of perspectives, including those which may have been ignored over time, and that they are encouraging different voices to be heard. Rather than labels which speak straight from the curator, from a place of authority, Orit Gat proposes that museums and galleries make space for 'a multiplicity of voices', with 'numerous label systems, or layers on each label, or six audioguides from different viewpoints, or different exhibition guides according to a visitor's interest.'[337] There is no single or proscribed way forward but institutions must be proactive in addressing the needs of the

[335] Ibid.
[336] Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (London, UK: Vintage, 1996), p. 15.
[337] Orit Gat, 'Could Reading Be Looking?', *e-flux, 72*, (April 2016), last accessed 25 November 2019, <www.e-flux.com>.

sociopolitical context within which they are operating and they should not ignore sexual abuse, or indeed any abuse by one group wielding more power over another. By addressing these issues and adopting different practical approaches, museums and galleries demonstrate that they are making a stand against reprehensible behaviour and will not tolerate it becoming normalised or excused. As Catherine McCormack has stated, images have a real and great power and often, we do not always give them that credit.[338] They have the power not only to inspire and excite, but also to inform us of our relationship to ourselves and to society, and the museums and galleries where they are displayed should always be aware of that connection.

[338] *State of the Art: Art & Morality with Michelle Hartney & Art Historian Catherine McCormack* (12 July 2019), Episode 99, <https://sotapodcast.com>.

III

The Agency of the Gallery Space

The museum does not simply present objects; it presents and questions the space between objects and conceptual systems.[339]

~ Beth Lord

It is clear that the choices an institution makes regarding what it displays, also illustrates its priorities, whatever those priorities may be. In the same vein, choices made regarding the contextual environment within which any artwork or object is displayed are also important, because they impact on visitor experience and may subliminally influence responses. Consequently, a curator must not only consider all accompanying literature such as wall text, but also the gallery space as a whole. This is because the placement of objects within an assigned space, including how they relate to one another, impacts on how they might be read or appreciated. In this regard, the choices a curator makes in terms of the physical space can lead to more dynamic readings, with 'works of art and didactics' encouraging 'viewers to grapple with what they're viewing through thoughtfully considered contexts and frameworks deemed important by museum professionals.'[340]

White cube galleries became popular during the beginning of the twentieth century, and tend to be formulaic spaces of rectangular or square dimensions, with white walls and light emanating from above. This blank frame was favoured in the hope that it would create a less distracting environment and encourage the viewer to

[339] Beth Lord, 'Representing Enlightenment Space', in Suzanne MacLeod, ed., *Reshaping Museum Space: architecture, design, exhibitions* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 153.
[340] Theresa Sotto, 'Make Space for Difficult Conversations', *Walker,* (7 March 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://walkerart.org>.

focus solely on the artwork itself. The establishment of these white cube spaces may be seen as a movement away from the status quo, and a reaction to how art was displayed traditionally. Many larger, older museums and galleries, and particularly those in western Europe, developed through the acquisition of private collections, Royal or otherwise, and from the outset, their artworks were 'displayed in dense, symmetrical arrangements that connoisseurs believed allowed for a better comparison of styles and movements.'[341] Inspiration was taken from the salons in Paris, where 'paintings jostled for space on walls hung floor to ceiling with art.'[342] Certainly, the hang of artworks in prominent, older institutions has become, to a certain extent, embedded in tradition and can be affected by the nature and architecture of the buildings wherein the collections are housed. The modernist white cube space operates as an alternative to this model, offering a clean and less cluttered environment, and one that suggests a more neutral background is provided for the artworks on display.

However, as Brian O' Doherty espoused in his series of essays entitled *Inside the White Cube*: *The Ideology of the Gallery Space,* (1976), 'the modernist gallery' is also a 'highly controlled context', which not only impacts on the art being displayed, but also on the person viewing it.[343] In these spaces, 'the context devours the object, becoming it.'[344] There is a definitive link between the object, how it is displayed and how it is then received by its audience, demonstrating that no space exists that is ever completely neutral, even if it presents as such. O'Doherty emphasises this, arguing that the glorification of these white *environs* has transmitted

[341] Abigail Cain, 'How the White Cube Came to Dominate the Art World', *Artsy,* (23 January 2017), last accessed 16 March 2020, <www.artsy.net>.
[342] Ibid.
[343] These essays were first published by *Artforum* in 1976 (although they appeared in a different format), before being collated into a book which was published ten years later. Brian O' Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco, CA: The Lapis Press, 1986), p. 7.
[344] Ibid.

an unhealthy, 'almost […] sacred' status on the artworks on view in such spaces and this can encourage an unduly reverent response on the part of the viewer.[345] To step inside any museum or gallery, as Christopher Whitehead makes evident in *Interpreting Art in Museums and Galleries,* (2012), 'is not to leap into some alternative pre-political reality of aesthetic contemplation and reverie'.[346] Wherever an exhibition or display is housed, be that a white cube, classical gallery, or an alternative space such as Banksy's temporary *Gross Domestic Product* store in Croydon, UK, (2019) (Fig. 64), the physical space operates as a form of agency.[347] From the moment a gallery visitor arrives into a space, this agency takes hold, subconsciously informing their response to the work on display.

Both the situation and environment in which we observe art, affects how we see it, and simultaneously how we experience those spaces. This is partly because 'no space can be sanitized of its historical resonance'.[348] In fact, the history of art is not a neutral construct either, as it has always been influenced by factors such as market forces and trends. These forces can determine how the physical gallery space is used and ultimately dictate how art history is presented. Even the decision to display works chronologically, seemingly without fear or favour, is a conscious choice, possibly made in response to how something was ordered previously. Favouring a chronological display or one that is based on a school or style, might suggest a neutral

[345] Ibid., p. 15.
[346] Christopher Whitehead, *Interpreting Art in Museums and Galleries* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. xvii.
[347] Banksy's *Gross Domestic Product (GDP)* was an installation set up in a shop in October 2019 in Croydon, UK. It acted as a showroom for his online store. The shop contained 'branded merchandise' with all items on show – his works both new and old - available for sale online. A poster in the shop window explained that that the shop 'came about "as a result of legal action" after a greeting cards company attempted to claim legal custody of the name "Banksy"'. It claimed that he was legally advised to sell merchandise as a means of retaining his name. Naomi Polonsky, 'Banksy Opens London Art Shop Same Week He Sets $12M Auction Record', *Hyperallergic,* (4 October 2019), last accessed 12 January 2020, <https://hyperallergic.com>.
[348] Rebecca Nison, 'Why are art galleries white cubes?', *Hopes&Fears,* last accessed 9 March 2020, <www.hopesandfears.com>.

or at least an apolitical stance, but in reality, this is never the case. Some institutions exist that are considered by those who preside over them as neutral, unmediated or apolitical spaces, which may explain any reluctance on the part of museums and galleries to address recent contentious histories or political issues, such as #MeToo. However, as David Fleming has said, there is hypocrisy in museums claiming that 'they are apolitical' because in the daily operations of a museum, 'all the basic tasks […] are loaded with meaning and human bias,' emphasising that 'there is no such thing as an unmediated display'.[349] Claiming that a space is neutral actually implies that a position has been taken and accepted, that position being the status quo.

When Duchamp created *Fountain,* (1917) (Fig. 65) his intention was to disrupt the status quo and assault artistic convention. Using an ordinary mass-manufactured product, in this case a regular porcelain urinal, he transformed a readymade object into art by signing it R. Mutt. Duchamp applied for *Fountain* to be shown at the 1917 show for the *Society of Independent Artists* (a group which he co-founded), at the *Grand Central Palace*. According to Joseph A. W. Quintela, he did this 'to disrupt the sanctity of gallery space' and in so doing, protect free expression and challenge the status quo.[350] Duchamp believed that an effective artwork 'set its sights beyond its mere presence in space' which supports the argument that the gallery environment plays a significant part in any work.[351] Interestingly, for this show, Duchamp suggested that artworks should be arranged alphabetically using the artists' surnames, rather than according to curatorial choice. This disrupted traditional patterns at the time, again supporting the assertion that there can be no such thing as

[349] Rebecca Atkinson, 'The myth of the apolitical museum', *Museums Association,* (17 October 2012), last accessed 9 January 2020, <www.museumsassociation.org>.
[350] Nison, 'Why are art galleries white cubes?'.
[351] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics,* translated by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (France: Les presses du réel, 2002) p. 41.

a completely neutral gallery space. Choices are often made in reaction to the previously established order of things, and what we define as the status quo, could otherwise be recognised as institutional authority. Consequently, as Fleming establishes, this 'myth of apolitical museums is perpetuated by self-serving elite that want the museum to be theirs' and at every level, operate on their terms.[352] This is inherently problematic because it prevents the creation of a dialogue with the wider public and specifically, with gallery visitors, thereby keeping knowledge and, by default, power, within the confines of the institution.

In reality, the organisation of the gallery space affects the viewing public in subliminal rather than more direct ways. Given that exhibitions are specifically designed with visitors in mind, curators must inevitably influence them with the choices that they make regarding presentation and layout, as even the order in which they place works might suggest a rank importance or hierarchical significance. For example, when entering the *Victoria and Albert Museum* (*V&A*), using the tunnel entrance, visitors arrive into *The Dorothy and Michael Hintze Galleries*, and are immediately met by Eric Gill's sculpture *Mankind*, (1927 – 1928) (Fig. 66), currently on loan from the *Tate*. This headless and armless female torso which veers over the viewer from its plinth, demonstrates Gill's love for direct carving, as the sculpture was crafted from a large, singular piece of hoptonwood stone. In the online collection entry, the *Tate* refer to this work as Gill's 'personification of womanhood' and speak of its interest being drawn from its unusual three-dimensional form, as Gill commonly worked in reliefs.[353] Certainly, the ability to view the work from all angles and to appreciate the distinctly polished nature of the stone ensures that the artwork is

[352]Atkinson, 'The myth of the apolitical museum'.
[353] Online collection entry, 'Mankind', *Tate,* (August 2004), last accessed 3 February 2020, <www.tate.org>.

captivating to look at. However, its placement within the gallery raises some interesting issues.

Unlike the statue of *Aphrodite* more commonly known as the *Venus de Milo* (*c.* 100 BC) (Fig. 67), whose arms were lost over time, *Mankind* (Fig. 66) was sculpted without arms or a head, a deliberate decision made by the artist which ensures that the viewer has no choice but to focus their gaze solely on the torso before them. When confronted with the work in this way, the viewer cannot fail to notice that the genital area is completely smooth. This seems to be quite common in classical sculpture of women, where, as Syreeta McFadden notes, 'there are but modest dents around the pelvic bones of the statues, but no openings or slight separations of the pelvic mounds to be found anywhere.'[354] Certainly, Ancient Greece was responsible for creating representations of the traditional male and female roles which 'codified a power dynamic and a social order that persists in so many ways today.'[355] Greek sculpture sought to visualise the 'male ideals of the female body' and the vulva disappears in Ancient Greek art in the same way that 'feminine power […] was denigrated' at that time.[356] Classical renderings of the female nude are often depicted in the contrapposto pose, where a softly bent knee leads to the extenuated curvature of the hip and a coyly slanted shoulder, with a hand modestly covering the breast or vagina. Although typical of classical sculpture, a version of this pose was also used by Picasso in many drawings from his print book *Le Gôut du Bonheur,* (1970) (Figs., 16a and 16b). Here, the artist has focused attention on crafting the male's face, figure and as the series develops, his erection, whilst the woman's distinguishing features, apart from her

[354] Syreeta McFadden, 'The lack of female genitals on statues seems thoughtless until you see it repeated', *The Guardian,* (13 April 2015), last accessed 7 February 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Ibid.

breasts, are removed or covered, in a manner which parallels Gill's *Mankind* (Fig. 66). As a result, the subject is reduced to the status of object. This is significant because Picasso and Gill's renderings of women, which were modelled on the ideals of Ancient Greece, substantiate that this view of women is still, for the most part, the norm projected in gallery spaces.

By removing the intricacies of the female genitalia, you remove the idea of the female being a sexual being in her own right and therefore suppress her worth. We are left with an idealised rather than a realistic interpretation of what it is to be female. This is not an issue in itself, as art often deals in idealised depictions. However, if there are no other objects or artworks offering a different view of femininity in a given space, then the display reflects only a patriarchal perspective, and not what is truly female. With this, there is the suggestion that if you 'Destroy the image […] you can control the narrative.'[357] The curatorial decision to link *Mankind* (Fig. 66) thematically with the other sculptures surrounding it whilst failing to provide an alternative depiction of womanhood, demonstrates that an embedded narrative in *The Dorothy and Michael Hintze Galleries* is firmly established, significantly crafted through the use of the physical space as an agency. A visitor might not immediately consider that a specific, idealised and limited view of the female is being offered in the first instance, but given the lack of alternative images, then that is undeniably the case. The statue's prominent placement serves to emphasise this point. Centrally displayed, surrounded by works offering a similar perspective, and without rigorous labelling, then, 'the lasting effect, erases feminine humanity.'[358] Careful consideration should be given to any implicit messages conveyed by the placement of objects, particularly where this relates to

[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid.

women post #MeToo, but also with regard to other problematic issues. This is because there is potential for institutions to inadvertently reflect sexist or racist values, which is contrary to their intentions.

When curators discuss and decide which works to juxtapose with one another, and in which order to place them when hanging an exhibition, immediately a narrative is crafted in order to inculcate meaning. Putting works of a similar nature or theme together is the simplest way curators can facilitate an immediate language of understanding and meaning, because viewers are clearly able to identify and perceive the links between them. Works in an established grouping are also benefited by symbiosis, with additional layers of meaning suggested, as a result of the artworks being considered together. For example, curators at *The Broad* in Los Angeles made the decision to hang artworks by Terry Winters including *Set Diagram 9*, (2000) (Fig. 68a) and *Set Diagram 54*, (2000) (Fig. 68b), next to Chuck Close's work, *John,* (1971 – 1972) (Fig. 69). The placement was intended to illustrate how these contemporary artists both utilise specific systems or methods in their work but leading to entirely different outcomes.[359]

By displaying Winters' works at a perpendicular angle (Fig. 70) to the larger painting by Close, the Museum encouraged the viewer to compare the processes which the artists adopted, and note the similarities and differences in their effect. Winters is often considered the father figure of the abstracted version of Systems art, which was established by a group of artists operating towards the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. The group sought to turn attention away from the prominence of 'the

[359] Tyler Green, 'When Exhibiting Works by Artists Accused of Wrongdoing, Context Matters', *Walker,* (7 March 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://walkerart.org>.

object' and create art which was more engaged and in tune with the world around.[360] Winters used this concept as a foundation for his own art, mapping 'natural biological processes' by way of 'abstract forms, lines, and color.'[361] On first observation, *Untitled (I),* (1999) (Fig. 71) appears simply as swirling forms of coloured mass. However, on more detailed and closer inspection, the viewer begins to attune to Winters' processes and to perceive recognisable forms within, those 'networks' which 'undergird contemporary life', only for them to disappear once again.[362] In collaboration with architect Rem Koolhaas, Winters created sixty paintings in the *Set Diagram* series which operate in a similar way, dispersing 'coordinates' throughout the paintings by plotting 'spheres, charts, and graphs, reminiscent of data arranged in physics or biology textbooks.'[363] Winters' hoped these 'coordinates' would operate as organising structures and starting points for the viewer, drawing them in and encouraging them to begin an investigation of the wider work and attune to its processes. For example, in *Set Diagram 54* (Fig. 68b), it is only on moving beyond these starting 'coordinates', that the viewer perceives a swathe of arrows and lines that bisect each other and which encourage them to begin to witness 'abstract interpretations of blueprints, or architectural maps' before they become invisible once more.[364]

The tension between glimpsing the process utilised by the artist and then it becoming invisible is also reflected in the work of Chuck Close and specifically in *John* (Fig. 69). Close employs a grid system to divide a photograph of his chosen subject into various sections, before using this to create a photorealistic painting. This technique has been favoured by many artists over time, including Leonardo da Vinci

[360] Art Term, 'Systems Art', *Tate,* last accessed 17 January 2020, <www.tate.org.uk>.
[361] 'Terry Winters: Artist Bio', *The Broad,* last accessed 16 January, <www.thebroad.org>.
[362] Green, 'When Exhibiting Works by Artists Accused of Wrongdoing'.
[363] 'Terry Winters: Artist Bio', *The Broad*.
[364] Ibid.

and is clearly exemplified in *John,* where the artist uses the system to enlarge the initial image accurately and in proportion. This facilitates the creation of a substantial work, built up assiduously through the application of microscopic dabs of paint. From a distance, the viewer perceives a large and striking photorealistic image, but close up it becomes clear precisely how that image was achieved. In a similar way, the process and systems employed by Winters can be briefly witnessed and understood by the viewer as they focus in and out from sections of his work.

Juxtaposing Close with Winters is beneficial in this context, because it increases the opportunity for dialectical relationships. However, they have been physically arranged in the space in a way that focuses greater attention on *John* (Fig. 69), which may be viewed as problematic by some, in light of the accusations against Close. The gallery is long and narrow, featuring eight of Winters' *Set Diagrams,* which are identical in size, lined up along the right-hand side, with Close's *John* displayed in isolation on the back wall. The size of the latter work ensures that it commands attention, but its prominence is reinforced by the dimensions and layout of the gallery space. Naturally, the difficult and unusual proportions of the gallery encourage the viewer to look straight down through it, the walls operating to create a blinkered effect, channelling the visitor's eyes straight forward to *John* (Fig. 70). Whilst this is the case, it is difficult to envisage a different configuration of the works. If the Winters' paintings were placed on the back wall, Close's work on the right-hand side would appear isolated, and the viewer's attention would still be drawn to *John* (Fig. 69) because of the notable blank space that would be left on either side of it. The chosen layout achieves balance, and ensures Winters' works are not diminished by Close. In fact, they benefit from this physical arrangement. This is reinforced by the Museum's decision to keep the display after the allegations of sexual misconduct against Chuck

Close became public. *The Broad* did debate removing Close's work, and as other galleries were either cancelling scheduled shows of his or removing individual works on display, they must have felt a certain pressure to follow suit. However, if Close's work had been removed, then it would have denied 'viewers context that enriches our understanding of the Winterses [*sic*].'[365] Despite this, the issue remains that significant prominence is given to Close's painting, which in a white cube style gallery space, creates the effect of an object to be revered.

Mieke Bal has encouraged art professionals to assess the various ways that an exhibition's '*mise-en-scène* might help frame, forge, and support a mode of looking' which would enable 'the affective force of images' to be 'directed toward thought as to one's responsibilities as a viewer'.[366] By utilising the full potential of the *mise-en-scène*, Bal believes that the viewer 'might yet become an ethical witness' to 'scenes of suffering' with which they may be faced.[367] In addressing problematic histories or contexts, museums and galleries should consider and employ physical space as an agency, which could allow visitors to engage more deeply with any difficult information presented. This in turn could lead to beneficial change in wider society. The retrospective of photojournalist Don McCullin at the *Tate Britain, Don McCullin,* (5 February to 6 May 2019), reflects Bal's views that the gallery visitor could become an 'ethical witness'.[368] This is because McCullin's photographs often capture painful or shocking realities, such as homelessness in east London (1970) (Fig. 72) and The Troubles in Northern Ireland (1971) (Fig. 73), and so calls the viewer to consider why

[365] Green, 'When Exhibiting Works by Artists Accused of Wrongdoing'.
[366] Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson, eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge,* p. 196.
[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid.

the events depicted have come to pass and what might be done to prevent them happening ever again.

Curators of the McCullin retrospective decided to paint the walls of the galleries a deep grey, with the 250 mostly black and white documentary style photographs arranged individually in rows, apart from a few grouped pieces. This visually encouraged the galleries to appear like newsprint. Newspapers operate as a means of informing the public about what is happening across the world, and so mimicking their greyscale format in the space suggests that the curators wanted visitors to be physically confronted by these images, and to learn from them, in the hope that they might step into the role of an ethical witness. According to the *Tate,* this aligns with McCullin's own feelings that whilst his photographs play 'an insufficient role in ending the suffering of the people they depict', he aspires to make others feel what he felt when he captured the image, so that in this way, the viewer might bear witness, as he himself did.[369] However, there was little respite from the cutting reality of these depictions, leading Adrian Searle writing for *The Guardian* to claim that there were 'too many photographs' in the retrospective.[370] Indeed, and as Searle highlights, McCullin is undeniably both 'a man who has seen too much and borne witness to too much' and that it was this focus on 'the too many and the too much' that was deliberately established in the physical use of the gallery space.[371] The display of these difficult works seemed 'unrelenting' and gallery visitors were confronted with their 'own voyeurism' and 'an increasing inability to process the mounting horrors.'[372] The organisation of the display was also paced in a way that encouraged and challenged

[369] Exhibition Guide, 'Don McCullin', *Tate,* last accessed 17 April 2020, <www.tate.org.uk>.
[370] Adrian Searle, 'Don McCullin review – witness for the persecuted', *The Guardian,* (4 February 2019), last accessed 13 August 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[371] Ibid.
[372] Ibid.

viewers to look long and hard at some images, and then move away from others instantaneously, with a mere glimpse ensuring they were 'already fixed in the developing fluid of the subconscious.'[373] In this way, and reflecting Bal's theory, visitors were confronted with their own responsibilities as viewers, and also afforded the opportunity to bear witness to what they had seen, which could positively impact on the world beyond the gallery space itself.

Eric Gill: The Body, at the *Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft*, (29 April to 3 September 2017), is another example of an exhibition where Bal's proposition was realised but in a different manner. Here, the *mise-en-scène* was crafted in such a way as to recognise Gill's skill and contribution as an artist, whilst acknowledging those featured in his works who were victims of his abuse, with the intention of redressing the power balance. On entering the introductory gallery space, visitors were greeted by Cathie Pilkington's statue entitled *Twinkle,* (2014) (Fig. 74), a bronze sculpture of a young girl who appears floating as if in a dream, with her eyes softly closed. This was a significant curatorial decision because mounted on a plinth, the sculpture's presence was magnified and it could not be ignored by gallery visitors. As such, it acted as a counterpoint to the feminist concept that society has traditionally encouraged women to make themselves small, so that men have more room to control any space, an idea explored in Annie Ridout's poem *Women should take up less space* (Appendix IV). The final stanza reads:

> Be quiet. Be small. Don't talk. Don't move.
> Take up less space, they insist.
> Because there isn't enough room on this earth
> for both women and men to exist.

[373] Ibid.

Co-curators Nathaniel Hepburn and Cathie Pilkington hoped that placing *Twinkle* (Fig. 74) so prominently would, 'take back from Gill the way that young girls are depicted.'[374] This was emphasised by the fact Pilkington created the sculpture and so brought her lived experience as a female to the rendering of it. Significantly, *Twinkle* was also deliberately placed close to Gill's *Doll* (Figs., 74 and 15) which the artist had made for his daughter Petra when she was four years old. Given its previously referenced phallic nature, *Doll* is, in the opinion of the Museum, 'neither a playful toy nor a sculptural object,' and its curators' choice to display the work next to the much larger *Twinkle* (Fig. 75), again instantly suggests a reassessment and redressing of the power balance.[375]

Twinkle faced an installation called *Doll for Petra,* (2017) (Fig. 76), also by Cathie Pilkington. Referencing Gill's *Doll* (Fig. 15), the work featured five carved busts, each one mounted on a plinth inscribed with Petra's name, surrounded by a selection of dolls, doll heads and other parts. The doll parts bring to mind childhoods fractured or damaged by abuse, but the busts and *Twinkle* (Fig. 74) which, in this composition, 'confront the viewer with a straightforward and unwavering gaze' imply strength and the ability to rise from such an experience.[376] They are not to be ignored, and by implication, neither should the truth about Gill. Over the course of the exhibition's creation and its subsequent run, *Twinkle* was seen as a 'guardian angel, or mediator' and whilst this was a previously created work (and importantly made before #MeToo), the curatorial decision to display the sculpture in this different context and space,

[374] Woodger, 'Ditchling comes clean'.
[375] 'Doll for Petra', *Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft,* last accessed 3 February 2020, <www.ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk>.
[376] Woodger, 'Ditchling comes clean'.

allowed *Twinkle* to appear 'new and more potent'.[377] Once again, the viewer is placed in the role of ethical witness, encouraged to consider both Gill's work and issues surrounding abuse more deeply and in different ways, by the specific placement of objects within a space.

The concept of artworks gaining new or deeper meaning from being presented in a different context, is also reflected by the re-framing and re-positing of Sue Williams work, *The Art World Can Suck My Proverbial Dick,* (1992) (Fig. 77) in light of #MeToo. In originally creating the piece, Williams sought to demonstrate the inherent sexism of the art world by commenting on the industry's hypocrisy at the time. Utilising comic books as a source of inspiration, Williams crafted a work that illustrated her emotions, whilst employing 'sharp feminist criticism and humour to boot'.[378] Notably, in the left-hand side of the image is scrawled 'Femail Imagery is a Joke'. The intentional misspelling here could ironically relate to the fact that work by female artists is not always regarded seriously, and that many do not want to associate it with the 'male', even as a suffix, but it could also be that the artist does not want her work to be defined by any male terms. The phrase 'Funny the animal shapes you can see in the paint' featured in the work also suggests that work by female artists is often considered less sophisticated and is frequently trivialised as a result. A quarter of a century after its creation, the *303 Gallery* in New York repurposed Williams' work by posting it on their *Instagram* feed to comment on the increasingly publicised 'predatory behaviour […] in our society, our industry, our spaces' (Instagram, @303gallery, 26

[377] 'Case Study: Eric Gill/The Body: Managing Risk', *Index on Censorship,* (15 May 2019), last accessed 16 September 2019, <www.indexoncensorship.org>.
[378] Will Furtado, 'Were the '90s LA's Golden Decade?', *SLEEK,* (14 June 2016), last accessed 18 March 2020, <www.sleek-mag.com>.

October 2017). This demonstrated how art from the past can retain its cultural currency and intersect with present societal concerns.

Some might view *303 Gallery's* action as a weaker example of reinvigorating works in a new physical context because it did not occur in the gallery space itself. However, we are living in an increasingly digital age where information is disseminated and shared twenty-four hours a day. In order for museums and galleries to remain current and retain their status and authority in this technological world, they must think about the digital space they hold and how they can use it to engage in conversations with their audiences in real time. *303 Gallery* has a following of 118,000 on *Instagram* (as of 8 October 2020) and so when Williams' work was posted on their feed, it had the potential to reach a much wider audience than it had originally, or if it had simply been redisplayed in a gallery, especially given that the posting could be re-shared. By using their digital presence in this way, the gallery was able to immediately address the unfolding situation regarding sexual harassment and abuse within the art world, and to affirm their support for its victims. However, it must also be noted that Williams appears to have been represented by the corporate gallery since the 1990s and the decision to use her work in this posting, may well have also been motivated by financial reasons. The #MeToo movement's high profile at the time is likely to have fostered a greater interest in feminist related art, which might have increased its value as a result. Regardless of the motive behind its actions, *303 Gallery's* repurposing of Williams' work implies that not much has changed regarding the position of women in the arts since the 1990s, especially as Williams still deals with this issue in her work today. It also reaffirms that gallery space, both real and digital, can be used to further a cause and which may as a consequence benefit society as a whole.

In 1939, Alfred H. Barr Jr, the first director of *The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)* in New York said, 'Nothing that the visitors will see in the exhibition galleries, neither the works of art, nor the lighting fixtures, nor even the partitions, is at present permanent.'[379] The declaration was included in the catalogue for *Art in Our Time* (10 May to 30 September 1939), an exhibition celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Museum and the opening of the new Goodwin-Stone building. As Glenn D. Lowry, the current director of *MoMA* remarked, Barr's statement implies 'that the museum was to be a work in progress, changing and evolving' in accordance with the changes and evolutions in contemporary art.[380] By extension, it could be argued that all museums and galleries would benefit from emulating this approach today, in order to better reflect present society, which is constantly changing. However, by specifically referring to 'lighting fixtures' and 'partitions,' Barr also demonstrated the crucial importance of the physical space in the display of artworks, and that this is an equally significant strand of curating that must be routinely reflected upon and modified accordingly. Over time, *MoMA* had moved away from Barr's original model, favouring a 'Book of Genesis' method whereby works were displayed more rigidly, according to either chronology or the development of disciplines or styles.[381] Galleries progressed through a 'teleological' depiction of art history, whereby 'the present' was seen 'as the logical culmination of the past'.[382] It is easy to understand why this resulted in a display of their collection which projected a 'white-and-male-and-Eurocentric' outlook, and one

[379] Alfred H. Barr Jr., 'Art in Our Time: The Plan of the Exhibition', in *Art in Our Time: 10th Anniversary Exhibition* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1939), p. 15.
[380] Charlotte Higgins, 'Budge up, great white males! MoMA goes global with an explosive $450m rehang', *The Guardian,* (16 October 2019), last accessed 10 May 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.

which did not represent the diverse make up of American society.[383] However, realising that this fundamentally 'lacks contingency,' director Glenn D. Lowry aimed to return to Barr's original concept and 'the museum's founding principles' in its 2019 rehang, substantiating that the museum is never the finished article and should be constantly 'changing and evolving' over time.[384]

This project to re-hang *MoMA* actually began halfway through 2013 and since then, the world has changed remarkably. Ongoing issues such as the realities of climate change, the refugee crisis, both the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements and the election of Donald Trump have informed, and hopefully will continue to inform, all new displays. Whilst still mostly adhering to chronology, the Museum now utilises a thematic form of display which aims to provide 'a 360-degree view of a subject across mediums'.[385] For example, one of the galleries is titled 'At the Border of Art and Life' and another 'Worlds to Come'. These loosely structural concepts allow for a greater array of dialectical relationships to occur particularly where works – albeit on less frequent occasions – are hung next to others from different periods of time. A particularly striking example of this is the cross-dialogue that arises from placing Faith Ringgold's *American People Series #20 Die,* (1967) (Fig. 78) next to Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,* (1907) (Fig. 79). Picasso's work depicts five prostitutes of Avignon Street in Barcelona, and is traditionally believed to be the first iteration of Cubism. Contrastingly, Ringgold's work (Fig. 78) is a visual representation of the race riots that occurred in Los Angeles in 1965 and 'out of time and context,' in the middle of 'the white-walled gallery, it lands like a slab of raw meat

[383] Andrew Goldstein, 'So, Is MoMA Woke Now? Not Quite. A Q&A With Director Glenn Lowry on Why "You Can Never Be Comprehensive in Some Absolute Way"', *artnet news,* (15 October 2019), last accessed 10 May 2020, <https://news.artnet.com>.
[384] Higgins, 'Budge up, great white males!'.
[385] Goldstein, 'So, Is MoMA Woke Now?'.

on a bedsheet'.[386] Whilst sixty years separate the creation of these works, there are many similarities. Certainly, in terms of the formal qualities, aspects of the colour palette Ringgold employs, including contrasting pinks and yellows in conjunction with cooler blue tones, mimic those utilised in Picasso's *Demoiselles* (Fig. 79). Similarly, in both works this colour is applied in flat planes, fragmented across the compositions, whilst tonal shading is used to create a sense of depth. In this regard, it is clear that Ringgold was influenced by the Cubist movement, of which Picasso was a founding member. However, the violence of Ringgold's work with black and white business men and women splayed chaotically across the canvas, framed in and amongst splattering's of blood, perhaps specifically invites comparison with Picasso's *Guernica* (Fig. 59) and its depiction of the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War. Alongside a shared violent subject matter, the grey background, large mural scale, and horizontal plane of Ringgold's work also reflect *Guernica*.

MoMA's decision to juxtapose Ringgold's work with Picasso's *Demoiselles* (Fig. 79) does not just appear to have been intended for purely aesthetic comparison. Placing the works so near each other (Fig. 80), implicitly suggests that 'History, […] might not be working in only one direction', and that dialectically, these works could 'illuminate' one another on greater levels than just their formal qualities.[387] As an African-American artist engaged with documenting her lived experience, Ringgold's presence in the same gallery as Picasso, encourages the viewer to note - aided by the gallery label for *Demoiselles* – the latter's 'radical engagement with African art and its startling depiction of women's power'.[388] However, this is a subjective view and many

[386] Murray Whyte, 'At the new MoMA, cracking open Modernism's narrow tale', *The Boston Globe,* (17 October 2019), last accessed 10 May 2020, <www.bostonglobe.com>.
[387] Higgins, 'Budge up, great white males!'.
[388] Whyte, 'At the new MoMA'.

feminist readings of Picasso's work would disagree with that interpretation, seeing it instead as an objectification of women. Others may view that the artist's engagement with African art, evidenced in the two figures in the right-hand side wearing African masks, is an 'appropriation of the visual culture of colonized Africans in a depiction of unclothed female sex workers'.[389] Nevertheless, the existence of Ringgold's work near to Picasso's *Demoiselles* is significant as it 'shifts the conversation', demonstrating that there is always more than one reading to an artwork.[390] Whilst Ringgold's work is shocking and 'a powerful depiction of a racialized mass shooting,' it brings the content to the foreground, encouraging the viewer to find out precisely what is being represented over 'the finer points of spatial illusionism'.[391] Arguably, much analysis of Picasso's *Demoiselles* (Fig. 79) is based on the artist's formal innovation. However, when this painting is placed near to the Ringgold (Fig. 78), the viewer is encouraged to move past Picasso's formal advances and consider it more as a 'psychologically charged scene', which makes us question 'representations of women, power, and cultural difference.'[392] As Murray Whyte states, positioned in this room, 'Ringgold reminds us that formal concerns alone do not a revolution make, and that stories matter – they matter a lot.'[393] The placement of these two large works in close proximity to one another (Fig. 80) leads to interesting readings and implies that a black, female artist is being considered on equal terms with a man whose contribution to art history is undeniable. However, it is important to note that the gallery where they are

[389] Jack McGrath, 'What the New MoMA Misunderstands About Pablo Picasso and Faith Ringgold', *Frieze,* (18 October 2019), last accessed 17 March 2020, <https://frieze.com>.
[390] Whyte, 'At the new MoMA'.
[391] McGrath, 'What the New MoMA Misunderstands'.
[392] 'Collection 1880s – 1940s: Around *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*', *MoMA,* last accessed 21 May 2020, <www.moma.org>.
[393] Whyte, 'At the new MoMA'.

displayed is entitled ‘Around *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon’,* and so the focus remains on Picasso.

As society begins to grapple with the significance of the #MeToo movement and its ramifications, there is an obligation for museums and galleries to reflect upon their collections and acquisitions through this filter, and begin to revitalise their displays, recognising that, ‘conversations need to happen.’[394] By encouraging the creation of new stories and understandings through the constant revaluation and subsequent modification of a work’s physical context and *environs*, curators are able to create a contextual environment where the wider public can take ownership of these stories. The history of art for the most part currently on display in museums and galleries, needs to shift from focusing on ‘one of straight lines and linear progressions’ and become more reflective of society and its changeability.[395] As Jack McGrath, paraphrasing Walter Benjamin believes, the shift needs to be made from questioning, ‘What is the attitude of a museum *to* the political and economic relations of its time?’ to asking, ‘What is its position *within* them?’[396] Since its reopening in 2019 after the collection was rehung, *MoMA* have asserted that going forward, their displays will change ‘substantially’ on a six monthly basis.[397] The Museum’s present director, Glenn D. Lowry emphasises the importance of this, stressing that, regardless of their scale, exhibitions can only ever be ‘a partial view of something.’[398] Thus, by refocusing on the physical environment and display regularly, museums and galleries can address contentious or problematic contexts, by revaluating the narratives they employ, ‘again

[394] Kane, Hayes, and Bell, ‘What do we do with art made by bad people?’.
[395] Higgins, ‘Budge up, great white males!’.
[396] McGrath, ‘What the New MoMA Misunderstands’.
[397] Higgins, ‘Budge up, great white males!’.
[398] Goldstein, ‘So, Is MoMA Woke Now?’.

and again and again.'[399] Definitive action like this ensures that curators regularly reconsider and utilise the full potential of the physical space within which they are working. It also demonstrates an acknowledgement and understanding of the fact that cultural institutions, particularly those considered prominent or highly regarded by the public, should be present *within* larger societal concerns, and that they should not stay silent with regard to problematic histories or difficult knowledge. By addressing these issues directly, they help 'complex ripples set in motion', by navigating the 'pebbles thrown' by society, to fall with the greatest effect.[400]

[399] Ibid.
[400] Higgins, 'Budge up, great white males!'.

IV

Shared Guardianship of Heritage

Analysing the role of museums and galleries as agents for change

But what if the intern and the caterer, together with artists and curators, had a say in who managed the gallery and how?[401]

~ Miya Tokumitsu

Janet Marstine deduces that for the creation and sustainment of a 'socially responsible museum', institutions should operate and embrace what she refers to as a 'shared guardianship of heritage.'[402] This concept was originally introduced by Michael Frisch in his book *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (1990), where he argues that 'shared authority' involves knowledge being 'built in collaboration with the public.'[403] Frisch believed that instead of privileging the view of the curator or historian, whereby institutions exhibit works that their curators think have the highest 'artistic merit' or value, 'without needing to explain or justify their choices,' greater focus should be placed on the viewer and their relationship with those works.[404] Otherwise, they will appear as if they were 'made and displayed in a vacuum'.[405] Rather than dictating to the viewer or offering a limited interpretation of what they should appreciate or comprehend when considering a work, museums and galleries should be broadening discourse and facilitating a wider response. This can

[401] Miya Tokumitsu, 'After #MeToo, it's Time to Democratize the Art World's Workplaces', *Frieze,* (19 March 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://frieze.com>.
[402] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 10.
[403] Fabio Spirinelli, 'Museums as places of shared authority and public debate', *C²DH*, (20 November 2017), last accessed 10 January 2020, <www.c2dh.uni.lu>.
[404] Jillian Steinhauer, 'Let's Reckon with the Power Structures that Enable Abusers', *Walker,* (7 March 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://walkerart.org>.
[405] Ibid.

be achieved by encouraging diversity and adopting 'more democratic and collaborative modes of practice,' and by offering increased responsibility to their audiences, whilst being simultaneously aware of the responsibilities they have to them.[406] Both Marstine and Frisch emphasise the need for a focus on 'shared authority and of social understanding among diverse communities', so that arts institutions better serve and reflect the needs and concerns of contemporary society.[407] They believe this kind of holistic approach will facilitate both greater learning and development because it involves all sides, 'historians and the public, academics and non-academic people', and extends power rather than allowing it to remain solely in the hands of curators.[408] Marstine argues that without the 'values of shared authority', only minimal change will be viable in museums and galleries, and that 'institutional bureaucracies, the demands of funding sources and allegiances to common practice' will prevent anything more rigorous in terms of development.[409]

Exemplifying how 'shared authority' might be achieved in museums and galleries, Theresa Sotto believes that artworks and displays should become 'part of an expanded dialogue', mounted on 'an open platform' to be explored 'through the lens of the public's diverse interests and values.'[410] This would allow for 'the democratization of the knowledge-building process', because it values and respects the intelligence of the viewer and ultimately leads to our museums and galleries becoming more inclusive spaces as a result.[411] Some museums might wish to refrain from 'shared authority', as a protective mechanism, in order to retain cultural capital,

[406] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 136.
[407] Ibid., p. 5.
[408] Spirinelli, 'Museums as places of shared authority'.
[409] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 5.
[410] Sotto, 'Make Space for Difficult Conversations'.
[411] Thomas Cauvin, *Public History: A Textbook of Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 14.

which curators have established through their expertise and authority. However, in today's world of 24/7 media access where facts are only a click away, this would seem to be a naïve step because it undermines the role of the viewer, implying that they cannot be trusted in their response to a work. It is a patronising approach which maintains the position of both museums and curators at the top of a hierarchy. This is also damaging because if information is withheld from the public, museums and galleries 'cannot manage to become spaces of critical reflection and public debate', and may consequently stagnate.[412]

The treatment of sculptor Carl Andre's work illustrates the ramifications of galleries withholding information from their public. It also highlights how women artists can suffer when there is no 'shared authority'. Andre lived in a high-rise apartment in New York with his wife, the artist Ana Mendieta, from which Mendieta fell to her death in 1985 in circumstances that were considered suspicious. Despite facing criminal investigation and trial, Andre was cleared of second-degree murder in 1988, but the event did little to harm his career and his work has continued to be displayed in major solo and group exhibitions. By comparison, Mendieta's work has found less favour and we must consider why this is the case.[413] Mendieta was gaining renown at the time of her death, but the highly publicised nature of it may well have overshadowed her significance and achievements as an artist. However, the exhibition materials and statements relating to the retrospective of Andre's work at the *Dia: Beacon* gallery in New York, entitled, *Carl Andre: Sculpture as Place 1958-2010,* (5 May 2014 to 2 March 2015), failed to mention Mendieta, or her death at all. Neither would one have learnt it

[412] Spirinelli, 'Museums as places of shared authority'.
[413] Fisun Güner, 'Can you separate the artist from the art?', *Fisun Güner: writing about art,* (12 June 2017), last accessed 14 October 2018, <https://fisunguner.com>.

from the installation itself, which appeared 'as a love song to Andre's art practice.'[414] Although he was acquitted of any crime, it seems a dishonest decision on the part of the exhibition curator to omit certain 'facts' from Andre's biography and to withhold information from the visiting audience. This approach not only undermines the role of the viewer, but ironically, it also undermines the impact of Andre's art and so potentially devalues it. For example; the meaning of *Foot Candle*, (2002) (Fig. 81), which presents a woman's shoe and a funerary candle, is completely lost without the context of Mendieta's story, as the visitor is unable to access that the 'amusing, Dada-inspired ephemera' surrounding it, is in fact 'morally charged'.[415] Collated in this way, the works, part of Andre's *Dada Forgeries* series produced between the late 1950s and early 2000s, reflect the artist's creative development in which it is implied that Mendieta and her death played a role. By showing Andre's work but refusing to detail its full context, the gallery lacked sufficient faith in both the work and the prospective audience 'to surround it with its own complexity.'[416] Of course, viewers should be able to appreciate the artist's work separate from his personal history if they wish, but the choice to do so is theirs and a gallery should not make that decision on their behalf.

Interestingly, protesters and activists have taken the concept of 'shared authority' back into their own hands, by disrupting Carl Andre's shows and bringing Ana Mendieta to the forefront again, so that neither she nor her art are forgotten. This type of action also ensures that the voices of the wider public are heard and so become invested in the process as a result. One protest by the feminist *No Wave Performance Task Force* on 19 May 2014, involved demonstrators smearing 'deep red chicken

[414]Faheem Haider, 'The Problematic Elegance of Carl Andre', *Hyperallergic,* (6 March 2015), last accessed 14 January 2020, <https://hyperallergic.com>.
[415] Ibid.
[416] Deborah Cullinan, 'Accolades and Accusations Are Part of the Story', *Walker,* (7 March 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://walkerart.org>.

blood and dark, chunky guts' outside the *Dia Art Foundation* in protest against the *Dia: Beacon* where Andre's work was being exhibited (Fig. 82).[417] This not only operated as a visual reminder of the nature of Mendieta's death but also as a reference to her performance art, some of which featured themes of violence and involved blood. In particular, it recalled *'Untitled' (Rape Scene),* (1973) (Fig. 83), Mendieta's response to the campus rape and murder of Sara Ann Otten, by another student in March 1973. As part of the performance piece, Mendieta invited students to her apartment where they arrived to discover her bent across a table, naked from the waist down and covered in blood. She remained in position for an hour and as Mendieta recollected, the audience 'all sat down and started talking about it. I didn't move […] It really jolted them.'[418] The work was unannounced, so on arrival the students reacted instinctively to the piece with no guidance from the artist herself. By enabling a variety of responses and discussions to happen around a communal surface where everything was laid bare, Mendieta both literally and metaphorically brought diverse voices to the table, and so facilitated 'shared authority' in a challenging way.

In another attempt to increase awareness and offer a different perspective on Andre's work, protesters handed out postcards featuring 'an image of Mendieta and the text: "Carl Andre is at MOCA Geffen. *¿Dónde está Ana Mendieta?*" (Where is Ana Mendieta?)' (Fig. 84).[419] As Joy Silverman, a documentary producer and friend of Mendieta's, who arranged for the printing of the 5,000 postcards stated, 'We wanted Ana to have a presence and a voice'.[420] Interest in the nature of Mendieta's relationship

[417] The *No Wave Performance Task Force* is a collective which seeks to facilitate the creation of performative works built from a feminist foundation; Jillian Steinhauer, 'Artists Protest Carl Andre Retrospective with Blood Outside of Dia: Chelsea', *Hyperallergic,* (20 May 2014), last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://hyperallergic.com>.
[418] Online collection entry, 'Untitled (Rape Scene)', *Tate,* last accessed 5 May 2020, <www.tate.org.uk>.
[419] Carolina A. Miranda, 'Why protesters at MOCA's Carl Andre show won't let the art world forget about Ana Mendieta', *Los Angeles Times,* (6 April 2017), last accessed 13 January 2020, <www.latimes.com>.
[420] Ibid.

with Andre and the implication that her husband used violence is ongoing. Recently, actress Ellen Barkin used social media to report on an event in the 1970s, when as a twenty-two year old, she worked as a waitress at a party for Andre and he became angered by the service, 'Shoving me against a wall, his hands around my neck pulling me up [until] my feet left the floor' (Twitter, @EllenBarkin, 18 January 2020). However, the question is not about whether Andre was guilty of Mendieta's murder. A court of law ruled that he was not. Rather, it is about an institution's values and the decision-making process behind an exhibition. This is a significant point, given that most protests happened *outside* of a gallery, which implies that the protesters' voices were unwelcome within its walls and a lack of 'shared authority' in the first instance. Andre was acquitted of Mendieta's death but to separate her story from his seems dishonest. In this regard, we can neither separate the artist from the artwork, nor should we dictate or limit responses to it, by denying 'shared authority'.

By choosing to remove any mention of Mendieta in relation to Andre's work, galleries made 'a mistake that preys upon and chooses to ignore victims of institutionalized power in favor of a more convenient deification of the status quo.'[421] Consequently, viewers have been afforded a limited perspective which does not facilitate a true and full understanding of Andre's works and his nature as an artist, and denies a 'shared guardianship of heritage'. Curators may have a specific concept they wish to present, but they should not seek to protect their expertise and secure their authority by refusing to bring other voices into the remit, if these have the potential to dilute their own vision. Indeed, given the status and respect they generally command, curators have the potential to do so much more than protect a single perspective or guard an aspect of heritage in a limited way. In an open letter to then

[421] Lee, 'The Picasso Problem'.

MOCA director, Philippe Vergne (Appendix V), the *Association of Hysteric Curators (AHC),* highlighted their grievance at *MOCA's* decision to re-show the Andre retrospective first seen at the *Dia: Beacon,* at *The Geffen Contemporary*, (2 April 2017 to 24 July 2017) reminding curators and gallery officials 'that symbols of power emanate from institutions and reverberate through society', and as such, their impact reaches beyond the gallery space.[422] This is particularly significant considering the dates of the exhibition; the Andre show was on view less than four months after Donald Trump's Presidential Inauguration, which is disconcerting given Trump's documented abusive treatment of women. As Amanda Carpenter wrote in *TIME* in October 2019*, '*At this point, who can even keep track of all the women who have made allegations of sexual misconduct against Donald Trump?'[423] The *AHC* were angry with the decision to revive Andre's show, particularly when framed in this context, and saw it as bluntly communicating to them 'as feminists, that the museum has no allegiance to women or victims of domestic abuse' (Appendix V). The *AHC* hoped their letter would remind Directors that, as heads of large and significant institutions, they had a responsibility to help, 'symbolically stem the tide of increasingly violent, racist, and misogynistic attitudes' beyond the walls of the museum space (Appendix V). Feminist theory supports this notion of 'a social justice role for museums' and galleries.[424] Bringing people from all backgrounds, situations and minority groups together, could lead to these institutions becoming 'tantalizing sites of reconciliation where contrast and discord join in a protected environment that cultivates sympathy and reflection.'[425]

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[422] The *Association of Hysteric Curators (AHC),* is a group of feminist artists and curators based in Los Angeles, who seek to respond and discuss both historical and contemporary feminism; 'Carl Andre Exhibition At LA MOCA Sparks Protests', *Artforum,* (10 April 2017), last accessed 8 May 2020, <www.artforum.com>.
[423] Amanda Carpenter, 'Trump's Treatment of Women Was His Original Abuse of Power', *TIME,* (30 October 2019), last accessed 17 February 2020, <https://time.com>.
[424] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 13.
[425] Ibid.

As a result, they would function not only as guardians of history but as agents for change, in a way that is both beneficial for society and reflective of its needs.

In their article *Art in Times of Uncertainty: I am you, you are too,* Pavel Pyś, Vincenzo de Bellis and Adrienne Edwards argue that artworks have impact beyond their immediate agency with the viewer, because 'their significance is dictated by their ability to offer compelling insight into the world as it is today or has been in the past.'[426] They add that 'with hindsight, artworks also gather new meanings and resonate in often unintended and unforeseeable ways' because they are complex and elicit multifaceted responses.[427] The article uses the metaphor of a tree to exemplify these layers of meaning, suggesting that each of its rings pertains to the reading or understanding of an artwork at a particular time in history. As they may exist and be interacted with for a long period of time, artworks develop many more rings and as a result, their individual histories become 'increasingly complex and rich.'[428] The tree rings could also symbolise each and every human who interacts with the artwork and their share of understanding and discussion that is brought to the table.

An example of a work which demonstrates both this tree metaphor and the benefits of 'shared authority' is the *Pussyhat Project* which was co-founded by Jayna Zweiman and Krista Suh in November 2016. The *Pussyhat Project* is an artwork and global women's movement that unites a widely diverse group of people by involving them in knitting a basic pink hat. As the pattern created by Kat Coyle is both simple and available to download online for free, anyone, whatever their ability, can be involved. The hats were first worn to show 'solidarity for women's rights and in protest

[426] Pavel Pyś, Vincenzo de Bellis, and Adrienne Edwards, 'Art in Times of Uncertainty: I am you, you are too', *Walker,* (20 November 2017), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://walkerart.org>.
[427] Ibid.
[428] Ibid.

against the rhetoric used toward women and minorities' in the USA state and federal elections of 2016.[429] Later on, they were also worn by many who attended the Women's March in Washington D.C. on 21 January 2017 (Fig. 85) and other Women's marches across the world. The project also brought individuals together to protest against Donald Trump's comments 'about the freedom he felt to grab women's genitals' and to challenge the negative associations attached to the word 'pussy' in this context.[430] As it involved amateur as well as more advanced knitters, and encouraged school and knitting group activity, the project held 'a broadly democratic purview' and it was not contained within the walls of any institution.[431] Extending the metaphor of the tree rings, each individual who made or wore a hat and took part in the protests, added another 'ring' to the life of the original design. Simultaneously, the force of the project became more impactful with each individual taking part, and who, in turn, brought their own experience, knowledge and understanding to the project.

Museums and galleries are well placed to serve the needs of contemporary society through what Richard Sandell has referred to as 'moral activism'.[432] This involves such institutions perceiving themselves as 'change agents', and acknowledging that as a result of their established status, they have the potential for 'promoting social inclusion and human rights both inside and outside the museum.'[433] If a museum is not accessible or open to all views, opinions and different sources of knowledge then it cannot be considered truly representative of the space or area within which it operates. Whilst it is true that they cannot fix society, nor should that be their function, museums can and should address its failings, problems or inequalities where

[429] 'Pussyhat Project: Our Story', *Pussyhat Project,* last accessed 8 May 2020, <www.pussyhatproject.com>.
[430] Ibid.
[431] Tokumitsu, 'After #MeToo'.
[432] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 5.
[433] Ibid.

possible. Specifically, with regard to this thesis, galleries should not ignore the problem of sexual harassment and abuse which recent evidence indicates has been so prevalent within the art world. Instead, they should 'seize upon the opportunity to collaborate in order to share experiences and collectively think through the difficult and urgent issues facing civil society today.'[434] Rather than perceiving 'art-making' as limited to solely the 'final product,' institutions need to be proactive in thinking of 'artworks and the lives of artists as the cultural material we have as a society that allows us to engage in provocative, multifaceted conversation that leads to progress.'[435]

This concept of proactive thinking and utilising artwork to lead to greater and wider discussion with the public was synthesised in the actions of the *Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art (PAFA)* when allegations against Chuck Close first broke in the media on 19 December 2017. The institution had to quickly decide what to do regarding their exhibition of *c.* ninety images entitled *Chuck Close Photographs,* (6 October 2017 to 8 April 2018). Knowing that nothing could be achieved before the Christmas break, it was agreed a discussion forum would be held as soon as the full community returned to work after the holiday period. The forum, which took place on 17 January 2018, was centrally focused on community involvement and demonstrated an alignment with Marstine's plea for 'shared authority', as it included staff and students of every level and from different departments. This gave everyone a chance to share their views which ensured the conversation was varied, 'with both men and women sharing ways they had experienced problems of gender imbalance and other

[434] Ibid., p.159.
[435] Cullinan, 'Accolades and Accusations'.

sorts of endemic power hierarchies in the art world.'[436] One particularly powerful statement made by a female student was, 'I'm incredibly frustrated that, yet again, I am losing time in my own studio working on my own projects to have a conversation about how to solve the problems that men create.'[437] However, the process reflects a proactive and highly inclusive way of working, which had a significant impact on the direction that the gallery was to take next. It sent a powerful message about the *PAFA's* attitude towards equality and the choices it might make in the future, all whilst alerting the public to a specific issue of sexual harassment.

A similarly proactive approach to 'shared authority' was adopted by the *Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft*, in relation to its exhibition *Eric Gill, The Body*, (29 April to 3 September 2017) when Nathaniel Hepburn decided to address difficult aspects of Gill's biography directly. He opted for an open and inclusive consultation with various organisations, including charities dealing with sexual abuse, in order to make sure everyone's feelings and opinions were heard and accounted for. Hepburn instigated this workshop, as he 'didn't know anything about child abuse'.[438] He was highly aware of the need to gain a broader understanding of the issue because as an institution, the *Ditchling Museum* wanted to be fully aware of how the exhibition could impact those who have experienced abuse. It is clear that knowledge of Eric Gill's biography and the context in which his art was made renders his images and sculptures problematic. However, in making 'space for difficult conversations that honor diverse viewpoints', and by seeking the opinions and understanding of those who have experienced sexual violence or abuse, Hepburn encouraged 'shared

[436] Nisa Mackie, 'The Conversations That Follow Abuse of Power', *Walker,* (19 April 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://walkerart.org>.
[437] Ibid.
[438] Cooke, 'Eric Gill'.

authority' and directly addressed this problematic context.[439] In considering Gill's works, we cannot avoid or hide the fact that the artist was an abuser, because if we do, then we also erase the story of the person who was abused. We silence the voice of the victim.

The *Ditchling Museum's* approach allows for Gill's artwork to be displayed and appreciated, but recognises and respects that voices other than the artist's must also be heard. Instead of employing censorship, it facilitated the creation of a wider context, inclusive of different perspectives. This is important because we cannot presume to know or understand another person's view or every view. In *The Descent of Man,* (2017), Grayson Perry states that people assume being a transvestite confers upon him 'a special insight into the opposite gender.'[440] He is quick to argue that this is both 'rubbish' and an idea 'insulting to women', highlighting that as he was 'brought up as a man,' how could he 'know anything about the experience of being a woman?'[441] He also notes that assuming they know more or perceiving themselves to be more rational is commonplace amongst the male sex. Just as Picasso was mistaken in his assumption that 'he could represent all of the perspectives' (1:04:17), it is important to note that neither can curators, artists or anyone else involved in the presentation of art, but that does not mean these other perspectives should be ignored.[442]

Another way in which museums can shift their focus from collections to audience is by thinking carefully about the language they employ in presenting information to the public, and The *Ditchling Museum* was proactive in considering precisely *how* to discuss the context of Gill's work. Historically, and reflected in art

[439] Sotto, 'Make Space for Difficult Conversations'.
[440] Grayson Perry, *The Descent of Man* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2017), p. 5.
[441] Ibid.
[442] *Hannah Gadsby: Nanette*, dir. by Madeleine Parry and Jon Olb (2018), Netflix, 67 minutes.

history, there exists the idea of a 'good' or a 'credible' rape victim, who usually ends up dead, regularly by her own hand, or who is silenced in other ways. Parul Sehgal, for example, draws attention to Lucretia, 'whose rape catalyzed the founding of the Roman Republic,' and Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* who 'has her tongue cut out to keep her from testifying'.[443] Thinking began to change in the 1980s, partly as a result of the proliferation of books by women recounting the sexual abuse they had suffered as children, including Ellen Bass and Louise Thornton's *I Never Told Anyone,* (1983) and Ellen Bass and Laura Davis' *The Courage to Heal,* (1988). Sehgal notes that these books began to replace the more familiar designation 'victim' with the term 'survivor', as a means of emphasising 'women's resourcefulness rather than their helplessness.'[444] However, at the consultation and workshop day *Not Turning a Blind Eye* held at the *Ditchling Museum*, in advance of their exhibition on Gill, participants were handed a crib sheet which informed them 'that some organisations working in this field believe it is better to use the terminology "a person who has experienced violence" than the words "victim" or "survivor"'.[445] Undoubtedly, the language and terminology applied to those who have experienced sexual abuse is still contested as Sehgal writes, 'the pendulum swings from one extreme to another: from casting rape as insurmountable pain to casting the survivor as possessing superhuman strength.'[446] However, by specifically considering the appropriate language and terminology it should use, the *Ditchling Museum* showed another level of regard for those who might be specifically upset by Gill's artwork, emphasising benefits of 'shared authority'. Hepburn was shocked to discover that no other museum had appeared to have dealt with these issues previously, and so there was no model of good practice for *Ditchling*

[443] Sehgal, 'The Forced Heroism of the "Survivor"'.
[444] Ibid.
[445] Cooke, 'Eric Gill: can we separate the artist from the abuser?'.
[446] Sehgal, 'The Forced Heroism of the "Survivor"'.

to follow. Although Michael Frisch initially explored the concept of shared authority in the 1990s, related practices have yet to be embraced by every arts institution.

The humble post-it note has been used widely by museums and artists as a vehicle for merging an institution's voice with those of visitors to the gallery space. The most famous example of this is the *The Clothesline Project/El Tendedero* by artist Mónica Mayer (1978 – present) (Fig. 86), which has been implemented in various museums and communities around the world since its inception. It has been installed with greater regularity and further afield, in the wake of the sexual harassment whistleblowing after #MeToo. The installation calls for visitors to detail comments about violence against women on pink notelets, in response to pre-assigned questions such as, 'As a woman, where do you feel safe?' or 'Have you ever experienced violence or harassment? What happened?'[447] The site-specific nature of the work encourages women from all backgrounds and of all ages, to respond to the questions in relation to the place where they live. The responses are then hung on a physical clothesline and pinned up in the gallery space. In this way, an item traditionally associated with women is repurposed to engage each community where it is installed, in discussion about women's lived experience.

The post-it note has also been used elsewhere to illustrate that art has agency beyond the gallery space, and to facilitate real change in decision-making processes. Following the *PAFA* forum, which discussed what should be done with photographs by Chuck Close already on display in their institution, a decision was made to address related issues, specifically questions of gender and power, in a direct manner. The *PAFA* believed that although removing these images had the potential

[447] Nadja Sayej, 'The Clothesline Project: an exhibit asking women to share stories of sexual abuse', *The Guardian,* (16 November 2017), last accessed 10 January 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.

to be ‘easier’ in that it might ‘mute the stories’ of abuse and in doing so, avoid controversy, this would also mean placing ‘other as-yet-untold tales to the sidelines’, which would constitute an abrogation of their duty to the public (Appendix VI). Consequently, they took a more proactive step by creating a new temporary group show in an adjacent gallery entitled, *The Art World We Want,* (13 February to 8 April 2018). During a process that lasted *c.* ten days, students and members of staff were invited to contribute ideas and to consider what artwork should be included or left out of the exhibition. They sought ‘to drill down to a list of artworks and questions’ which their community believed ‘made for the most powerful combinations for generating forward-thinking conversation.’[448] Curators made the decision to paint on the walls above and around the artworks in *The Art World We Want* with questions such as ‘Who has had the power to speak about women’s bodies?’ and ‘Who do we need to hear more from?’ (Fig. 87).[449] In this way, the exhibition sought to challenge rather than preserve ‘our artistic mentors, heroes and even the canon of art history’ (Appendix VI).

The *PAFA’s* action can be seen as an initial but significant step towards change in itself, but it will also impact on long term development. The decision to use post-it notes allowed gallery visitors to respond both to the exhibition and to the institution itself. Some of the post-it notes also addressed and replied to other notes that had been pasted up and as a result, several conversations were naturally established whereby individuals interacted with each other in real time. The individuals, although not officially recorded, came from all backgrounds and as they

[448] Mackie, ‘The Conversations That Follow’.
[449] Nadja Sayej, ‘Chuck Close: how to deal with an artist accused of sexual harassment’, *The Guardian,* (15 February 2018), last accessed 18 February 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.

had free choice whether or not to take part, the process was truly democratic and entirely without hierarchy. Some notes included captions such as ‘more women artists’, ‘more black artists’ and ‘pay artists better’ (Fig. 88), whilst others questioned art’s intrinsic worth and argued for ‘trying to separate value from monetization, or at least change where the valuation is.’ [450] Interestingly, the central thrust of the conversations considered where the power to make decisions in a gallery or museum resides, with some beginning to think practically about what adjustments need to be made to the existing structure of decision making so that it is fit for purpose.

As well as these notes being beneficial in opening up the conversation to address difficult subject matter, the comments were also archived by the education department at the museum, in a report that Brooke Davis Anderson director of the *PAFA* stated, ‘will impact the decisions we make’ henceforth, in an affirmative ‘attempt to contribute to lasting change.’[451] Archiving the notes also facilitates ‘guardianship of heritage’. Many who have experienced sexual abuse have chosen to share their stories through social media, but although the internet seems enduring, it is more transient than people think. Printed matter can survive for centuries ‘but “the average life of a Web page is about a hundred days”’.[452] If not archived, these stories may just disappear. Most importantly, these post-it notes exemplify Sandell’s ‘moral activism’ by having agency significantly beyond the gallery space itself.[453]

Perhaps the most significant way in which arts institutions can lead to lasting change in widening participation and promoting social inclusion, is by addressing the

[450] Mackie, ‘The Conversations That Follow’.
[451] Sayej, ‘Chuck Close: how to deal with an artist accused’.
[452] Nora Caplan-Bricker, ‘The Challenge Of Preserving The Historical Record Of #MeToo’, *The New Yorker,* (11 March 2019), last accessed 10 January 2020, <www.newyorker.com>.
[453] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 5.

canon of what is displayed or considered worthy of display. In the 1970s, Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock began their pivotal work addressing the need to augment the canon with 'an infusion of female Michelangelos or artists of color.'[454] They called for a fundamental rethinking of how the history of art is presented. Half a century has passed, yet the necessity for 'correcting, complicating and providing alternatives to dominant art world myths' remains, alongside the need to challenge 'the legend of the lone, male genius.'[455] As social and political views alter and the world changes, the art world needs to adapt accordingly, so that it adequately reflects and represents the changing times. It has already been established that this does not necessarily require museums and galleries to limit their collections in any way, or to remove specific artwork or artists, but rather to supplement and expand them by becoming more diverse. Art institutions should seek to reconsider 'an exhibition or collections program to identify whose voices and artworks are overrepresented and whose overlooked, and why.'[456] By so doing, they will be demonstrating an active stance in 'addressing power imbalances in both the gallery and the office', working 'to promote equality' and establishing 'shared authority' as a result.[457] The *Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA)* set a precedent with this, when it announced its plans in November 2019 that it would only purchase work by female artists in the following year, as well as promising to 'showcase at least 20 exhibitions featuring work from a diverse range of women', as part of its '2020 Vision initiative'.[458] Before, this plan was unveiled, the Museum's collection included just four per cent of works by female artists and so this was a

[454] Mary Louise Schumacher, 'Rethinking art museums in the age of #MeToo', *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel,* (18 May 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://eu.jsonline.com>.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Steinhauer, 'Let's Reckon with the Power Structures'.
[457] Ibid.
[458] Anna Sturla, 'Baltimore Museum of Art will only buy women's art in 2020', *CNN,* (1 December 2019), last accessed 18 February 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com>.

significant step, particularly considering the budget for acquisitions at the *BMA* in 2020 is approximately roughly $2 million.[459] Purchasing work by female artists, rather than just having it on loan, demonstrates the *BMA's* determination to readdress the power balance. Furthermore, it not only pays for the artist to continue her work, but also allows the gallery to display it as part of future exhibitions.

One artist who will feature on the walls of the *BMA* as a result of their recent initiatives is Elissa Blount Moorhead, whose first experience of seeing someone who looked like herself in an artwork, was on her father's old record covers rather than the walls of a museum or gallery. She noted that the brightly coloured sleeves of albums by the funk and rock band *Funkadelic*, created by Pedro Bell, featured strong, black women in space age environments. This is exemplified by the striking cover for *One Nation Under a Groove,* (1978) (Fig. 89), with its strong blue, green and pink tones, and the powerful stance adopted by the woman in the right-hand side of the image. Moorhead's own works now reflect this aesthetic. In a still from her directorial work *As of A Now*, (2018) (Fig. 90), a 3D film installation projected onto a terraced house which depicts 'the imagined quotidien [*sic*] movements of a Black family in Baltimore over 150 years', a black woman is swathed in a background of vivid, shocking green.[460] The work speaks of synaesthesia, with the pulse of the colour behind adding life and vibrancy to this still capture. The *BMA's* decision to display Moorhead, demonstrates that it understands 'the potency of seeing and hearing people who not only represent us but look and sound like us'.[461] Certainly, the importance of this is reiterated by comments made in *The Times* article about the formation of the *Critics' Club,* where seventeen year old Olamide Taiwo stated that although she was interested in

[459] Ibid.
[460] 'Press Clip AOAN', *Baker Artist Portfolios,* last accessed 9 May 2020, <https://bakerartist.org>.
[461] Perry, *The Descent of Man*, p. 26.

attending galleries and watching plays, she did not believe that it was her 'type of scene', since 'when I go to these places I do not see people that look like me so I get impostor syndrome.'[462] This is precisely the issue that Moorhead is trying to address through her work, hoping to encourage and ensure a diversity in our museums and galleries, which she believes was significantly lacking when she was growing up. She asserts, 'I want to make work that's not just a reflection, but really an extension of who I am and who we may be,' so that when visitors 'walk through, they see something that is resonant and that reminds them I'm there, on the other side.'[463] By exhibiting her work, the *BMA* are ensuring real inclusivity and taking steps to achieve societal change. However, smaller or regional museums, constrained by funding concerns and reliant on blockbusters or well-known artists for footfall and income, may struggle to emulate this practice.

The concept of making way for 'new voices' and 'new artworks' relates not only to the artwork displayed and the public which views it, but also to those who hold leadership roles in our museums and galleries.[464] If these institutions are to achieve the 'shared authority' that Marstine states is of utmost importance to a 'socially responsible museum', then this authority must also be shared at every level.[465] In 2018, Jo Caust claimed that whilst 'women are the major consumers as well as the largest percentage of employees in the arts', there are very few women or people of colour in leadership, despite the *Andrew W. Mellon Foundation* revealing in a staff demographic survey in January 2019 that there had been an increase in appointments

[462] Garlick, 'Critics' Club'.
[463] Sturla, 'Baltimore Museum of Art'.
[464] Pogrebin, and Schuessler, 'Chuck Close Is Accused of Harassment.'.
[465] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 10.

for these minority groups.[466] This survey, which looked at 332 museums and over 30,000 employees in the United States of America, concluded that 'the percentage of women holding leadership roles – which the survey defines as "all executive positions," including directors, CEOs, and CFOs' had 'increased from 57 percent to 62 percent between 2015 and 2018.'[467] However, whilst these figures suggest improvement, 'Directorships […] remain majority male, as do curatorial roles with management responsibilities.'[468] For change to happen and for a determined movement towards 'shared authority', there needs to be a different way of thinking and greater equality. Grayson Perry believes that gender equality should not feel disturbing or unsettling in any way, but something that is essentially good sense.[469] He substantiates that what he refers to as the 'Default Man' has been in charge of the wider world for some time, but should now 'relinquish his dominance.'[470] Introducing different leadership structures and adopting an inclusive approach to employing staff, especially in major or management roles, would ensure museums and galleries reflect the society within which they operate and so are likely to serve it better. As 'women and minorities bring very different life experiences to bear on their decisions' this could ultimately lead to beneficial change with greater equality and diversity going forward.[471]

It is important to remember that appointing a woman or promoting diversity at the top does not guarantee change. It may be more likely through female leadership but not automatically so. The *Tate* faced criticism in 2018, when Maria Balshaw, who

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[466] Jo Caust, 'To fix gender inequality in arts leadership we need more women in politics and chairing boards', *The Conversation,* (11 June 2018), last accessed 13 January 2020, <https://theconversation.com>; Caroline Goldstein, 'Women Have Made Gains in Museum Leadership, But Progress Has Been More Incremental for People of Color, a New Study Says', *artnet news,* (28 January 2019), last accessed 13 January 2020, <https://news.artnet.com>.
[467] Ibid., Goldstein.
[468] Ibid.
[469] Perry, *The Descent of Man*, p. 22.
[470] Ibid.
[471] Ibid.

had recently been appointed as its Director, made comments relating to the recent allegations of sexual harassment and abuse in the art world. In an interview with Rachel Campbell-Johnston in *The Times,* released on 3 February 2018, Balshaw said, 'I personally have never suffered any such issues […] Then, I wouldn't […] I was raised to be a confident woman who, when I encountered harassment, would say, "Please don't"…or something rather more direct.'[472] In focusing on her own experience, Balshaw failed to understand that the views and experiences of others may differ from hers but are equally as important. Liv Wynter, artist in residence for education, schools and learning at the *Tate*, resigned from her role in response to Balshaw's comments, citing her remarks as 'personally harmful'.[473] As a survivor of abuse herself, and one who creates work that she thinks 'quite explicitly' references 'what it means to have survived a violent relationship,' Wynter found Balshaw's comments disrespectful.[474] When Balshaw failed to take responsibility for her words, at a public meeting called in the wake of *The Times* article, claiming that the publication had misquoted her, Wynter could not see how she could continue to work under her leadership. Her public resignation letter clarified that she felt 'like there is no dignity to be found as a survivor whilst working for her, nor is there any dignity in creating work about abuse and survival under the guide of someone who considers the abuse I suffered to be my fault.'[475] Balshaw's stance belittled the experiences of women who have suffered abuse, which in the light of #MeToo, is inappropriate.

[472] Rachel Campbell-Johnston, 'Tate boss Maria Balshaw on the top job in the art world', *The Times,* (3 February 2018), last accessed 10 May 2020, <www.thetimes.co.uk>.
[473] Geraldine Kendall Adams, 'Tate artist resigns over director's sexual harassment remarks', *Museums Association,* (9 March 2018), last accessed 10 May 2020, <www.museumsassociation.org>.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Ibid; Liv Wynter's website is currently under construction, where her public resignation letter could previously have been found, <https://cargocollective.com/livwynter>.

When women have been promoted to higher management or directorial positions, it has not always led to real change in the power base. An article from *The New York Times*, updated on 29 October 2018 looks at the '201 powerful men' that were 'brought down' by the #MeToo movement and analyses the choice that 'nearly half of their replacements are women.'[476] On one level, this appears a positive move towards equality. However, the article refers to what Michelle K. Ryan and S. Alexander Haslam have coined 'the glass cliff', that is the moment at which 'women are appointed to leadership in times of organisational crisis, when the chance of failure is higher.'[477] When women are promoted to fail in this way, traditional power structures are protected rather than challenged. A recent example of this is when Theresa May stepped up to the role of UK Prime Minister after the Brexit vote, when the reluctance of her male colleagues to do so suggests this was unlikely to be a positive career move for anybody. Despite this, it is important to remember that thinking outside of the box is increasingly likely to facilitate change in future, with 'diversity in power' meaning that there is 'an inbuilt devil's advocacy' potentially representing a multiplicity of perspectives.[478]

Museums and galleries can be seen to operate with a 'unique and increasingly critical role', manifesting 'as public places that are among the only places where we can come together in all our diversity in order to grapple with who we are.'[479] If successful in drawing communities together to help craft and mould arts institutions that befit and reflect contemporary society, then 'galleries can become the place for

[476] Audrey Carlsen, and others, '#MeToo Brought Down 201 Powerful Men. Nearly Half of Their Replacements Are Women.', *The New York Times,* (29 October 2018), last accessed 13 January 2020, <www.nytimes.com>.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Perry, *The Descent of Man*, p. 26.
[479] Cullinan, 'Accolades and Accusations'.

the most important conversations of our time.'[480] This will involve attention being diverted from the artworks as 'too-precious object[s]' and them being perceived instead as 'a radically public asset surrounded by story and by inquiry'.[481] It would be a disservice to future generations for our museums and galleries to be little more than 'acquisition machines,' when there is rich opportunity for curators to unleash the power art has, 'to enlighten, expose, unsettle, shock, and stir,' whilst simultaneously helping people to express their unhappiness with, and resistance to, inequality of any description.[482] Instead, they must realise their unique position as agents for change so that their role continues to develop in the twenty-first century.

[480] Ibid.
[481] Ibid.
[482] Schumacher, 'Rethinking art museums'; Tokumitsu, 'After #MeToo'.

Conclusion

'We welcome looking at art not as the product of an isolated talented individual but as the urgent manifestation of our contested present.[483]

~ Deborah Cullinan

In December 2017, a cartoon image was shared on *Twitter*, which featured a weight fastened to the end of a piece of string 'that had traveled halfway through its long arc ("all of history") with a little blip of the upswing ("since #MeToo started in September")'.[484] It was captioned, 'The pendulum has swung too far.'[485] This image visually demonstrated both the intransigence of patriarchy and that there is still a considerable way to go before equality is achieved. It also established that the #MeToo movement, which is seen as a 'blip' in the trajectory of patriarchy, has not impacted on it significantly enough. Although change has begun, more is needed. It implies that society should consider #MeToo and its moment in history as a moment from which we can all learn and then adapt our behaviours accordingly. In a similar vein, museums and galleries should harness the energy and attention that the #MeToo movement has focused, using its momentum to consider new ways of curating and exhibiting, supported by the creation of a reinvigorated ethical model.

Contending with challenges posed by new understandings and changes prompted by the movement is not going to be an easy task for a variety of reasons,

[483] Cullinan, 'Accolades and Accusations'.
[484] Journalist Aruna D'Souza was contacted on 16 March 2020 asking if she could send a link to the cartoon she referred to in her article for *MOMUS*. D'Souza replied on 20 March 2020 and had been unable to re-source the image again on *Twitter*. Aruna D'Souza, 'Worst-Case Scenarios: Contemporary Art's #MeToo Handwringing', *MOMUS,* (21 March 2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://momus.ca>.
[485] Ibid.

but its impact on curatorial decision making cannot be ignored. As Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey wrote in 2019, 'The #MeToo movement is an example of social change in our time but is also a test of it: In this fractured environment, will all of us be able to forge a new set of mutually fair rules and protections?'[486] Moving forward, museums and galleries should proactively embrace diversity and inclusion, or continue to do so, and not only in reaction to the noise or protest against works in their collections made by the wider public, but as a commitment to reflecting the society they represent. This is because when museums better reflect the make-up of the society within which they operate, then it becomes more difficult for any kind of oppressive behaviour to take place as a consequence of one group having more power over another. This should also, in turn, have a positive effect on widening participation from under-represented groups, which is beneficial because inclusive and diverse institutions are likely to be more understanding and aware of issues of abuse, sexual or otherwise, and therefore better equipped to deal with them. Museums and galleries are likely to face challenges in adapting their practices, but should be prepared to learn from any mistakes that they make in the process of change and development, giving credence to their accountability and thus ensuring that they remain vitally relevant and respected cultural institutions.

The downfall of Harvey Weinstein, who on 11 March 2020, was sentenced to twenty three years in prison for criminal sex offences, might give the impression that establishment attitudes to sexual harassment and abuse are really changing.[487] If someone of Weinstein's status and financial power can be brought to account, then

[486] Jodi Kantor, and Megan Twohey, *She Said: Breaking The Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite A Movement* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 5.
[487] Lauren Aratani, and Ed Pilkington, 'Harvey Weinstein sentenced to 23 years in prison on rape conviction', *The Guardian,* (11 March 2020), last accessed 18 March 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.

this would appear to indicate a shift in sociopolitical power structures. However, evidence suggests that this is not the case. As recently as 31 December 2019, *Hyperallergic* released an article called 'The 20 Most Powerless People in the Art World: 2019 Edition' and listed second were 'Sexual Harassment Whistleblowers'.[488] The article demonstrated that even though it had been two years since the #MeToo movement firmly took hold, those who accuse individuals of sexual harassment and abuse, or indeed accuse institutions of abetting or ignoring its occurrence, are often still struggling to achieve justice. This point was further emphasised by *ArtReview's* 'Power 100' list, which saw the #MeToo movement drop from third place in 2018 to twenty-first the following year.[489] In the wider context, *The New York Times* recently reported that in China, an increasing number of men accused of sexual misconduct have used defamation lawsuits to counter the claims made against them, whilst in the UK, *The Guardian* has noted a rapid increase in allegations of rape and sexual assault made by women, alongside a significant plunge in convictions.[490]

These figures reflect similar trends in the art world. Since the start of the #MeToo movement, members of the art community have been accused of sexual harassment and abuse, yet very few of these men have been brought to account or faced legal action. One of the most high-profile cases involved the now ex-publisher of *Artforum*, Knight Landesman, who has been referred to as 'the Harvey Weinstein of the art world', and faced accusations of sexual misconduct from more than twenty

[488] 'The 20 Most Powerless People in the Art World: 2019 Edition', *Hyperallergic,* (31 December 2019), last accessed 20 January 2020, <https://hyperallergic.com>.
[489] 'Power 100: The annual ranking of the most influential people in art', *ArtReview,* (2019), last accessed 11 January 2020, <https://artreview.com>.
[490] Sui- Lee Wee, and Li Yuan, 'They Said #MeToo. Now They Are Being Sued.', *The New York Times,* (26 December 2019), last accessed 16 May 2020, <www.nytimes.com>; Owen Bowcott, '#MeToo and the justice system: complaints up, but convictions down', *The Guardian,* (15 October 2019), last accessed 17 November 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.

women.[491] However, as *Hyperallergic* makes clear, both Landesman and *Artforum* are yet to face 'any serious consequences' or offer 'a full accounting and detailed apology'.[492] Only one of the cases made against Landesman, concerning ex-*Artforum* employee Amanda Andrea Schmitt made it to court. Even so, whilst a New York appeals court had reversed an earlier ruling from a lower court marking some level of progress in this case, the court still 'dismissed all claims against Landesman personally.'[493] Whilst stepping down from his role as publisher at *Artforum* in October 2017, Landesman has continued to maintain partial ownership of the magazine. Although he has yet to be found guilty of any crime, the number of accusations made against him implies, at the very least, that women do not find it easy to be in his employ and their accusations should not be readily or easily dismissed.

In India, the *Instagram* account *Scene and Herd*, whose biography reads, 'Cutting through BS in the Indian Art world, one predator and power play, at a time' (@herdsceneand), has faced censorship for disclosing allegations against Indian artists including Riyas Komu and Subodh Gupta. In response to their second *Instagram* post relating to the matter, Gupta filed a civil defamation suit against *Scene and Herd*, which called for monetary compensation of 50 million rupees (*c.* £500,000) in terms of damages. Gupta also asked for the removal of all posts which pertained to him, arguing that the allegations had damaged his reputation. The male judge presiding over the case ordered *Facebook,* who have owned *Instagram* since 9 April 2012, to remove the posts and release the identity of the account holder and

[491] Nadja Sayej, '"It's hurting everyone": the truth about sexual misconduct in the art world', *The Guardian,* (31 October 2017), last accessed 3 March 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.
[492] 'The 20 Most Powerless People in the Art World', *Hyperallergic*.
[493] Rachel Corbett, 'Appeals Court Greenlights Ex-Artforum Employee Amanda Schmitt's Lawsuit Against the Magazine – But Lets Knight Landesman Off the Hook', *artnet news,* (27 December 2019), last accessed 3 March 2020, <https://news.artnet.com>.

administrator of *Scene and Herd*. This caused outrage amongst many art workers, who saw the order as 'an outright move to silence the survivors and gag the platform that gave them a voice while protecting their identities.'[494] The case was finally settled at the end of February 2020 when, according to the Indian digitised newspaper *The Print,* lawyers for *Scene and Herd* 'informed the court that they were willing to withdraw the posts and allegations.'[495] Gupta's lawyers responded saying they were ready 'to let go of the other demands and agreed to maintain the anonymity of the Instagram account.'[496] Whilst this settlement was actually formulated by both parties as the court was unable to reach any findings, the case was still progressive. Though *Scene and Herd* had to concede on one level, by removing any posts relating to Gupta, retaining anonymity was crucial in allowing 'those with little access to power to warn others about predators' and be protected in doing so.[497]

Perhaps the most highly publicised case regarding the art world and #MeToo occurred in the USA and involved Joshua Helmer, who in October 2019 was included in the *ARTnews* article, 'Museum Directors Under 40: A Brief History of 20 Young Leaders Who Helped Shape Their Institutions.'[498] Helmer had joined the *Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA)*, after completing his Master's degree in 2014, moving quickly into the role of Assistant Director for Interpretation. It appears that he resigned from that post in February 2018, without any reason cited in the art press or anywhere else at the time, before moving to the *Erie Museum* in Pennsylvania in October that year,

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[494] Valentina Di Liscia, 'In Subodh Gupta Defamation Lawsuit, "Whistleblower" Defendants Give First Statements in Court', *Hyperallergic,* (23 January 2020), last accessed 13 March 2020, <https://hyperallergic.com>.
[495] Apoorva Mandhani, 'What artist Subodh Gupta's case against anonymous #MeToo posts achieved – and didn't', *The Print,* (21 February 2020), last accessed 17 March 2020, <https://theprint.in>.
[496] Ibid.
[497] M Neelika Jayawardane, 'Anonymity is a necessary tool for India's #MeToo movement', *Aljazeera,* (14 October 2019), last accessed 11 March 2020, <www.aljazeera.com>.
[498] Claire Selvin, 'Museum Directors Under 40: A Brief History of 20 Young Leaders Who Helped Shape Their Institutions', *ARTnews,* (28 October 2019), last accessed 17 February 2020, <www.artnews.com>.

in the more senior role of Executive Director. Shortly after he started at the *Erie*, a complaint of abuse was made against Helmer, and although the Museum investigated the claims, initially, they did not see any grounds for discipline. However, it transpired that Helmer had been accused of similar behaviour in his previous post. In 2016, several female staff members at the *PMA* logged complaints about him with both museum managers and human resources. One woman reported that Helmer told her 'she "wasn't smart enough to work at a museum" but that he could help her have "a great trajectory."'[499] Another reported that working with him had led her to 'vomiting from the stress.'[500] Taken individually, these grievances perhaps did not seem to amount to anything, and many of the complainants were left unsure what action, if any, had been taken as a result of them being made. Whether the *Erie Museum* was aware of Helmer's previous record of behaviour at the *PMA* is uncertain, but he was ultimately fired from his role with them on Monday 13 January 2020, following a *New York Times exposé* published on the previous Friday.[501] It is good that the *Erie Museum* acted so quickly. The *PMA* reasserted that it strives to be a workplace 'free from harassment or inappropriate behavior of any kind' and that they would review their 'programs and policies' to ensure this, which is also a positive step.[502] However, this case should never have been allowed to occur or escalate to such a level in the first place, and rather begs the question: why did it happen? Should the women's complaints have been taken more seriously initially, and why were they not? This leads to conjecture that there was mismanagement or a cover up, which in turn implies that institutions sought to avoid negative publicity, and in so doing, protected a perpetrator of abuse.

[499] Robin Pogrebin, and Zachary Small, 'He Left a Museum After Women Complained; His Next Job Was Bigger', *The New York Times,* (10 January 2020), last accessed 19 March 2020, <www.nytimes.com>.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Ibid.
[502] Ibid.

The number of disclosures of sexual harassment and abuse within the art world and elsewhere, which appear to have been swept aside or ignored, demonstrates just how damaging it can be for women to disclose their truth, particularly in 'an industry that "cancels" those who do not prostrate themselves before the powerful, and how difficult it is to change these toxic practices.'[503] Also, whilst the Weinstein case set a precedent in terms of its comparative justice, it perhaps caused other sexual misconduct cases either to go unnoticed or to appear less significant in the wider context. Certainly, the cases of Landesman, Gupta and Helmer, alongside those referenced elsewhere in this thesis, reflect the much larger and integral problem that women and minorities are frequently forced to accept aggressive and disagreeable behaviour in the Arts, in order to protect their careers and general livelihoods. This becomes more of an issue when official forms of disclosure are considered difficult or viewed as unsafe. An anonymous survey entitled 'Freedom of Expression', created by the organisation *Arts Professional* and released in February 2020, explored the extent to which arts workers in the UK feel able to speak out about their profession.[504] Over 500 respondents, including artists and those who work in the arts more broadly, collectively contributed *c.* 60,000 words in reply to questions relating to their personal experiences of 'navigating controversy and coercion' in the sector.[505] The results revealed that an engrained 'culture of self-censorship and fear of backlash from funders, colleagues and the public is convincing arts and cultural workers to stay silent on important issues'.[506] As the survey was not given to specific individuals in order to try and target a wide remit of people, it is important to recognise

[503] Jayawardane, 'Anonymity is a necessary tool'.
[504] Adele Redmond, '"Culture of censorship" as arts workers fear backlash', *Arts Professional,* (20 February 2020), last accessed 7 March 2020, <www.artsprofessional.co.uk>.
[505] Ibid.
[506] Ibid.

that it therefore elicited a group of self-selecting respondents. However, one in six participants claimed that they had been provided with the offer of a financial settlement, or what is otherwise known as a 'gagging order', in return for their silence on a matter relating to their employment.[507] The trend across the answers received suggested that these Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) were used mainly as a means of avoiding 'negative publicity' and in order to 'control dissenting voices.'[508] This means that the real figures relating to abuse in the art world are unlikely to be known, as not all cases will be reported or become public knowledge.

It is well documented that both Harvey Weinstein and Jeffrey Epstein (who was also convicted of sex offences in a high-profile case), used NDAs extensively as a means of silencing their victims. In October 2018, then UK Prime Minister Theresa May expressed concern to the *House of Commons* regarding NDAs stating, 'it is clear that some employers are using them unethically'.[509] May's comment came in response to provocation from the Labour MP Jess Phillips who said, 'It seems our laws allow rich and powerful men to do what they want as long as they pay to keep it quiet'.[510] Phillips was addressing a story reported in *The Daily Telegraph,* that 'an unnamed "leading businessman" had used NDAs to pay off former employees who had accused him of bullying, sexual harassment and racial abuse'.[511] Boris Johnson's government has since said that it is dedicated to creating legislation which would prohibit the use of NDAs in this domain. This is a positive step and should lead to institutions becoming much more wary of damping down cases of sexual harassment.

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[507] Redmond, '"Culture of censorship"'.
[508] Javier Pes, 'Gag Orders and NDAs Are More Common at UK Arts Organizations Than You Think, According to a Troubling New Survey', *artnet news,* (25 February 2020), 4 March 2020, <https://news.artnet.com>.
[509] Esther Addley, and Dan Sabbagh, '"British #MeToo scandal" puts non-disclosure agreements in spotlight', *The Guardian,* (24 October 2018), last accessed 17 November 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.
[510] Ibid.
[511] Ibid.

However, reaction to the cases listed above, alongside a proliferation of NDAs in the arts sector, would imply that we are, at this juncture, situated in what Aruna D'Souza has defined as a 'sex-panic panic' - a state of terror where people are fearful 'that women's refusal to tolerate inequality in the workplace will usher in a draconian prohibition of pleasure'.[512] Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that there is a backlash response towards the #MeToo movement. Just a year after it began, *NPR-Ipsos* polls demonstrated how divided people's views on the movement were.[513] Although they surveyed only a small proportion of people and solely in the USA, the statistics are still informative. It was recorded that 69 per cent of over 1000 respondents believed that the #MeToo movement had 'created a climate in which offenders will now be held accountable' but also, of those surveyed, 43 per cent felt the movement had 'gone too far.'[514] Although the meaning of 'too far' was not defined, *NPR-Ipsos* stated that follow-up conversations indicated concerns of 'a rush to judgement, the prospect of unproven accusations ruining peoples' careers or reputations, and a bandwagon effect'.[515] Similar concerns have been voiced by powerful figures such as President Donald Trump who, on hearing Brett Kavanaugh – his then nomination for the Supreme Court – faced allegations of sexual harassment and abuse, stated that it is 'a scary time for young men in America […] you can be guilty of something that you may not be guilty of'.[516] When attitudes like these prevail from those who wield immense power, it is difficult for those who have suffered abuse

[512] D'Souza, 'Worst-Case Scenarios'.
[513] Tovia Smith, 'On #MeToo, Americans More Divided By Party Than Gender', *npr,* (31 October 2018), last accessed 29 April 2020, <www.npr.org>.
[514] Ibid.
[515] Ibid.
[516] 'Donald Trump: "It's a very scary time for young men in America" – video', *The Guardian,* (2 October 2018), last accessed 23 January 2019, <www.theguardian.com>.

of any type to come forward, particularly within the arts sector, where a culture of oppressive behaviour and inequality still exists.

Since the beginning of the #MeToo movement, women have been asking for their voices to be heard and their testimonies valued. The use of NDAs suggests that they have been denied that right in the past, including within the arts sector. Feminism seeks a re-evaluation of what society considers 'normal' behaviour by men towards women in the home, the workspace or elsewhere. It asks for the power base to be challenged and in doing so, seeks progression and change. However, 'as women rise to their just level of power,' as a consequence, 'so shall some men fall.'[517] In direct reaction and in order to prevent this, men have, on occasion, fought to maintain their privilege, 'finding ways to undermine, attack and discredit those who have sought change.'[518] Methods of protection employed may vary, targeting everything from the individual, an institution, an initiative or even government policy. However, this attempt to maintain power is often presented in the guise of 'a legitimate concern about "reverse discrimination" or "an attack on fair process."'[519] In terms of #MeToo, some have commented that the scales are weighted in 'favour of the "feminist agenda"' and that there must be a return to 'sensible, rational discussion'.[520] This type of thinking can impact on a variety of decisions made in any workplace, including arts institutions, in a negative way. It has the potential to affect everything from curatorial decision making to employee recruitment, including the selection of women to high-profile, senior positions or board posts. It can lead to museums and galleries becoming

[517] Perry, *The Descent of Man*, p. 24.
[518] Diane White, and Paula McDonald, 'As the Kavanaugh backlash shows, #MeToo hasn't gone far enough', *The Guardian,* (4 October 2018), last accessed 16 April 2020, <www.theguardian.com>.
[519] Ibid.
[520] Ibid.

reactionary rather than proactive agents of change, and at the most basic level, it can even affect what artists choose as their subject matter.

This suggestion of a 'sex-panic panic' appears to have translated into a shrinking pool of subjects for male artists to depict, as many have begun questioning whether it is either appropriate or indeed justifiable for them to create representations of nude women post #MeToo.[521] In an article from *The Cut*, in 2018, Michael Slenske reported that he contacted a number of male artists well known for their figurative depictions of the nude female form, to ask their opinions on this issue, including Jeff Koons, John Currin and Alex Becerra.[522] However, all three rejected the opportunity to answer. This lack of response may indicate a certain level of 'panic' in the field for a variety of reasons. In reaction to the movement at large, individuals may choose not to speak for fear of 'saying the wrong thing' or their words being misconstrued or manipulated.[523] Similarly, artists who are just beginning to establish their careers may fear saying something which could damage their growing reputation and so negatively impact on their progress and success. In the same article, Marty Schnapf paraphrased comments from conversations he shared with other male artists as, 'I quit working with the figure. I'm only doing abstract work, because I don't want to touch it,' which has led him to believe that we may 'be living through "a new Victorian age"'.[524] This is problematic because in effect, it becomes a form of self-censorship which could therefore stifle creativity and artistic expression. Men should not have to stop painting nudes, and neither should women. Again, the key issues here are equality and

[521] D'Souza, 'Worst-Case Scenarios'.
[522] Michael Slenske, and Molly Langmuir, 'Who's Afraid of the Female Nude? Paintings of naked women, usually by clothed men, are suddenly sitting very uncomfortably on gallery walls.', *The Cut,* (16 April 2018), last accessed 1 May 2020, <www.thecut.com>.
[523] Ibid.
[524] Ibid.

honesty, which should form the starting point in terms of the production of artwork and its subsequent curation. Painting nudes of either sex, as a means of objectifying the subject and abusing the position of artist to manipulate or exert control over another person, is very different from using figuration to examine themes such as the construct of masculinity or identity at the present time. Whilst there is no need to remove Balthus' *Thérèse Dreaming* (Fig. 20) or paintings like it from our gallery walls, we must acknowledge that what the viewer is being presented with is often an exclusively male viewpoint, and one that many might find offensive today. Deciding what is appropriate to display, or to paint in the first instance, is influenced by time, place, taste and context, and these things are contingent. Consequently, the issue is not simply about deciding what is appropriate to display post #MeToo, it is about curators and galleries making choices fit for the present moment. Perhaps one way forward is to exhibit nudes of both sexes, painted by a diverse group of artists and selected thematically to explore broad issues or concepts.

The panicked counter response to #MeToo, may also have instigated a movement to protect the privileged and male dominated power base at the top of the museum hierarchy, which would offer some explanation as to why, over the last two and a half years, several women have either been sacked or asked to resign from major, international arts institutions. This list includes Laura Raikovich, director of *Queens Museum* (New York), Beatrix Ruff, director of the *Stedelijk Museum* in Amsterdam, Olga Viso, executive director of the *Walker Art Centre* in Minneapolis, Maria Inés Rodríguez, director of the *Museum of Contemporary Art of Bordeaux* (*CAPC)* and Helen Molesworth, chief curator of the *Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles* (*MOCA)*. The case between Helen Molesworth and former *MOCA* Director Philippe Vergne is particularly relevant. *MOCA* released a vague press statement

citing 'creative differences' as the reason for Molesworth 'stepping down'.[525] However, Catherine Opie, who is also a trustee of *MOCA,* revealed to the *Los Angeles Times* that Vergne had told her he had dismissed Molesworth because she was 'undermining the museum.' [526] In light of these differing accounts, it is important to analyse Molesworth's legacy and conduct during the three and a half years she worked at *MOCA*. Whilst in the role, Molesworth instigated the re-installation of *MOCA*'s permanent collection in an exhibition called *The Art Of Our Time*, (15 August 2015 to 12 September 2016), creating a new canon by including works from a diverse range of artists including Senga Nengudi and Ana Mendieta, attributing their inclusion to them having an extremely innovative and 'articulate way of thinking about the fact that half of the world has a female body'.[527] Similarly, Molesworth also made a stance by objecting to *MOCA's* decision to house a solo exhibition of work by Carl Andre in 2017, considering it to be the wrong time and moment for this to take place. These decisions demonstrate a proactive rather than reactive curator who was happy to challenge the norm, and who had a focus on diversity and inclusion. She certainly sought to rattle the foundations of the cultural temple by challenging outmoded thinking.

However, much of what Molesworth tried to achieve appears to have been negated by Vergne interfering with her curatorial agenda. In forward thinking institutions, there is usually a distinct 'separation between the directorial and curatorial roles', which it is to be hoped, allows for the production of 'neutrality in the content of

[525] Christopher Knight, 'MOCA fires its chief curator', *Los Angeles Times,* (13 March 2018), last accessed 18 June 2019, <www.latimes.com>.
[526] Ibid.
[527] Carolina A. Miranda, 'Column: 9 ways in which Helen Molesworth's permanent collection show at MOCA is upending the story of art', *Los Angeles Times,* (8 January 2016), last accessed 17 October 2019, <www.latimes.com>.

exhibitions.'[528] Whilst Vergne should have helped facilitate support for Molesworth's vision, Àngels Miralda Tena believes that he often overstepped the mark and inserted 'market-darlings into Molesworth's program', keen to continue propping up established white male artists such as Carl Andre. [529] As such, Vergne undermined the professionalism of a woman employed in a key arts role but it is important to consider that he may have been motivated by financial concerns or constraints. As Dara Birnbaum has commented, so often 'museums take the less high road' and adhere to the traditional canon of male artists 'whom one might even consider corporate in statement, appearance, and even their zeal.'[530] This is likely to be because the visiting public want to see the major names from art history when they visit a prestigious gallery, and the canon is predominantly male. There is also an argument that many visit galleries simply to tick off seeing the major works, again likely to be by male artists, which they record by taking a 'selfie' on their mobile phones. They do not visit to become educated; they do not expect to commune with the works on anything other than a superficial level. There is nothing wrong with simply 'seeing' art. Neither is there anything wrong, obviously, with being deeply moved simply by looking at aesthetically beautiful paintings or sculptures and admiring the skill involved in their creation. However, museums and galleries have both the potential and the moral obligation, to offer society so much more than the straightforward pleasure of looking.

Birnbaum believes that there is an importance in knowing 'that a progressive woman can have a secure voice within an important art institution.'[531] Molesworth

[528] Àngels Miralda Tena, 'The Corruption Of Curating', *Collecteurs,* (April 2018), last accessed 11 May 2020, <www.collecteurs.com>.
[529] Ibid.
[530] Julia Halperin, 'Clashing Visions, Simmering Tensions: How a Confluence of Forces Led to MOCA's Firing of Helen Molesworth', *artnet news,* (16 March 2018), last accessed 28 April 2020, <https://news.artnet.com>.
[531] Ibid.

stridently made more challenging curatorial decisions which significantly highlighted 'a multiplicity of voices and ideas', and did so in a sector that has continued to adhere to the status quo and thrust anything considered 'other' to the margins.[532] As Birnbaum argues, Molesworth's dismissal speaks volumes, because 'it is also an action that undermines our very ability to *progress* precisely when this is more than ever necessary.'[533] At a time when it might be reasonably considered that more women are required in high profile management posts within museums and galleries, they are being removed from them or leaving of their own volition. Whilst it is important to remember that each dismissal of a woman from major international institutions as listed above involves a differing set of circumstances, and it would be inappropriate to conflate these cases, a contributing factor may be that, particularly in the USA, museum boards often comprise a male majority. This does not reflect the general composition of the society within which they operate, and obviously impacts on the choices that they make in a variety of areas.

In a talk given for the series *Art and Dialogue* operated by *Artadia in November 2017, and* delivered prior to her dismissal from the role at *MOCA*, Molesworth highlighted the ramifications of having non-diverse management boards declaring,

> I do think I do try to comport myself with a fairly high degree of ethics in the museum [and] that is increasingly…very difficult to do. Museums boards are increasingly comprised of exceedingly affluent people who don't come from a philanthropic or cultural background. They often come from a financial background or a being-rich background. They have really

[532] Priscilla Frank, 'The Museum World Is Having An Identity Crisis, And Firing Powerful Women Won't Help', *HuffPost,* (15 March 2018), last accessed 11 May 2020, <www.huffingtonpost.co.uk>.
[533] Halperin, 'Clashing Visions'.

> imported their ways of thinking from for-profit models that are very much at play in not-for-profit spaces, so that makes for a certain kind of ethical way of being.[534]

With this in mind, it is interesting to note that on one occasion, Molesworth decided to send a junior curator to meet with artist and *MOCA* board member Mark Grotjahn, in advance of his planned solo exhibition (scheduled for 2020), instead of going herself. Other members of the board, many of whom are known within the artworld to be significant collectors of Grotjahn's work, saw her action 'as a deliberate snub.'[535] Coincidentally, at the same time, the board had chosen Grotjahn to be honoured at their 2018 annual fundraising gala. However, after the invitations had been sent out, Grotjahn declined to accept, stating that those previously honoured had mostly been white men, like him. This fact may have influenced Molesworth's original decision not to meet with him. She would also have known that in 2017, Catherine Opie had been put forward for the same honour, but the board reversed this decision and gave it to Jeff Koons instead. If Grotjahn had accepted the award he would have been the fourth consecutive white male artist to be honoured, following on from Jeff Koons, Ed Ruscha and John Baldessari. Lari Pittman, who was also a member of *MOCA's* board at the time, decided to resign from his role in 2018, predominantly over the museum's significant lack of concern for diversity (Pittman is Latino and identifies as gay) but also because of former board member Steven Mnuchin, who has been linked to Jeffrey Epstein's circle. Despite Pittman bringing both issues forward for consideration, they were avoided and unaddressed by the institution itself. This apparent lack of timely

[534] Sarah Douglas, 'Prior to Her Firing, Curator Helen Molesworth Made Public Statements Critical of Museum Practices, MOCA', *ARTnews,* (21 March 2018), last accessed 11 July 2019, <www.artnews.com>.
[535] Halperin, 'Clashing Visions'.

and positive action reiterates that 'museums by nature are kind of slow moving and conservative' (00:18:42).[536]

Where women *have* been employed in high-profile roles, then stereotypical attitudes can impact on their ability to make a real difference. Nayland Blake criticised *MOCA's* board and director for their decision to dismiss Molesworth, who was clearly committed to making the museum more diverse, stating that they should have been aware of 'the type of work that she's interested in, the type of work she's championed' before she was appointed to the role.[537] He questioned why a board would enlist her specifically if they wanted to project a different vision or tread a different line. He also wondered whether Molesworth would have been treated differently had she been a man. Directly addressing, the number of dismissals of women from high profile roles in the art world in recent years, Blake highlighted his upset at the system: 'It happens across the corporate world: you hire men for their opinions and women for their compliance'.[538] Supporting Blake's view, on 14 March 2018, the *Instagram* account @notsurprised2018 posted an image on their feed of Helen Molesworth, Laura Raicovich and Maria Inés Rodríguez, emblazoned with the reasons for their dismissal from high-profile posts (Fig. 91). It clarified that Raicovich and Rodríguez were dismissed because they were considered 'too political' and 'too demanding' respectively (Instagram, @notsurprised2018, 14 March 2018). This type of vocabulary is rarely employed with negative connotations when referring to men.

Not only could it be argued that change is prevented from occurring because of an unchanging power base at the top of arts management, but a survey conducted

[536] Suse Anderson, and Ed Rodley, *Museopunks Episode 42: A #MeToo Moment,* podcast, (13 February 2020), 55 minutes.
[537] Halperin, 'Clashing Visions'.
[538] Ibid.

in 2019 by *artnet news* in collaboration with *In Other Words*, suggests that those in the arts with the most power to facilitate change, seem less interested in encouraging it.[539] Excuses included, 'change takes time' and 'women are more likely to put their careers on hold to raise families or quit in the face of a lack of opportunity.'[540] Ultimately, Molesworth's dismissal, alongside those of other women, sends a distinct message that, 'progressive programming is marketable, until it becomes a threat.'[541] Such attitudes allow museum boards to stagnate, which in turn constrains more progressive curators from encouraging diversity and championing new artists.

Change is not happening as quickly as one might imagine in what is considered by some to be a liberal environment. Rather, as Susan Fisher Sterling said, 'We are lulled into a sense that parity is being achieved faster than we think, but those myths reflect the status quo.'[542] If real change is to be facilitated, old power structures must be dismantled and more women and minority representatives appointed to posts of significant responsibility. Change will not always be easy. As Maxwell Anderson has noted, museums and galleries often still believe that 'they will only be recognised as an important institution if they acknowledge the greatest hits'.[543] This means that prestigious institutions are more likely to exhibit work from the canon, and as already established, that is largely, male. This is evidenced by further findings from *artnet news* and *In Other Words'* survey which found that 'larger historical museums' had collected 'fewer works by women than their Modern and contemporary counterparts.'[544] However, establishing increasingly diverse management boards will hopefully lead to

[539] Julia Halperin, and Charlotte Burns, 'Museums Claim They're Paying More Attention to Female Artists. That's an Illusion.', *artnet news,* (19 September 2019), last accessed 4 April 2020, <https://news.artnet.com>.
[540] Ibid.
[541] Frank, 'The Museum World Is Having An Identity Crisis'.
[542] Halperin, and Burns, 'Museums Claim They're Paying More Attention to Female Artists'.
[543] Ibid.
[544] Ibid.

more artists from outside the canon being chosen for display. This will also undermine in a positive way, the system that allows art produced by men to be perceived as more worthy in value but whether or not this will improve the monetary value of work by female artists in the current market is unknown.

Despite a lack of diversity and inclusion at the very top of arts institution management, it is evident that some museums and galleries have at least attempted to create progressive programmes, by featuring all female shows or determining to buy only the work of female artists for a set period of time. Recently, the *Richard Saltoun Gallery* operated a twelve-month programme entitled *100% Women,* (March 2019 to March 2020) which 'complemented the gallery's long-standing commitment to supporting under-recognised and under-represented artists'. [545] The programme aimed 'to address the gender inequality that persists in the art world and encourage wider industry action through debate, dialogue and collaboration' by giving '100% of its exhibition and art fair programme to women artists' for the year.[546] In a greater attempt to increase diversity and inclusion, the programme also brought in 'emerging artists and artists without direct representation'.[547] Whilst the programme ended in March 2020, the gallery said they would 'continue the spirit and ambition of *100% Women'* going forward, by concentrating their 'efforts on addressing imbalances' to guarantee that 'no presentation is lacking in equal gender representation.'[548]

Only a small number of institutions like the *Richard Saltoun Gallery* seem to be demonstrating some 'kind of consistency in their acquisitions and programs',

[545] 'Exhibitions: 100% Women', *Richard Saltoun Gallery,* last accessed 9 April 2020, <www.richardsaltoun.com>.
[546] Ibid.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Ibid.

suggesting they are treating the issue of equality seriously.[549] Whilst some museums and galleries are putting seemingly progressive structures and programmes in place, their practice is not always consistent. More often, these programmes run 'parallel to the canonical story of art history' rather than challenge it, or are an attempt to obscure the real statistics.[550] As Rebecca Fontaine-Wolf has said, whilst all-female 'one-off shows' are good in that they have potential to widen the canon and raise the value of work by female artists, ultimately, they can represent of be perceived as 'a token gesture'.[551] This is because they are perhaps unlikely to institute any real change over time and can become a ploy in response to rising media attention on this subject. In effect, the progressiveness of such shows is marginalised and its threat controlled. Similarly, even when it appears that museums and galleries have established or attempted to move towards a 'shared guardianship on heritage', they have often, in reality, been disingenuous. For example, the increase in the number of exhibitions based on participatory art such as *Carsten Höller: Decision* (10 June to 6 September 2015) at the *Hayward Gallery* and *Olafur Eliasson: In Real Life* (11 July 2019 to 5 January 2020) at the *Tate Modern*, would suggest that institutions are seeking to expand 'modes of aesthetic presentation' and that this attests to their commitment to treat the public differently.[552] However, often the true motivation for putting on these types of display is to hit footfall targets and government quotas, or to make commercial gains.

As this thesis argues, the tentative response from the art world to the #MeToo movement, demonstrates that the ethical model that is prevalently utilised in

[549] Halperin, and Burns, 'Museums Claim They're Paying More Attention to Female Artists'.
[550] Ibid.
[551] Sam Baker, 'The (Male) Art Entrepreneur Exhibiting Female Artists', *Forbes,* (29 June 2019), last accessed 22 October 2019, <www.forbes.com>.
[552] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics* p. 119.

many institutions is outmoded and lacks the flexibility to facilitate curation which is both ideal and just. The ethical model employed as a guiding structure needs to be truly supportive of and beneficial for everyone. However, some critics believe that curators are hindering rather than helping progression towards a more relevant and beneficial system. On 21 June 2017, Stefan Heidenreich published his polemic and controversial text *Get Rid of Curators* in *Die Zeit,* the English translation of which entitled *Against Curating* appeared on *&&& Platform* two days later.[553] In this text, he called the practice of curating, 'undemocratic, authoritarian, opaque and corruptible.'[554] Heidenreich deduces this from the fact that curators operate predominantly in isolation, picking their artists and deciding where and in what way to show works, without providing reasons for these decisions or indeed proffering discussion at any level. Ultimately, this led him to question why the art world, which traditionally is considered a liberal sector and one that places increased emphasis on freedom, continues to allow 'all the power' to be 'concentrated in the hands of exhibition autocrats?'[555] However, Heidenreich's argument fails to highlight that there *are* individuals, who are making changes by attempting to remodel and shift where power lies, by increasing diversity and operating a progressive agenda, regardless. For example, Kate Bryan, Head of Collections at *Soho House*, facilitated an art collection for the *Ned Club* which opened in April 2017 that 'inverted the gender ratio of the FTSE 100 CEOs' by 'acquiring the work of 93 women and 7 men' (Instagram, @katebryan_art, 27 April 2020). This feat is even more substantial when considering that the Ned Club is located right in the heart of The City of London, a corporate sphere dominated by men. In January 2020 it was recorded that 64 per cent of the City workforce was male and 36 per cent

[553] Stefan Heidenreich, 'Against Curating', *&&& Platform,* (23 June 2017), last accessed 11 May 2020, <https://tripleampersand.org>.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Ibid.

female.[556] However, it is important to remember that the *Ned Club* is not a museum or gallery, nor is it a corporate or domestic space. Rather, it operates in a sphere that transcends these boundaries, which might have made it easier for Bryan to challenge convention.

Another individual pushing for change in the art world is Amar Singh, who was featured in *Forbes'* 'The 2019 30 Under 30 Europe' list for his efforts in championing the work of female artists.[557] Singh directs *Amar Gallery*, which he founded in 2017. The gallery displays post-war and contemporary art and as listed on the gallery's website, 'happen[s] to champion a number of historically overlooked and important female artists', because they 'believe in their work.'[558] The gallery hopes to correct the current imbalance and as Sam Baker reports, Singh 'has his eyes set on pushing the art world far beyond such opportunistic tokenism […] willing to break outside the traditional gallery mold in order to do that.'[559] Certainly, Singh's activist background focusing on women's and LGBTQ+ rights in India demonstrates a dedication to inclusion. Whilst Bryan and Singh represent positive, ethical, curatorial action, it is important to remember that they are at the top of a hierarchy. For other individuals, the reality is that progressive decisions to facilitate more diverse and inclusive cultural spaces are forced back down by those who continue to control the power base and resist change. Indeed, often the application of this essential work ultimately leads to the dismissal of forward-thinking staff, just as with Helen Molesworth, and so the status quo prevails.

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[556] Economic research and information, 'City Statistics briefing: Business Register and Employment Survey (2019)', (January 2020), last accessed 25 May 2020, <www.cityoflondon.gov.uk>.
[557] Alexandra Wilson, and Alexandra Sternlicht, eds., 'The 2019 30 Under 30 Europe', *Forbes,* last accessed 17 May 2020, <www.forbes.com>.
[558] 'About: Amar Gallery', *Amar Gallery,* last accessed 23 February 2020, <www.amargallery.com>.
[559] Baker, 'The (Male) Art Entrepreneur'.

It is often difficult for curators to challenge the institution by whom they are employed, for fear of damaging their careers or losing significant amounts of funding. However, it is of paramount importance to remember that the work of those who continue to strive towards a progressive agenda 'has no price tag', even though funding may be lost.[560] Their actions help to protect 'the legitimacy and reputation of the curatorial role, academic rigor, and the creation of a more equal and distributed art history.'[561] The art world cannot rely on a handful of curators to tread this path. There needs to be change throughout the system, from the top down and bottom up, so that institutions embrace new ways of thinking. When this happens, museums and galleries should theoretically be able to address problematic histories and contentious subject matter successfully. With this in mind, just as lawyers utilise legal framework in an adaptive way in each individual case that is brought to them, Marstine's call for a 'new museum ethics' which reconceptualises 'museum ethics as a contingent discourse' is undeniably favourable, especially with regard to issues raised by #MeToo.[562] This is because, rather than a fixed set of rules, Marstine's demand for a 'new museum ethics' founded on contingency and seen 'from a feminist viewpoint, as constantly evolving ideals representative of human rights', focuses on the uniqueness of each case, and how, as Marstine clarifies, the individual case 'touches – upon social, political, technological and economic factors'.[563] Under Marstine's code of a 'new museum ethics', each artwork that could be criticised for depicting inappropriate or potentially offensive subject matter and indeed, each artist accused of sexual harassment and abuse, will be addressed and examined on an individual basis. In this vein, Marstine's theory allows that every artwork can have value at any time or space in which it is

[560] Tena, 'The Corruption Of Curating'.
[561] Ibid.
[562] Marstine, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, p. 8.
[563] Ibid., p. 8 and p. 10.

presented. There is no need to censor artwork made by a sexual predator but how, when and why it is being exhibited must be considered alongside a commitment to radical honesty about the context of its artistic production. Where such work is displayed in a manner that facilitates further discussion on related issues, and in a sensitive environment alongside the work of female artists, it could even operate as part of a 'cultural heterotopia', reflecting the true diversity of the world.[564]

As substantiated in this thesis, our museums and galleries are only just beginning to reflect and respond to the impact that the #MeToo movement has had and will continue to have on the art world, but one of the first steps towards change involves acting more assertively with regard to 'complexity and multiplicity'. [565] Emphasis should be given to expanding the definition of what and who belongs in a museum, most notably, making way for female artists and ethnic minorities who have previously been ignored by the establishment culture that has long invested in pale, stale and male. In seeking to augment the canon, we need to push past the cultural gatekeepers and not assume the depoliticised male gaze as default. As Charlotte Burns and Julia Halperin have said, 'Striving for equity is not just a matter of doing the right thing. Nor is it only about telling a more accurate history. It is also an important way for museums to ensure their own enduring relevance, and safeguard their financial viability.' [566] Widening and diversifying the canon, and the hierarchical structures which manage our museums and galleries, ensures that our arts institutions are augmented rather than limited going forward. In this way, they will continue to offer an inspirational, enjoyable and challenging learning environment for all who visit. So, change must come, and there is increasing evidence that some institutions have

[564] Schorch and McCarthy, eds., *Curatopia*, back cover.
[565] Sayej, 'See change'.
[566] Halperin and Burns, 'Museums Claim They're Paying More Attention to Female Artists'.

moved beyond considering the impact of #MeToo and are operating in an extremely forward thinking and new way already.

Radical Figures: Painting in the New Millennium at the *Whitechapel Gallery,* (6 February 2020 to 10 May 2020), recently represented a very different approach to curation. The exhibition featured figurative painting from the last twenty years, focusing on 'its aesthetic and social dimensions' and reinvigorated interest in experimentation.[567] Significantly, it brought together an extremely varied and disparate group of artists, who were able to look back and be inspired by art history, whilst at the same time producing work that expresses and reflects twenty-first century concerns. These artists were united by 'a political commitment to representing diversity in race and sexuality at a time when identity itself is becoming increasingly fluid, and lost or repressed histories are being excavated'.[568] Crucially, the exhibition featured work by both men and women, but it considered them very much as artists in the first instance and therefore as equals. Effectively this ensured gender neutrality but it also challenged the traditional canon. Consequently, whilst the exhibition featured many nude images, these made 'visible an identity, a way of being that, because of sexuality, race or class, has been absent or distorted within canonical representation.'[569] They used depictions of the human form to ask questions about the world today, but they also celebrated traditional forms of painting and reinvented them. This approach, whereby an art institution respects equality and reflects the diverse world within which it operates but also seeks to unite it, is an excellent example of a gallery moving forward post #MeToo.

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[567] Lydia Yee, Cameron Foote, and Candy Stobbs, eds., *Radical Figures: Painting in the New Millennium* (London, UK: Whitechapel Gallery, 2020), p. 5.
[568] Ibid., p. 3.
[569] Ibid., p. 4.

Samson asked to be allowed to 'feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them', *Book of Judges 16: 26 KJV* and, referencing both the biblical story and the image it evokes, Anthony Schrag's *Push* (Fig. 1), also calls for force and pressure to be applied to the existing ethical model of curating, and the columns of the cultural temple. The temple does not need to be destroyed but curators, artists, art workers and even gallery visitors should be aware of *where* the power base lies and *how* it operates. With this in mind, museums and galleries should be held strong by a new museum ethics, which utilises Marstine's three concepts of 'social responsibility, radical transparency and shared guardianship of heritage' as these provide structure in an otherwise contingent discourse and facilitate the creation of organised spaces which are truly reflective and also sympathetic of the evolving societal state. These are spaces which operate as cultural heterotopias being distinctly other, but also reflecting the society within which they operate and with the potential to facilitate beneficial transformation. As such, opportunities are created for growth and development which will allow museums and galleries to command authority and respect as sources of both 'authentic and reliable information' for decades to come.[570]

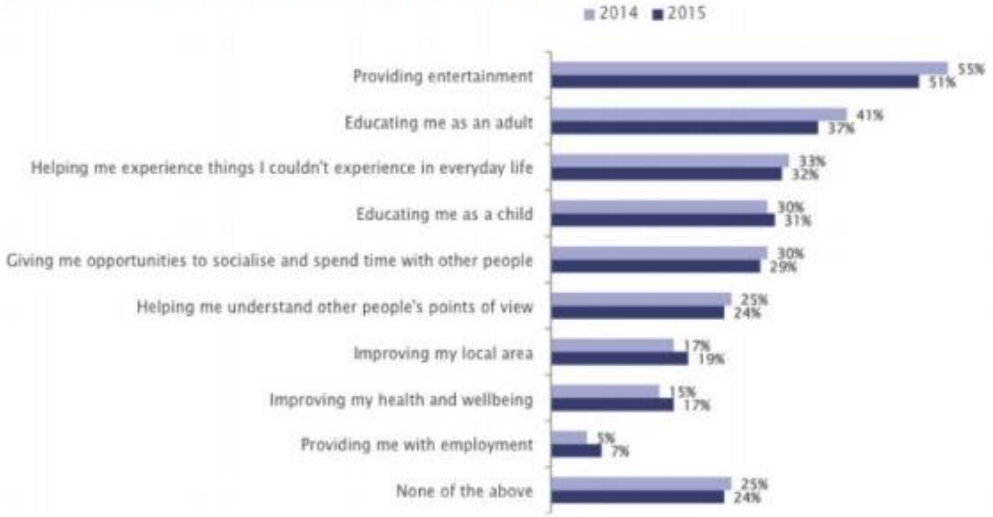
[570] Yerkovich, *A Practical Guide to Museum Ethics*, p. 101.

Appendix I

BritainThinks, *Next ten-year strategy: Evidence Review* (London, UK: BritainThinks, 2018), p. 7.

Next ten-year strategy: Evidence Review

Figure 11: Contribution of arts and culture to personal life



Q. Thinking about your personal life, in which of the following ways, if any, has arts and culture contributed? Base: (n=1727)

Source: ComRes, 2015

Appendix II

Not Surprised, ‘We’ll stay silent no more over sexual harassment in the art world’, *The Guardian,* (30 October 2017), last accessed 28 December 2017.

We are not surprised.

We are artists, arts administrators, assistants, curators, directors, editors, educators, gallerists, interns, scholars, students, writers, and more—workers of the art world—and we have been groped, undermined, harassed, infantilized, scorned, threatened, and intimidated by those in positions of power who control access to resources and opportunities. We have held our tongues, threatened by power wielded over us and promises of institutional access and career advancement.

We are not surprised when curators offer exhibitions or support in exchange for sexual favours. We are not surprised when gallerists romanticize, minimize, and hide sexually abusive behaviour by artists they represent. We are not surprised when a meeting with a collector or a potential patron becomes a sexual proposition. We are not surprised when we are retaliated against for not complying. We are not surprised when Knight Landesman gropes us in the art fair booth while promising he’ll help us with our career. Abuse of power comes as no surprise.

This open letter stems from a group discussion about sexual harassment within our field, following the recent revelation of Knight Landesman’s sexual misconduct. The conversation has branched out further and internationally. Harder work to advance

equity is often expected of and performed by women of colour, trans, and gender nonconforming people. Our efficacy relies on taking this intersection very seriously and not excluding other corroborating factors that contribute to bias, exclusion, and abuse. These additional factors include, but are not limited to, race, gender identity, sexual identity, ability, religion, class, political position, economic and immigration status. There is an urgent need to share our accounts of widespread sexism, unequal and inappropriate treatment, harassment and sexual misconduct, which we experience regularly, broadly, and acutely.

Many institutions and individuals with power in the art world espouse the rhetoric of feminism and equity in theory, often financially benefitting from these flimsy claims of progressive politics, while preserving oppressive and harmful sexist norms in practice. Those in power ignore, excuse, or commit everyday instances of harassment and degradation, creating an environment of acceptance of and complicity in many more serious, illegal abuses of power.

The resignation of one publisher from one high-profile magazine does not solve the larger, more insidious problem: an art world that upholds inherited power structures at the cost of ethical behaviour. Similar abuses occur frequently and on a large scale within this industry. We have been silenced, ostracized, pathologized, dismissed as “overreacting,” and threatened when we have tried to expose sexually and emotionally abusive behaviour.

We will be silenced no longer.

We will denounce those who would continue to exploit, silence, and dismiss us. Your actions will no longer be a secret, whispered amongst us for fear of ostracization,

professional shunning, and recrimination. Where we see the abuse of power, we resolve to speak out, to demand that institutions and individuals address our concerns seriously, and to bring these incidents to light regardless of the perpetrator's gender.

We will no longer ignore the condescending remarks, the wayward hands on our bodies, the threats and intimidations thinly veiled as flirtation, or the silence from ambitious colleagues. We will not tolerate being shamed or disbelieved, and we will not tolerate the recrimination that comes with speaking out. We will not join "task forces" to solve a problem that is perpetrated upon us. We provide a definition of sexual harassment, for those who may feel powerless so that they may point to a document that supports a safe work environment for all.

We, the undersigned—those who have experienced abuse and those standing in solidarity with them—call upon art institutions, boards, and peers to consider their role in the perpetuation of different levels of sexual inequity and abuse, and how they plan to handle these issues in the future.

We are too many, now, to be silenced or ignored. With all we have experienced and witnessed, this letter should come as no surprise.

Appendix III

An extract from Kaori's blog post from 1 April 2018, which detailed her experience of working with photographer Nobuyoshi Araki and her accusations against him. With permission, it was then translated into English by Alisa Yamasaki and posted on *Medium* on 1 May 2018.

Sometimes he would portray me like someone important in his life, calling me "my woman" and saying "I can't die as long as I have my muse." Other times he would call me a "prostitute" or "a woman not worth buying a house for," saying "I don't know anything about her private life." I looked forward to an NHK shoot once, where I was told to bring my blue dress because "NHK can't show nude bodies". However, the moment where he exposed my breasts saying, "I hope NHK shows tits" made it into the final cut and was broadcasted along with my profile. The influence of national television was very, very powerful.

The media communicated that anything a famous artist does is justified and glorified. I distrusted their judgement.

Based on his long career and especially from his experience photographing his wife, he should have understood how women change over the years and decide, "I don't want to be shot anymore. I don't want to be exposed to the public anymore." However, he never listened to how his name and actions have international impact, and how that impact ended up hurting me. He continued to treat me like an object and never once tried to improve his behaviour.

Appendix IV

Annie Ridout, *Women should take up less space,* (28 October 2018).

Women should take up less space

Close your legs when you're seated.
Keep your hands in your lap, on the train.
Don't dare use that armrest for your elbows!
If you're thinking of stretching, refrain.

Diet yourself into thinness.
Starve your body to make it small.
In fact, eliminate calories entirely;
until you're barely there at all.

Shave your legs and armpits.
Pluck hairs from your eyebrows and breasts.
Wax off all your vaginal pubes -
hair gets in the way; it's a mess.

Don't take a seat at the table;
stand or sit; just hang back - out of view.
Your opinions aren't worthy of voicing,
we don't want to hear from you.

Be quiet. Be small. Don't talk. Don't move.
Take up less space, they insist.
Because there isn't enough room on this earth
for both women and men to exist.

Annie Ridout

Appendix V

This public letter was circulated by the *Association of Hysteric Curators (AHC)* and sought to address their upset at the opening of the major Carl Andre retrospective at *LA MOCA*, *Carl Andre: Sculpture as Place, 1958-2010* from 2 April 2017 to 24 July 2017. Whilst signatures have been left off this appendix, they can be readily found online.

Dear Philippe Vergne,

We, The Association of Hysteric Curators, are extremely disappointed with your decision to bring the Carl Andre retrospective to the Geffen Contemporary. We feel the decision to show Andre at MOCA Geffen, after the election of president Trump, is tasteless. The choice of the museum to bring an Andre show to Los Angeles in this context communicates to us, as feminists, that the museum has no allegiance to women or victims of domestic abuse. We would like to remind you that symbols of power emanate from institutions and reverberate through society. As the director of a nationally recognized institution as powerful as MOCA, you have an obligation to symbolically stem the tide of increasingly violent, racist, and misogynistic attitudes throughout the United States.

MOCA's decision to bring Carl Andre's retrospective to Los Angeles was undoubtedly made before the election. However, under the vision of curator Alma Ruiz, MOCA secured the entire Ana Mendieta series, "Silhueta Works in Mexico" (thirteen works in total), and Ruiz lobbied the institution to bring a Mendieta retrospective to Los Angeles

on three occasions. Her attempts were thwarted over the years and instead the Carl Andre show has been produced, even though the museum has fewer Andre pieces in its permanent collection. One has to wonder why an Andre show? For whose benefit does a show like this exist? Doesn't MOCA have an obligation to build value for Mendieta, both as an internationally underrepresented Latina artist and as a major artist in its collection? Doesn't the City of Los Angeles, once historically part of Mexico and currently a center of the immigration and amnesty debate, have an obligation to Mendieta, who died before her last project, "La Jungla" was executed in MacArthur Park? As both a woman and a person of Latina descent, Mendieta, rather than Andre, has a historic connection to the city and the residents of Los Angeles that should have been recognized as important to MOCA.

Last night, Alma Ruiz stood outside the museum with protesters who asked, "Where is Ana Mendieta?" The protest was an emotional and telling event for the women who showed up. We found allies in the women and people of color who attended the event. We found allies in members of the museum staff who expressed embarrassment over the timing and subject of the show. We found allies in the educators and parents who recognized that MOCA is a teaching institution with an obligation to seek out shows that promote intersections of communities above the promotion of the value of artworks held in board members' private collections. The opening was a call to solidarity; we found each other, and we are not going away.

Our final thought is to wonder about the unfortunate juxtaposition of Arthur Jafa's video piece, notable in its own right, but also opening last night. Entitled, "Love Is The

Message, The Message Is Death," its title is a tragic parallel to Carl Andre's own words of domestic violence in a poem he wrote before Mendieta's death:

"The ways of love were
sometimes my revenge when
I was wronged by something
done or said & she stood
naked by the window waiting
to be struck perhaps where
here white breasts were
red…"

If the subtext of the opening itself is not enough for you to see the underlying hatred, violence, and misogyny the Andre show represents, we encourage you to walk out to the plaza and turn to the banners hanging above the Geffen pergola. The museum seems to be stating to women and victims of violence, very clearly and in bold text on its banners, that death is an acceptable outcome of love. The central banner displays Carl Andre's name in bold, with Jafa's title immediately to the right, stating, Love is the Message, The Message is Death.

Regards,

The Association of Hysteric Curators and our allies

Appendix VI

Introductory label for *The Art World We Want,* (13 February to 8 April 2018) at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Pennsylvania Academy *of the* Fine Arts **PAFA**

In December of last year, concurrent with PAFA's exhibition *Chuck Close Photographs*, several women came forward to accuse the artist of sexual misconduct in his studio. These accusations come at a moment of cultural reckoning that is allowing women to speak openly and honestly about their experiences with harassment and trauma. The accusations against one artist remind each of us that the problems of abusive power are as endemic in the art world as they are in other sectors.

PAFA held a community forum on January 17th and wrestled with how to respond, including whether to take down the current exhibition and how to continue educating its students and public in light of these new narratives. PAFA decided that the exhibition will stay on view. Taking it down might have been easier – it would have allowed us to move on to the next project, to mute the stories we've heard, and to place other as-yet-untold tales to the sidelines of our work lives. It would have preserved our artistic mentors, heroes and even the canon of art history.

But we believe there is a new canon to write, more stories to be told and more questions still to be asked. By leaving *Chuck Close Photographs* on view, we want to create a space that encourages that full dialogue.

This adjacent gallery has been reinstalled with a selection of works from the museum's permanent collection that help us ask some of these questions and invite your answers. These questions are about all of us – about power, gender, race, sexuality and access. What is our response, our collective vision for where we need to go as a creative community to bring a more equitable, diverse and accessible art world into being?

This space will also become a site for conversation and change through a series of public programs in the next two months.

Art museums and art schools must own their role in perpetuating the status quo. Only through honest debate and dialogue will we be able to articulate how the future art world must be different. This space is for that.

We hope you will participate.

- PAFA's Museum and School

Illustrations

Figure 1: Anthony Schrag, *Push,* 2008.

Figure 2a: Gustave Doré, engraved by C. Laplante, *The Death of Samson,* 1866.

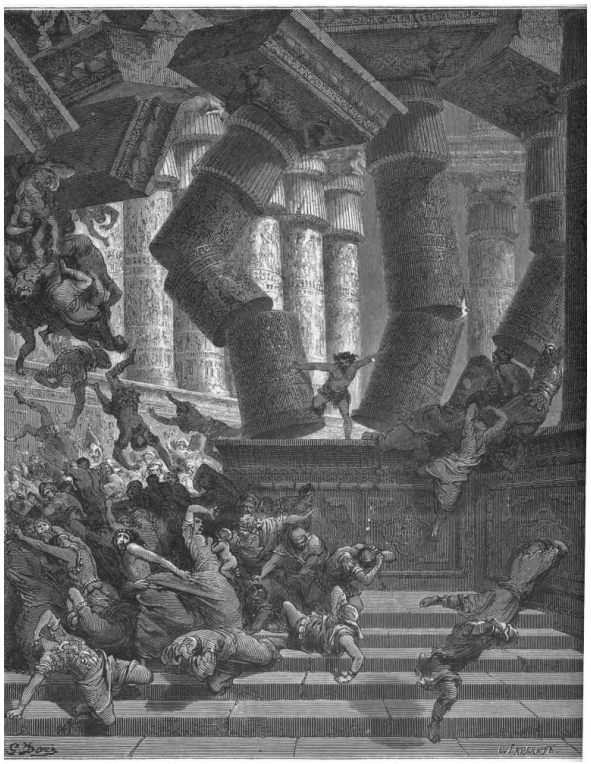


Figure 2b: Detail from Gustave Doré, engraved by C. Laplante, *The Death of Samson,* 1866.

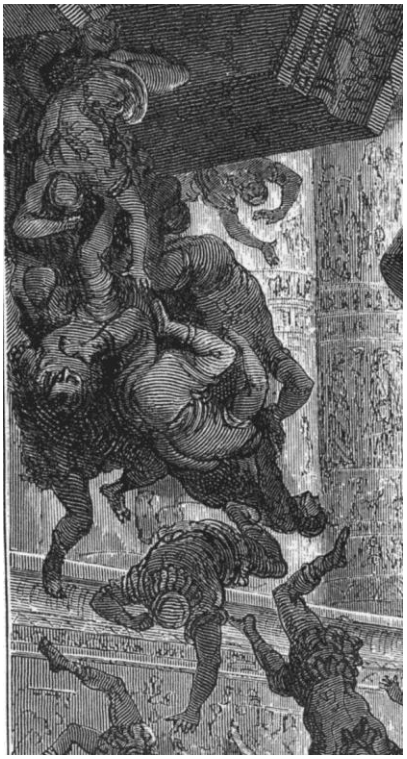


Figure 2c: Detail from Gustave Doré, engraved by C. Laplante, *The Death of Samson,* 1866.

Figure 3: George Grosz, *The Pillars of Society,* 1926.

Figure 4: Sir John Everett Millais, *The North-West Passage,* 1874.

Figure 5: Thomas Jones Barker, *The Secret of England's Greatness (Queen Victoria presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor), c.* 1862 – 1863.

Figure 6: Sonia Boyce*, Lay back, keep quiet and think of what made Britain so great*, 1986.

Figure 7a: Alice Procter, a digital graffitied version of *The Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I.*

Original Image: artist unknown after previously being attributed to George Gower, *The Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I, c.* 1588.

Figure 7b: Alice Procter, a digital graffitied version of *Queen Victoria.*

Original Image: Alexander Bassano, *Queen Victoria,* 1882.

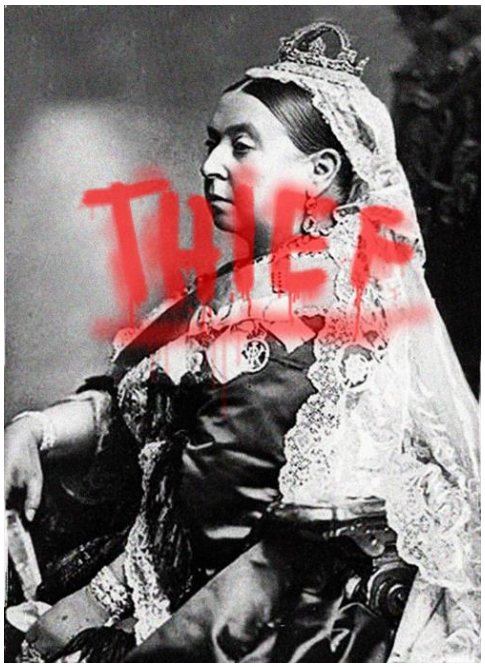


Figure 7c: Alice Procter, a digital graffitied version of *Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson 1758 – 1805.*

Original Image: Lemuel Francis Abbott, *Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson 1758 – 1805,* 1799.

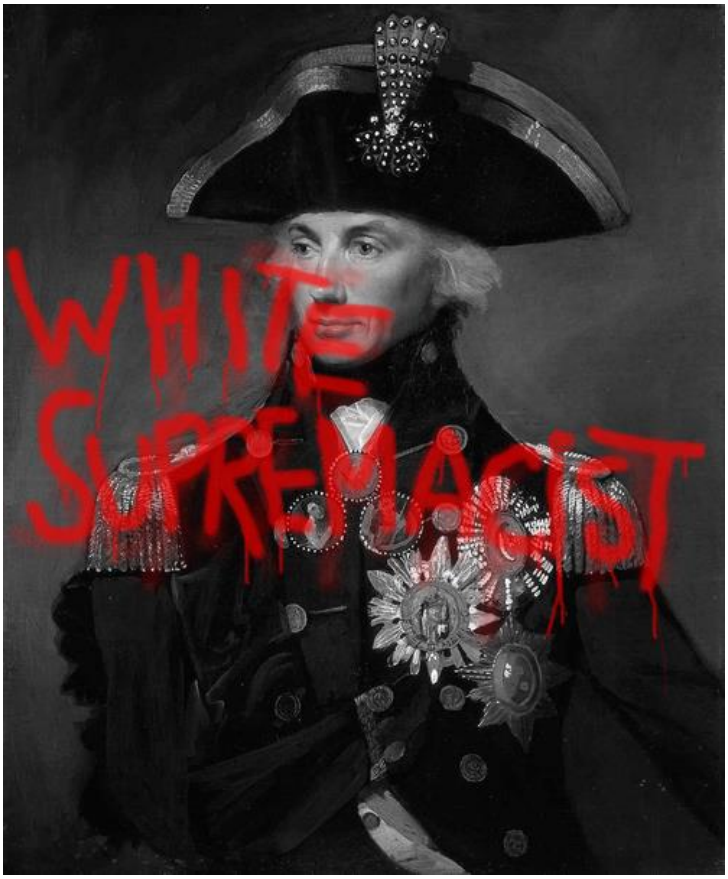


Figure 8: Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *'Untitled' (Portrait of Ross in L.A.),* 1991.

Figure 9: Keith Haring, *Safe Sex,* 1988.

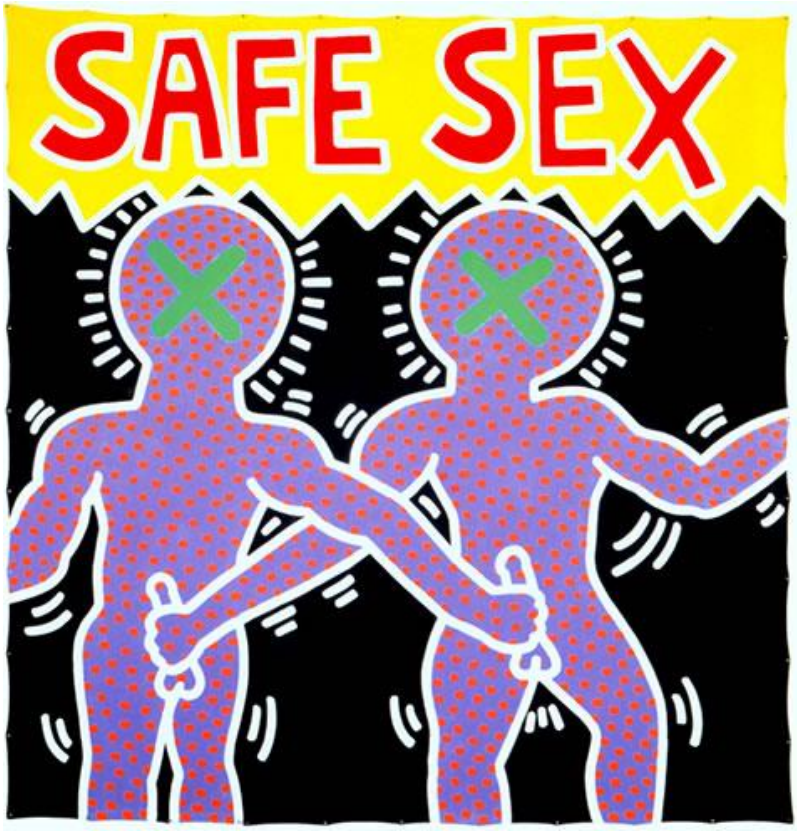


Figure 10: Keith Haring, *Ignorance* = *Fear*, 1989.

Figure 11: Photographer(s) unknown, photographs depicting civilians from the town of Ohrdruf being forced to view dead bodies found in the Ohrdruf-Nord concentration camp, 1945.

Figure 12: Eric Gill, *Girl in Bath II,* 1923.

Figure 13: Eric Gill, *The Bath (Petra Bathing),* 1920.

Figure 14: Edgar Degas, *The Tub,* 1886.

Figure 15: Eric Gill, *Doll*, 1910.

Figure 16a: Pablo Picasso, *Le Gôut du Bonheur,* 1964.

Figure 16b: Pablo Picasso, *Le Gôut du Bonheur*, 1964.

Figure 17a: Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (Balthus), *Untitled, c.* 1990 – 2000.

Figure 17b: Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (Balthus), *Untitled, c.* 1990 – 2000.

Figure 18: Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (Balthus), *Untitled* (posthumously referred to as *Girl with a Mandolin*), *c.* 2000 – 2001, unfinished at the time of death.

Figure 19: Eric Gill, *Hound of St Dominic,* 1923.

Figure 20: Balthasar Klossowski de Rola (Balthus), *Thérèse Dreaming,* 1938.

Figure 21: Graham Ovenden, *Little Lorraine,* from the *Five Girls* series, 1970.

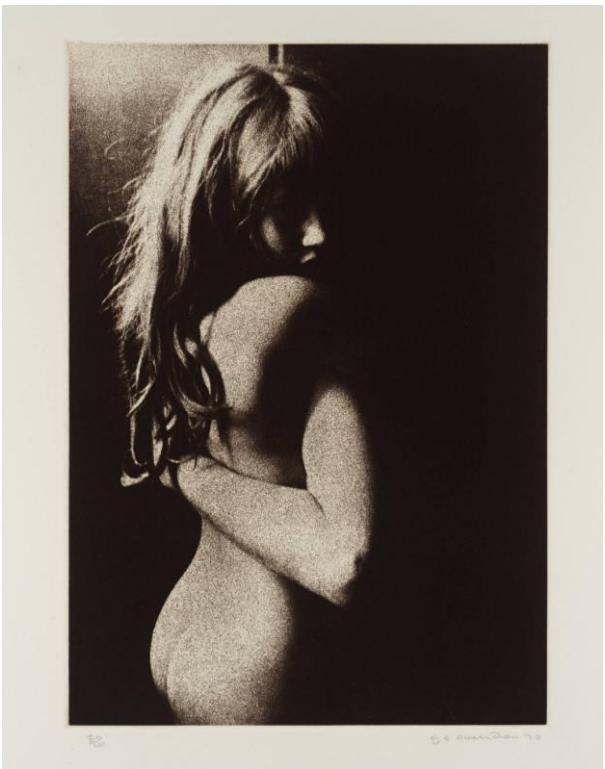


Figure 22: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Rosie,* 1976.

Figure 23: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Jim and Tom, Sausalito,* 1977.

Figure 24: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Man in Polyester Suit,* 1980.

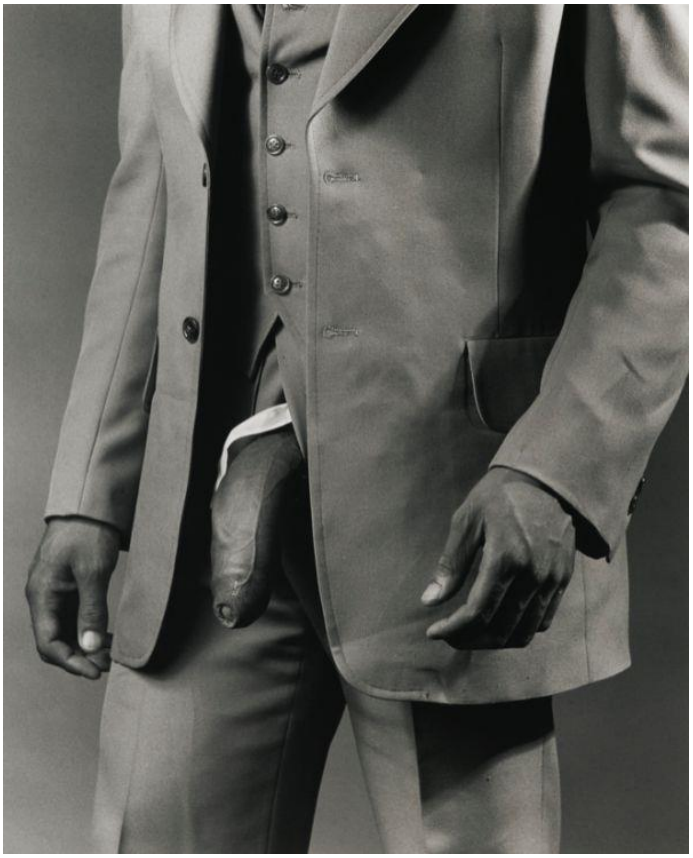


Figure 25a: Tracey Emin, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963 – 1995,* 1995, exterior view.

Figure 25b: Tracey Emin, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963 – 1995,* 1995, interior view.

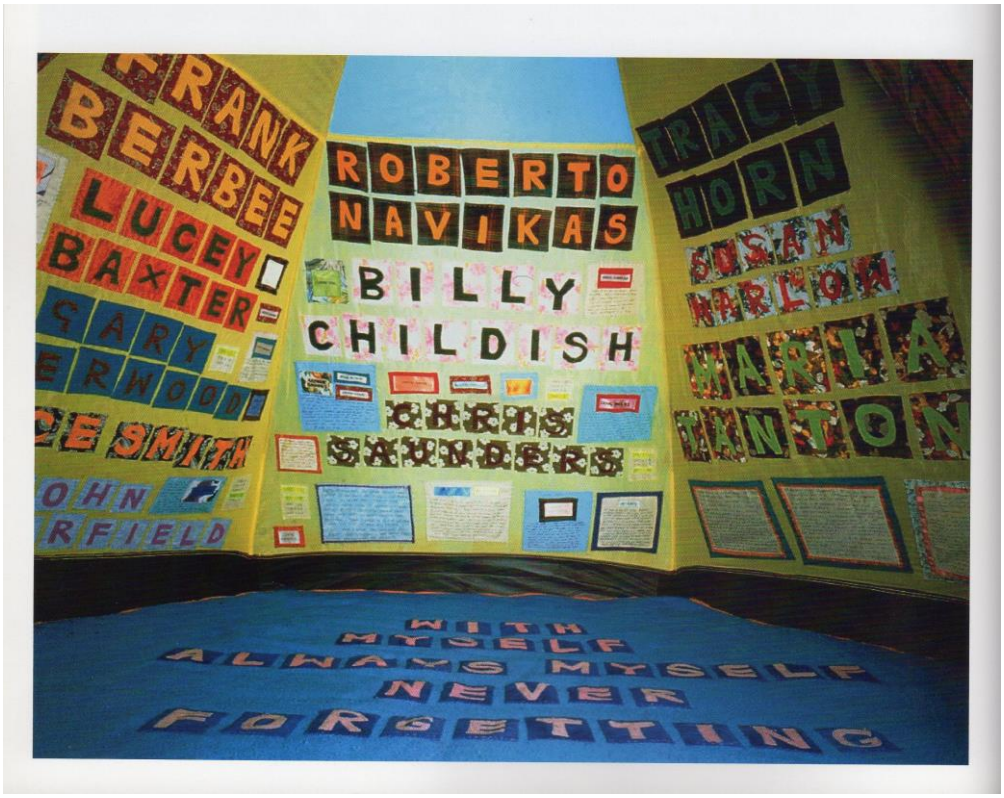


Figure 26: Jenny Saville, *Propped,* 1992.

Figure 27: Diego Velázquez, *The Toilet of Venus ('The Rokeby Venus'), c*. 1647 – 1651.

Figure 28: John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs,* 1896.

Figure 29: Nobuyoshi Araki, *Marvelous Tales of Black Ink (Bokuju Kitan),* plate 68, 2007.

Figure 30: Katsushika Hokusai, *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife*, 1814.

Figure 31a: Alexander Gardner, *Antietam, Md. Bodies of Confederate dead gathered for burial,* 1862.

Figure 31b: Alexander Gardner, *Ditch on right wing, where a large number of rebels were killed at the Battle of Antietam,* 1862.

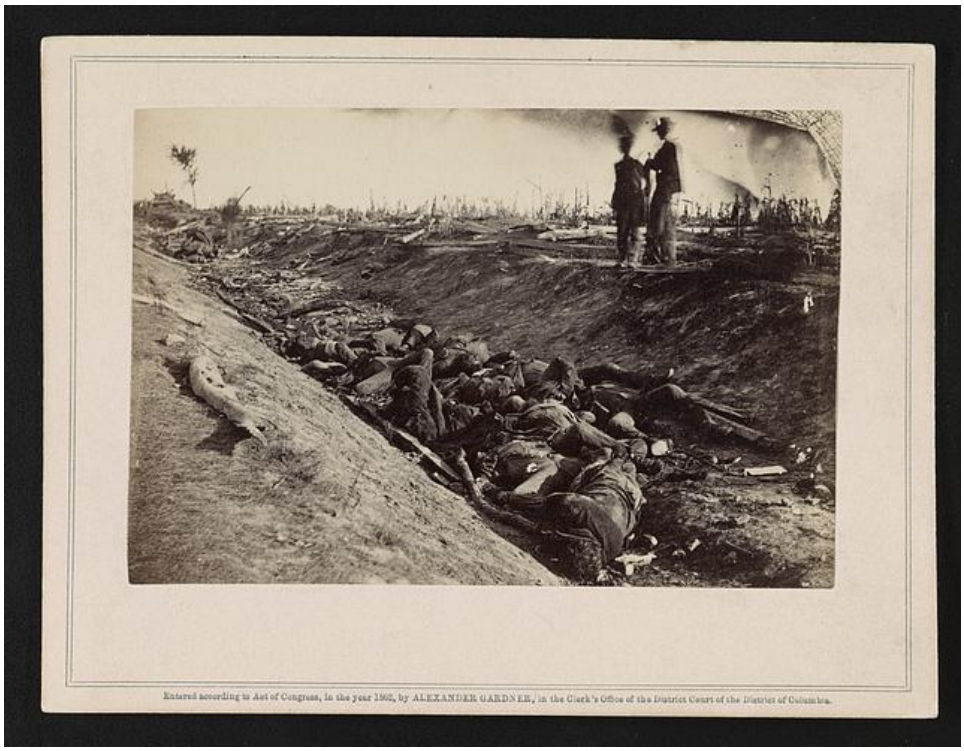


Figure 32: Tracey Emin, *My Bed,* 1998.

Figure 33: Jeff Koons, *Balloon Dog,* 1994 – 2000.

Figure 34: Marc Quinn, *Self*, 1991 – present. 2006 iteration.

Figure 35: Jeff Koons, *Silver Shoes,* from the *Made in Heaven* series, 1990.

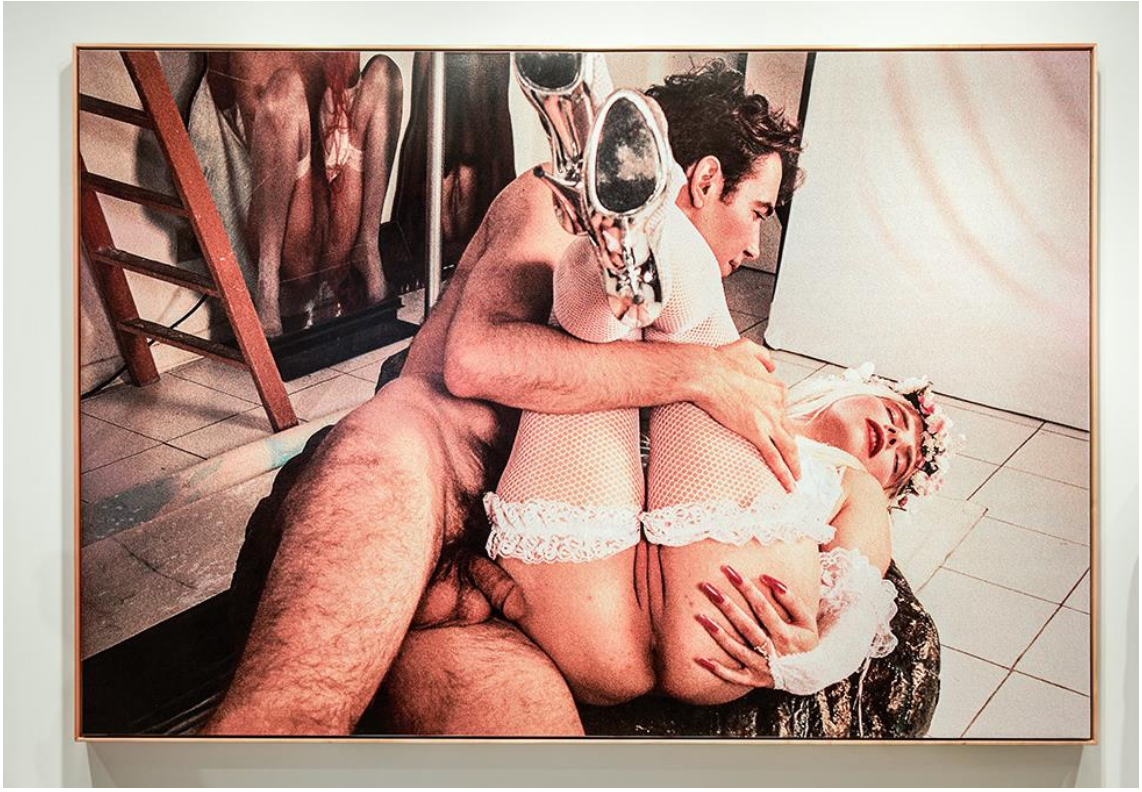


Figure 36: Jeff Koons, *Violet-Ice (Kama Sutra),* from the *Made in Heaven* series,1991.

Figure 37: Jeff Koons, *Antiquity 3,* from the *Antiquity* series, 2009 – 2011.

Figure 38: Andres Serrano, *Untitled VII (Ejaculate in Trajectory),* 1989.

Figure 39: Photograph of a gallery view from *The Obligation of Ownership: An Art Collection Under Scrutiny,* (4 May 2018 to 6 January 2020), at the Zeppelin Museum, *Friedrichshafen*, p.

Figure 40a: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Rape of Proserpina, c.* 1621 – 1622.

Figure 40b: Detail from Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Rape of Proserpina, c.* 1621 – 1622.

Figure 41: Titian, *The Rape of Europa,* 1562.

Figure 42: Greek two euro coin featuring Zeus and Europa.

Figure 43: UK residence permit, featuring Zeus depicted as a bull.

Figure 44: Pablo Picasso, *Woman with Dagger*, 1931.

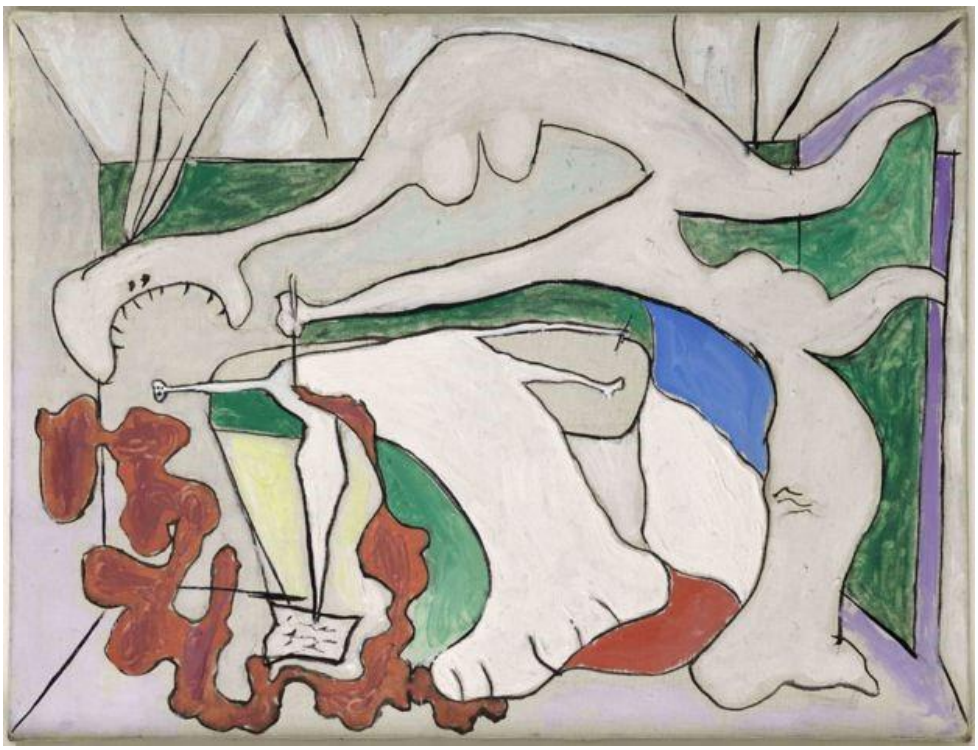


Figure 45: Pablo Picasso, *Woman in a Red Armchair,* 1931.

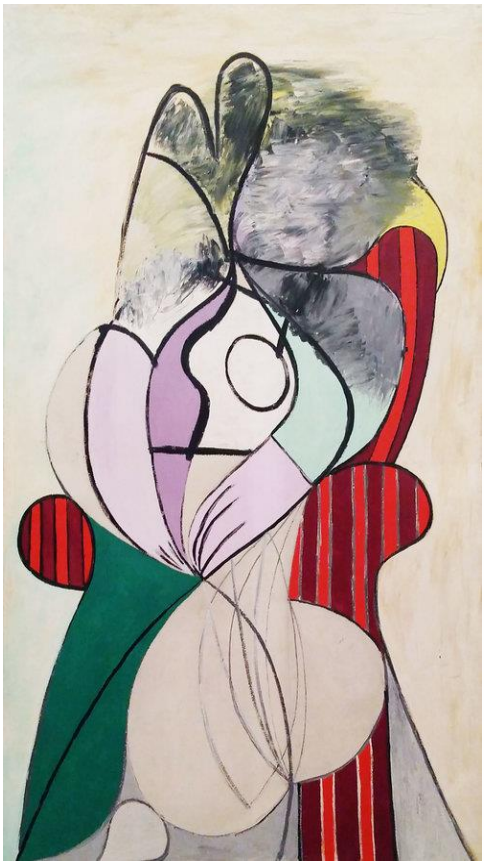


Figure 46: Pablo Picasso, *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust,* 1932.

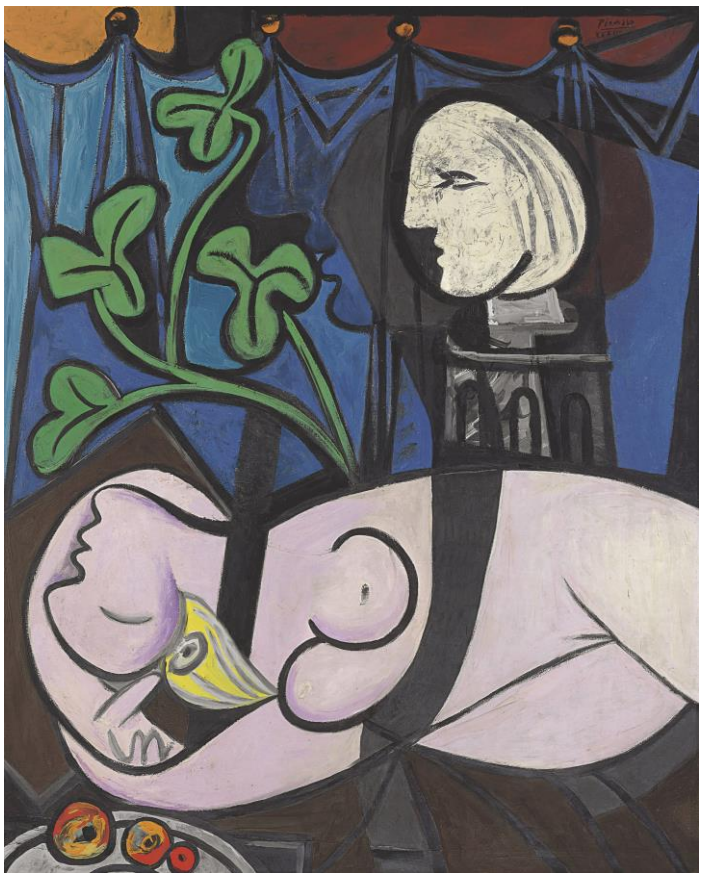


Figure 47: Man Ray, *White and Black (variant),* 1928 – 1929.

Figure 48: Pablo Picasso, *Minotaur Caressing the Hand of a Sleeping Girl with his Face,* from the *Vollard Suite,* 1933, published 1939.

Figure 49: Holger Keifel, *Floyd Mayweather Jr.,* 2005.

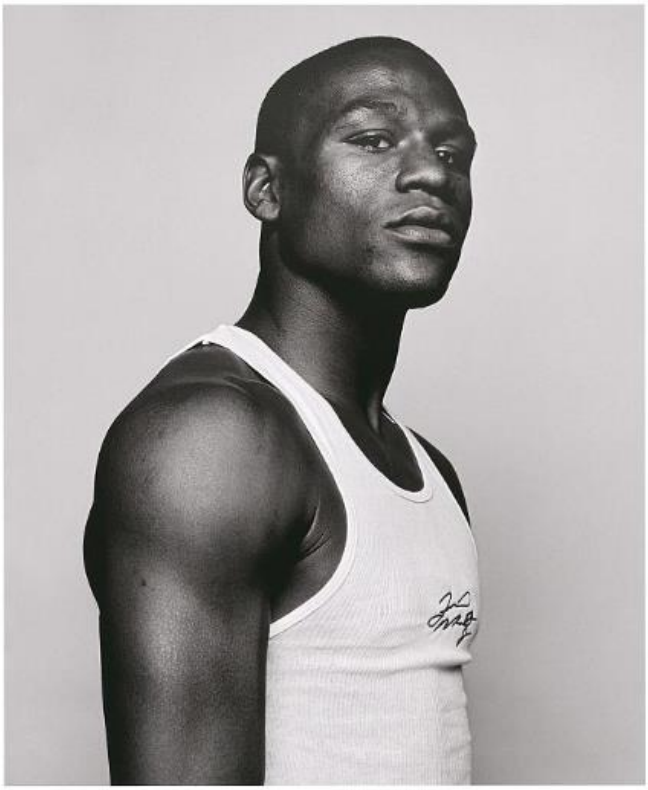


Figure 50: Chuck Close, *President Bill Clinton,* 2006.

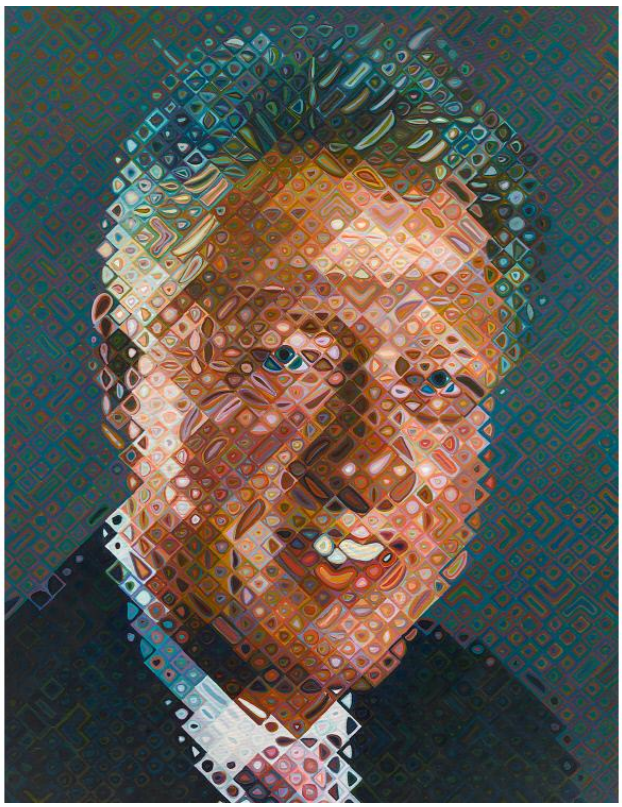


Figure 51: Chuck Close, *Big Nude,* 1967.

Figure 52: Chuck Close, *Chuck Close Self-Portrait,* 1989.

Figure 53a: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Beheading Holofernes, c.* 1620.

Figure 53b: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Beheading Holofernes, c.* 1612 – 1613.

Figure 54: Michelle Hartney, *Performance/Call to Action,* 2018.

Michelle Hartney

United States, b. 1978

2018

Performance/Call to Action

"We can no longer worship at the altar of creative genius while ignoring the price all too often paid for that genius. In truth, we should have learned this lesson long ago, but we have a cultural fascination with creative and powerful men who are also "mercurial" or "volatile," with men who behave badly.

These men are given wide berth. Their prominence grants them a certain amount of immunity. We forgive their trespasses because they create such brilliant work, because they are so charismatic, because there is such an allure to people who defy cultural conventions, who dare to do whatever they want. Whether we're talking about Bill Cosby or Woody Allen or Roman Polanski or Johnny Depp or Kevin Spacey or Harvey Weinstein or Russell Simmons [or Gauguin or Picasso or Chuck Close] or any man who has built his success on the backs of women and men whose suffering was ignored for the sake of that success, it's time to say that there is no artistic work, no legacy so great that we choose to look the other way.

I no longer struggle with artistic legacies. It is not difficult to dismiss the work of predators and angry men because agonizing over a predator's legacy would mean there is some price I am willing to let victims pay for the sake of good art, when the truth is no half hour of television is so excellent that anyone's suffering is recompense. Instead, I remember how many women's careers were ruined; I think of those who gave up their dreams because some "genius" decided indulging his thirst for power and control mattered more than her ambition and dignity. I remember all the silence, decades and decades of enforced silence, intimidation, and manipulation, that enabled bad men to flourish. When I do that, it's quite easy for me to think nothing of the supposedly great art of bad men.

There are all kinds of creative people who are brilliant and original and enigmatic and capable of treating others with respect. There is no scarcity of creative genius, and that is the artistic work we can and should turn to instead."

-Roxane Gay

Figure 55: Paul Gauguin, *Two Tahitian Women,* 1899.

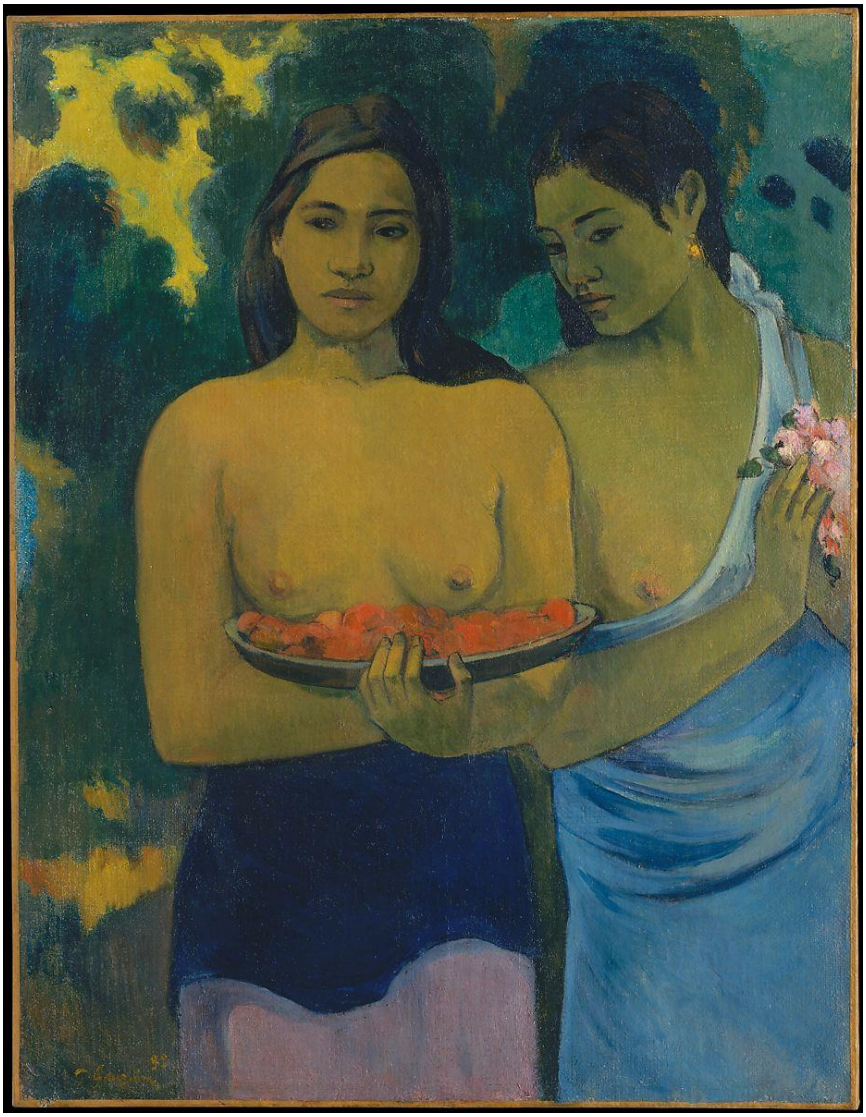


Figure 56: Michelle Hartney, *Performance/Call to Action,* 2018.

Michelle Hartney

United States, b. 1978

2018

Performance/Call to Action

"The history of western art is just the history of men painting women like they're flesh vases for their dick flowers... 'Cause it doesn't get any better with modern art... I trip on the first hurdle. Pablo Picasso. I hate him, but you're not allowed to. I hate him. But you can't. Cubism. And if you ruin... cubism, then civilization as we know it will crumble. Cubism. Aren't we grateful... that we live in a post-cubism world? Isn't that the first thing we all write in our gratitude journals? "Oh, thank god." I don't like Picasso. I fucking hate him...He's rotten in the face cavity. I hate Picasso! I hate him!

...But you get it a lot: "Oh, cubism..." And I know I should be more generous about him too because he suffered a mental illness. But you see, nobody knows that. Because it doesn't fit with his mythology. They go, "I think you're thinking of Van Gogh." No, I'm thinking about them all, actually... Because Picasso, he's sold to us as this passionate, virile, tormented genius, man, ball sack, right?...but... he did suffer a mental illness. Picasso did. He suffered badly and it got worse as he got older. Picasso suffered... the mental illness of
misogyny... Is misogyny a mental illness? Yeah. Yeah, it is! Especially if you're a heterosexual man. Because if you hate what you desire, do you know what that is? Fucking tense! Sort your shit out. Yeah, he did suffer from a mental illness. Smarter men than I have proved he didn't suffer a mental illness, but they're– No, they're wrong. They'd say he's not a misogynist. They're wrong. He was. If you don't believe me, let me provide you a quote from Picky Asshole himself. He said, "Each time... I leave a woman, I should burn her. Destroy the woman, you destroy the past she represents." Cool guy.

The greatest artist of the twentieth century. Let's make art great again, guys. Picasso fucked an underage girl. And that's it for me. Not interested. "But cubism... We need it." Marie-Thérèse Walter. She was 17 when they met. Underage. Legally underage. Picasso was 42, married, at the height of his career. Does it matter? Yeah. Yeah, it actually does. It does matter."

- Hannah Gadsby, from her comedy special *Nanette*

Figure 57a: Emma Sulkowicz in collaboration with photographer Sangsuk Sylvia Kang, photograph in front of Chuck Close's *Lucas I* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2018.

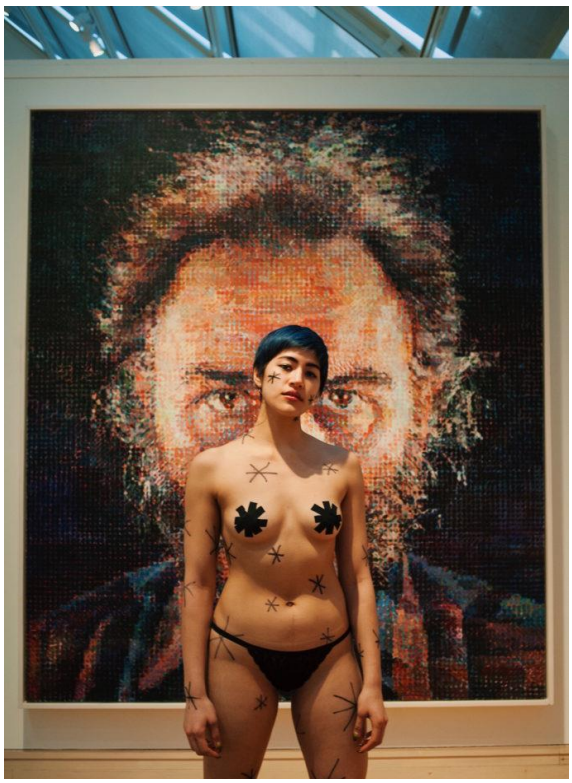


Figure 57b: Emma Sulkowicz in collaboration with photographer Sangsuk Sylvia Kang, photograph in front of one of Chuck Close's *Subway Portraits* at Second Avenue – 86 Street Station, New York, 2018.

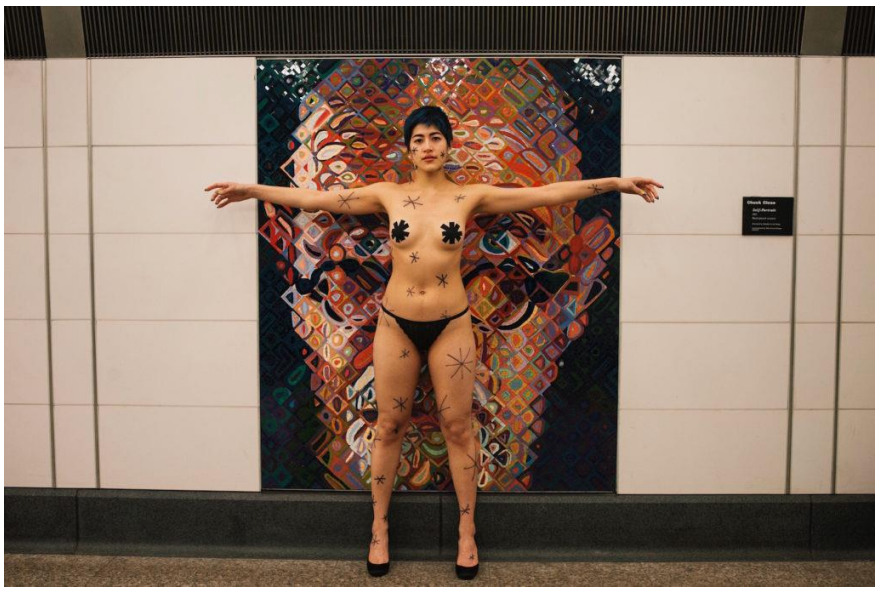


Figure 57c: Emma Sulkowicz in collaboration with photographer Sangsuk Sylvia Kang, photograph in front of Pablo Picasso's *Les Demoiselles D'Avignon* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018.

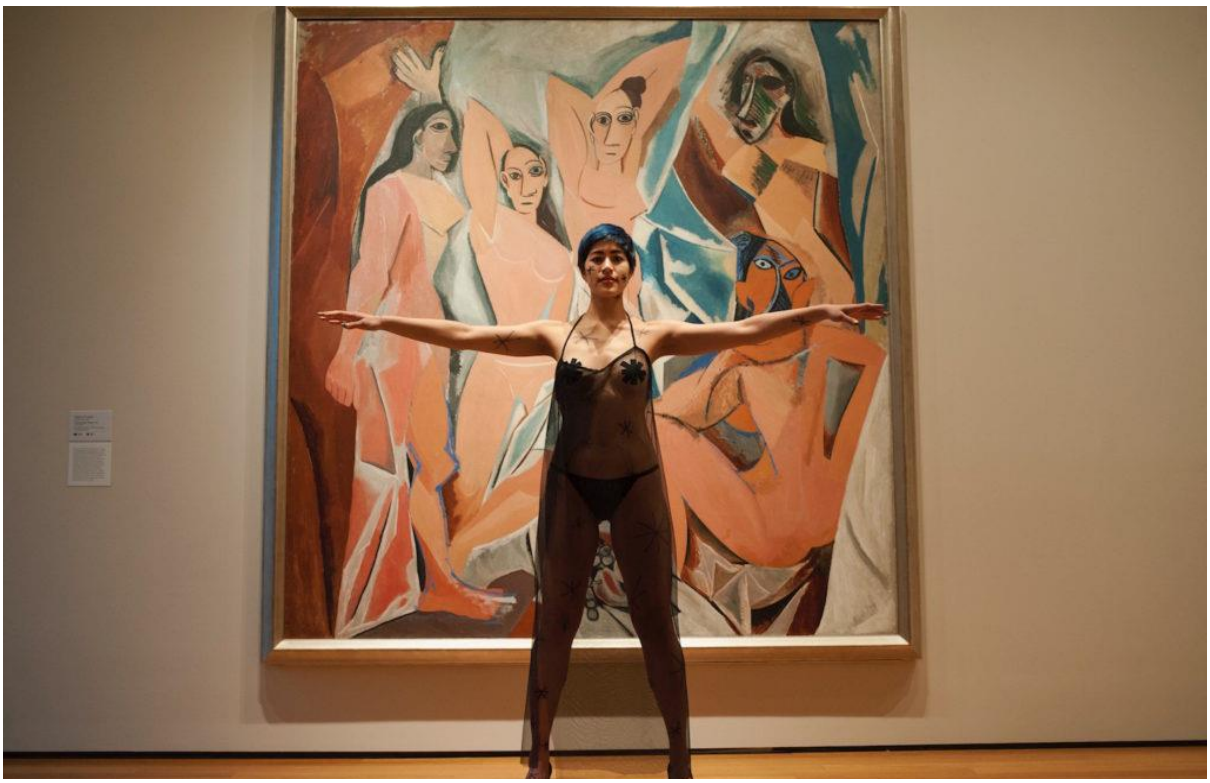
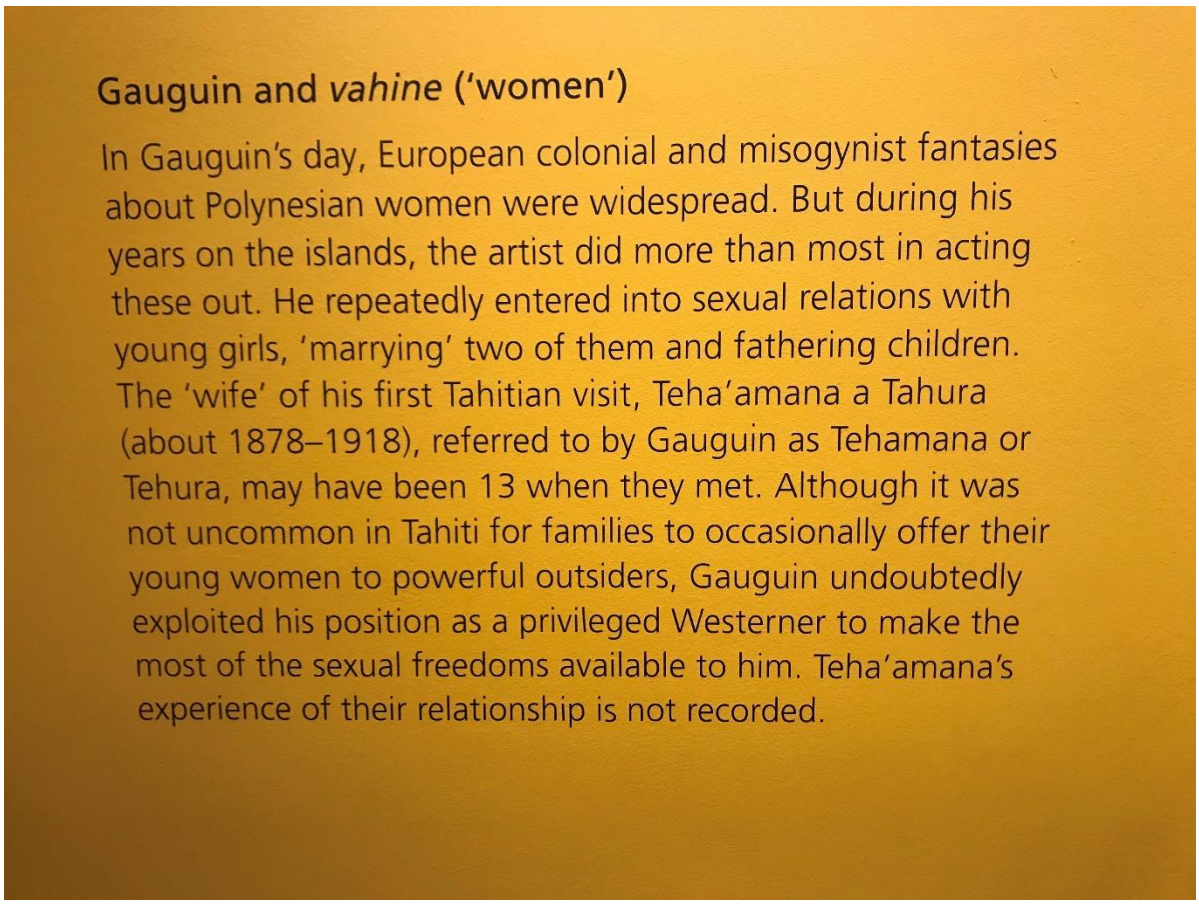


Figure 58: Pablo Picasso, *Weeping Woman,* 1937.

Figure 59: Pablo Picasso, *Guernica,* 1937.

Figure 60: Introductory label for Room 4, Tahiti 1891 – 1893 in *The Credit Suisse Exhibition: Gauguin Portraits,* (7 October 2019 to 26 January 2020) at the National Gallery, London.



Gauguin and *vahine* ('women')

In Gauguin's day, European colonial and misogynist fantasies about Polynesian women were widespread. But during his years on the islands, the artist did more than most in acting these out. He repeatedly entered into sexual relations with young girls, 'marrying' two of them and fathering children. The 'wife' of his first Tahitian visit, Teha'amana a Tahura (about 1878–1918), referred to by Gauguin as Tehamana or Tehura, may have been 13 when they met. Although it was not uncommon in Tahiti for families to occasionally offer their young women to powerful outsiders, Gauguin undoubtedly exploited his position as a privileged Westerner to make the most of the sexual freedoms available to him. Teha'amana's experience of their relationship is not recorded.

Figure 61: Paul Gauguin, *Vahine no te vi (Woman with a Mango)*, 1892.

Figure 62: Paul Gauguin, *Manao tupapau (The Spirit of the Dead Watching)*, 1894.

Figure 63: The Guerrilla Girls, *3 Ways To Write A Museum Wall Label When The Artist Is A Sexual Predator,* 2018.

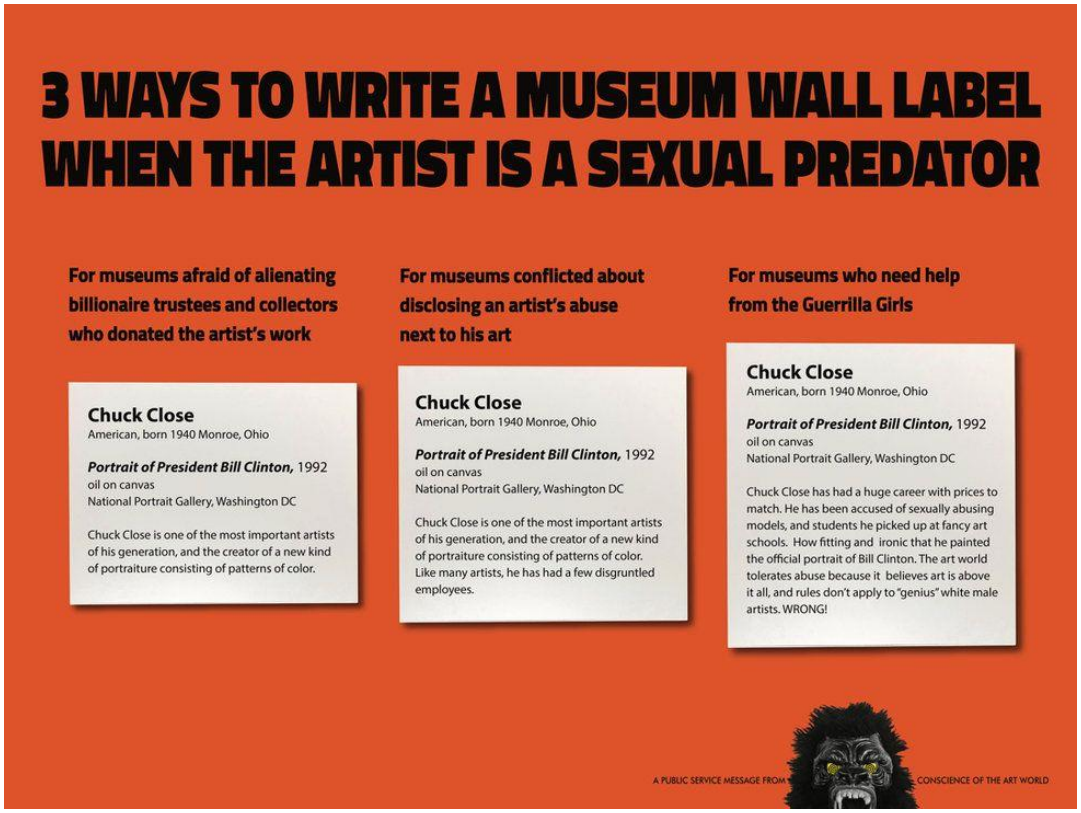


Figure 64: Banksy, *Gross Domestic Product* store in Croydon, UK, 2019.

Figure 65: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain,* 1917, image is of a replica produced in 1964.

Figure 66: Eric Gill, *Mankind,* 1927 – 1928.

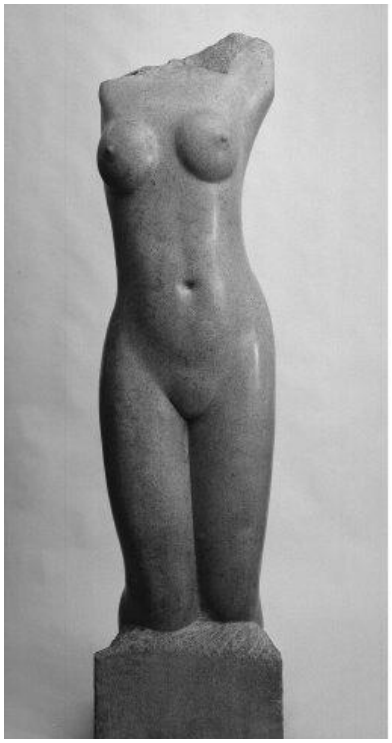


Figure 67: Artist unknown, *Aphrodite* known as the '*Venus de Milo', c.* 100 BC.

Figure 68a: Terry Winters, *Set Diagram 9,* 2000.

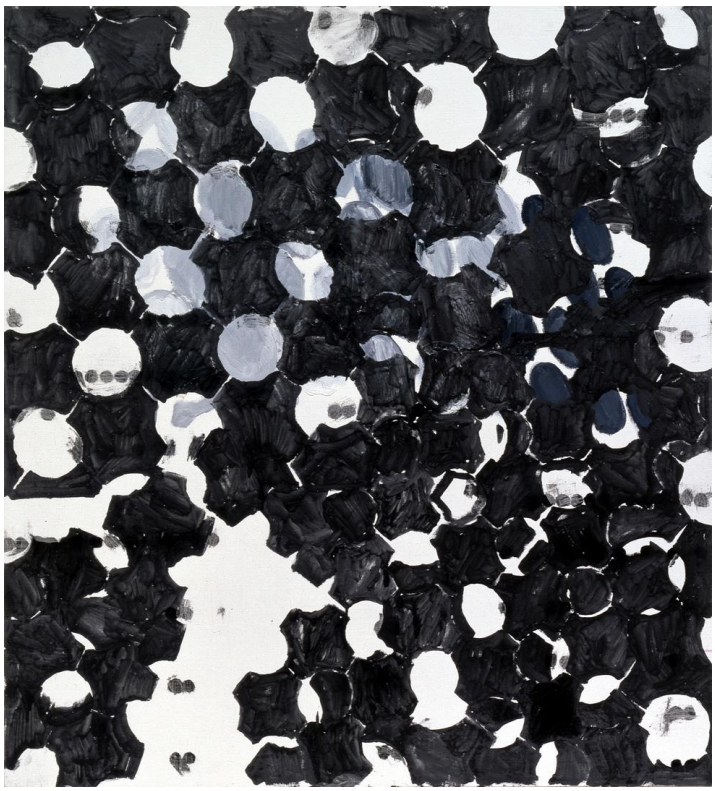


Figure 68b: Terry Winters, *Set Diagram 54,* 2000.

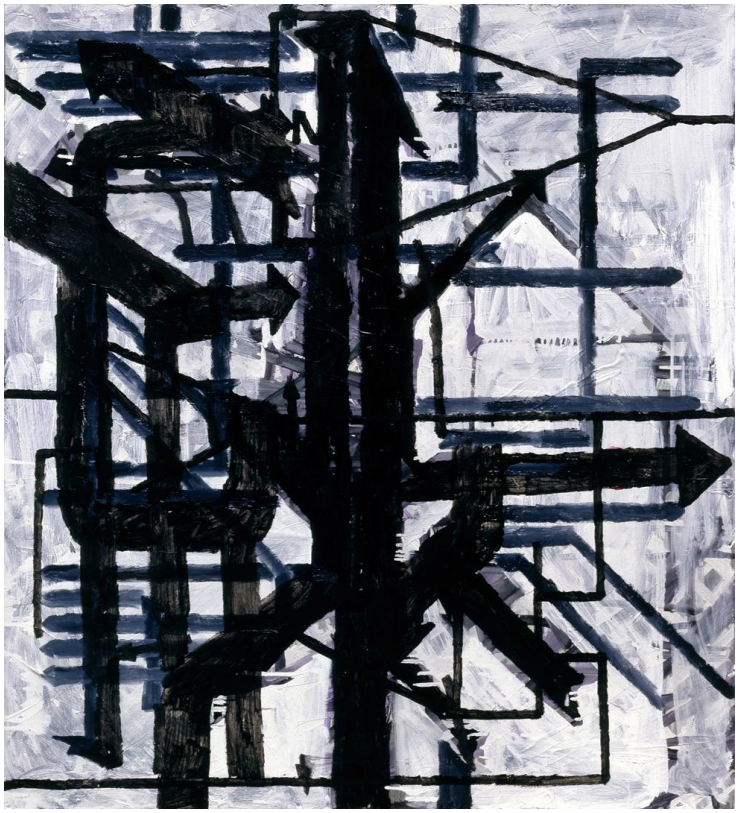


Figure 69: Chuck Close, *John,* 1971 – 1972.

Figure 70: Gallery view featuring Chuck Close's *John* (1971 – 1972) and eight of Terry Winters' *Set Diagram* (2000) works at The Broad, Los Angeles.

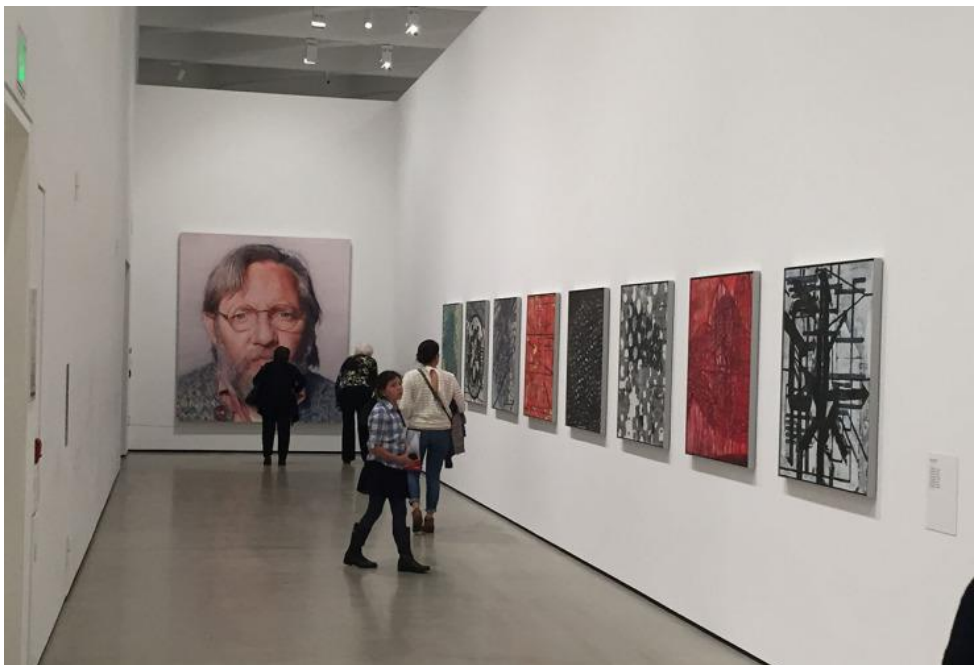


Figure 71: Terry Winters, *Untitled (I),* 1999.

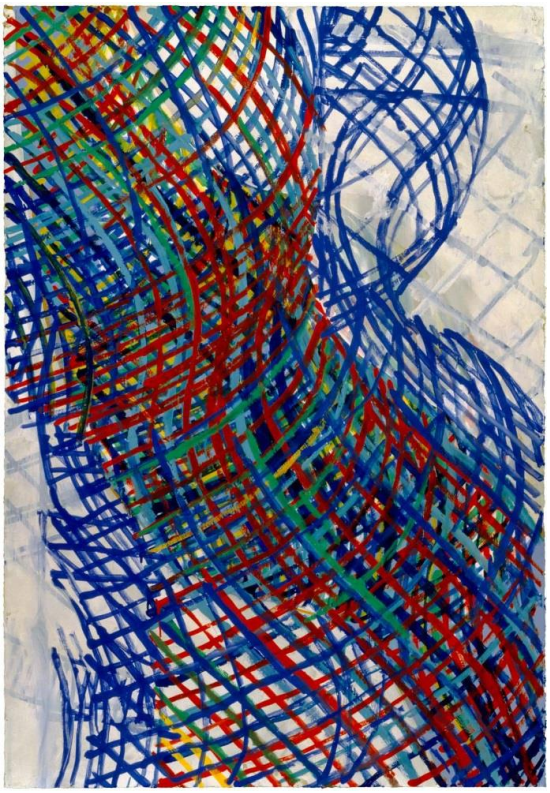


Figure 72: Don McCullin, title not known, 1970.

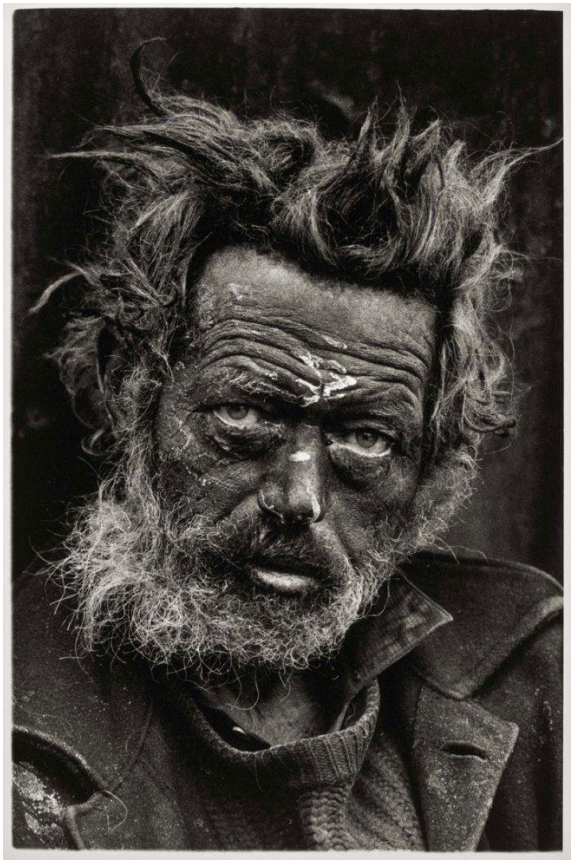


Figure 73: Don McCullin, *Northern Ireland, The Bogside, Londonderry,* 1971.

Figure 74: Cathie Pilkington, *Twinkle,* 2014.

Figure 75: Gallery view of the introductory room in *Eric Gill, The Body,* (29 April to 3 September 2017) at Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, featuring Eric Gill's *Doll* (1910) and Cathie Pilkington's *Twinkle* (2014).

Figure 76: Cathie Pilkington, *Doll for Petra,* 2017, partial image of the installation featuring the artist.

Figure 77: Sue Williams, *The Art World Can Suck My Proverbial Dick,* 1992.

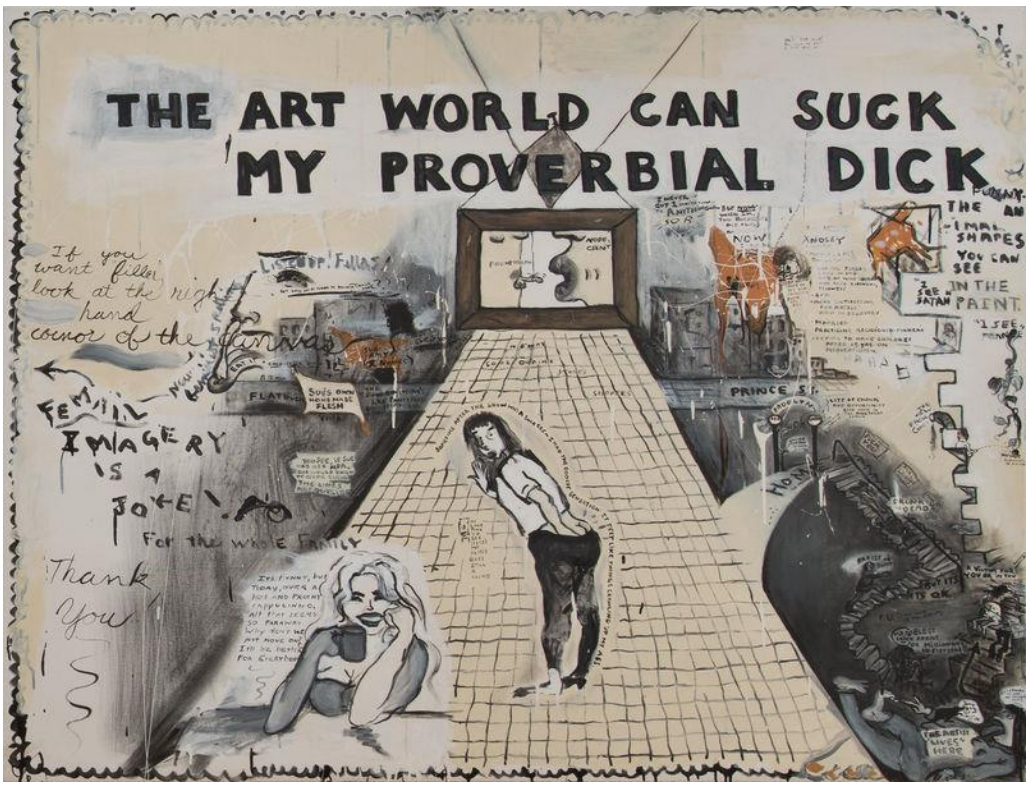


Figure 78: Faith Ringgold, *American People Series #20: Die,* 1967.

Figure 79: Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907.

Figure 80: Gallery view of 'Around *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon'* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, featuring Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) and Faith Ringgold's *American People Series #20: Die* (1967).

Figure 81: Carl Andre, *Foot Candle,* 2002.

Figure 82: Photographs from a protest by the group *No Wave Performance Task Force* on 19 May 2014, demonstrating against the retrospective of Carl Andre's work at the Dia: Beacon, New York.

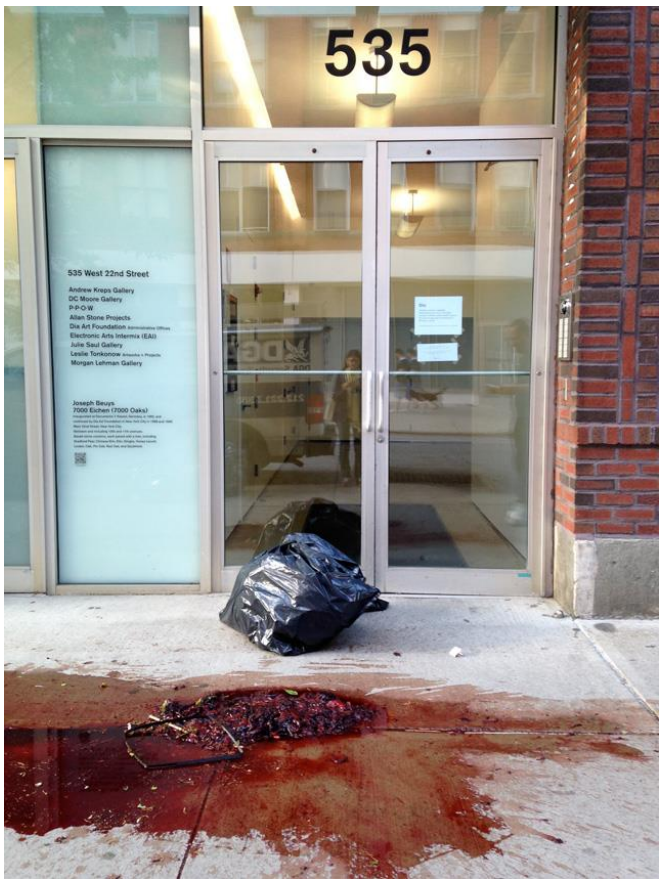


Figure 83: Ana Mendieta, '*Untitled' (Rape Scene),* 1973.

Figure 84: Postcards handed out protesting the retrospective of Carl Andre at The Geffen Contemporary, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles which included the words, **'**Carl Andre is at MoCA Geffen. *¿Dónde está Ana Mendieta?*" (Where is Ana Mendieta?).'

Figure 85: Photograph from the Women's March in Washington D.C., January 2017, where many in attendance wore the Pussyhat.

Figure 86: Mónica Mayer, *El Tendedero*/*The Clothesline Project,* 1978 – present.

Figure 87: Gallery view of questions painted on the walls above and around the artworks in the exhibition *The Art World We Want* (13 February 2018 to 8 April 2018), at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts.

Figure 88: Post-it note responses from gallery visitors to *The Art World We Want* (13 February 2018 to 8 April 2018), at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts.

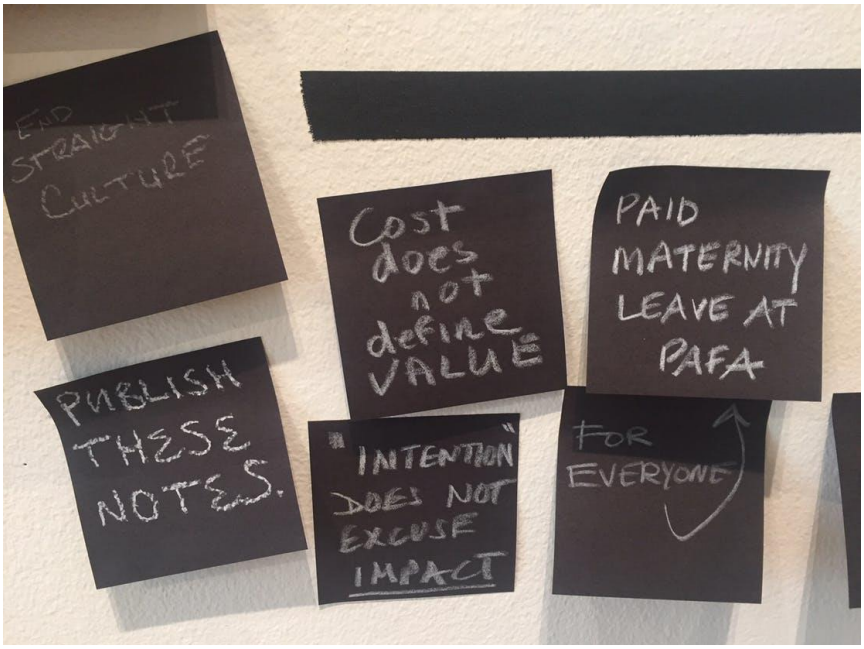


Figure 89: Pedro Bell, cover art for Funkadelic's *One Nation Under a Groove,* 1978.

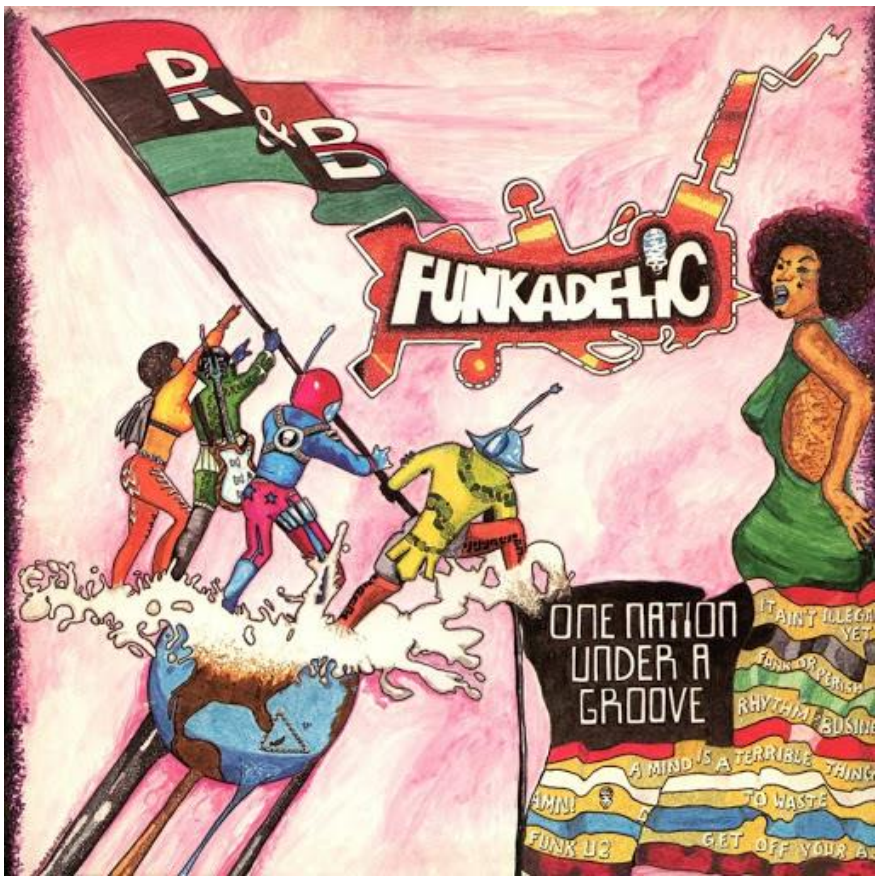


Figure 90: Elissa Blount Moorhead, photographic still from *As of A Now (AOAN),* 2018.

Figure 91: Screenshot of a post, dated 14 March 2018 from the Instagram account @notsurprised2018.

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Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.[571]

~ James Baldwin

[571] James Baldwin, 'As Much Truth As One Can Bear', *The New York Times,* (14 January 1962), p. 38.