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EDICIONES  
COMPLUTENSE

## Art Histories in Feminine

### INTRODUCTION

#### The new season of *Anales de Historia del Arte*

With this 2018 issue, the journal *Anales de Historia del Arte* embarks on a new era in its history, coinciding with the recently restructured Department of Art History at the Complutense University of Madrid. The new editorial team is keen to tackle the job of publishing the latest scientific reflections in the area of Art History and Visual Culture, within a chronological framework that extends from their origins through to the present day, in both a national and an international context. The journal offers researchers from Spanish and overseas universities a space for sharing the results of their work and a medium for framing art in ongoing debates on the topic of social challenges in the contemporary world. It also provides an academically focused space for addressing the controversies surrounding the problems of theoretical speculation, heritage conservation, gender debates, aesthetic and ethical education and the burning questions posed by the globalised world on new transcultural and interdisciplinary perspectives in the art history field.

In this first issue produced entirely by the incoming team, we have wanted to raise the profile of gender issues. These are topics that have been discussed with rigour by many of our specialists, but that only very recently appear to be getting the attention they deserve in the university environment. *Art Histories in Feminine* promotes academic discussion about the plurality of perspectives on issues posed by the presence of women, feminist debate and the feminine in Art History, that is, if one can speak from this perspective of a single Art History, as the title of our monographic issue creates the chance to think or question the possibilities of various parallel, crossed or simultaneous art histories. Imagining the infinity of opportunities opened up by this controversy is the horizon on which science itself is based and on which we believe that intellectual discussion and constructive, fertile dialogue will bear fruit so we can continue to take our discipline forward. This is the cross-disciplinary, open debate in which we hope that the many approaches will enrich the focus we intend to propose for each and every one of the monographic issues of the journal that will be published annually from now on.

#### Art Histories in Feminine

When we launched the call for papers for this issue of the journal we could not have imagined that 2017 and 2018 would be two such critically decisive years for feminism. 2017 was the year of #MeToo, the name given to the movement for denouncing sexual harassment and aggression, which went viral after accu-

sations made against film producer Harvey Weinstein and spread via this hashtag to include hundreds of thousands of women. Right at the start of 2018, at the American Golden Globes film awards ceremony, many actresses opted, for the first time in history, to attend with normal women and feminist activists instead of with their usual flamboyant, glamorous partners. Actress and world famous television personality Oprah Winfrey made a speech watched by millions of people, in which she chose to focus her attention on a woman away from the public eye, Recy Taylor. Taylor was an Afro-American housewife who was raped by six white men in 1944 and who had just died at the age of 98 without seeing her attackers brought to justice. I think this event is hugely significant for two reasons; firstly, because in the world of art there had never been such a public denouncement of sexual harassment; secondly, because the movement it represents does not deal with a white or western European issue. Instead, it is a denouncement that transcends borders and speaks on behalf of all women on the planet. This is a transnational issue that enabled Oprah's words "That time is over. Their time is up" to ring out with strength and hope like a manifesto that marked a turning point not only in the situation of women's inequality but also in the role that art can play in that call to arms. In fact, this is just one of many public demonstrations that have taken place all over the world in defence of equality, in which a new ideal of sisterhood with no kind of identity, cultural or social limitations has become the most powerful of weapons. Examples of this are the 8 March 2018 demonstration in Madrid plus the various public demonstrations across Spain in protest against cases of male chauvinist violence that brought millions of people out onto the streets.

The academic world has certainly not stood on the sidelines of the challenges posed by society. 2017 was also an important year for Art History field on the international feminist scene with the death of Linda Nochlin, the pioneering art historian whose famous 1971 article "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?". The article opened a Pandora's box of questions, debates, publications and fertile discussions on art and gender, perhaps one of the liveliest of critical debates in Art History and the one with the greatest consequences over recent years in the field. Work has been done constantly since the seventies to try and answer Nochlin's question "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" and to raise the profile of forgotten artists throughout history. In Spain many colleagues have been working for years in academia on this very topic. We are grateful for the untiring work done at the Autonomous University of Madrid by Rocío de la Villa and Patricia Mayayo; at the Polytechnic University of Valencia by Juan Vicente Aliaga; at the University of Barcelona by Erika de Bornay and Assumpta Bassas; by Sagrario Aznar at the UNED; by Teresa Alarios at the University of Valladolid, and by Ana Martínez-Collado at the Faculty of Fine Art in Cuenca. At the Complutense University of Madrid we have a pioneering figure, one of the few Fine Art academics, Estrella de Diego, as well as Beatriz Blasco Esquivias and Marian López-Fernández Cao. They are just a few people among the many currently working in the university sphere on finding an answer to Nochlin's question. During this time, the University Feminists and Gender Studies Platform has been set up and many Spanish universities now have equality units. Despite this, the gulf between men and women occupying high-powered jobs in both academia and research is still far too wide, and the absence of regulated studies on gender issues is inexplicable.

In the museums and exhibitions sphere the situation is very similar. In 2016, the Prado Museum exhibited a woman's work for the first time in its history, a painting by Flemish artist Clara Peeters, causing many critics to return to the thorny issues raised by the Guerilla Girls posters back in their day: do us women really have to be naked to get into museums? Or will we just have to settle for all the advantages of being a woman artist in a man's world?

Ever since it was founded, the MAV association (Mujeres en las Artes Visuales / Women in the Visual Arts) has been fighting to raise women's profile in these fields and the Pandora's Box platform has managed to bring together more than 3000 women connected with the art world since it was set up in 2017. There are many artists who defend the role of women in art or the place snatched from them in fairs, exhibitions and museums. Three artists trained at the Complutense University of Madrid, Yolanda Domínguez, María Gimeno and Diana Larrea have all produced highly interesting work on the subject. The first with her performance *Queridas Viejas* (Dear Old Women) set out to include, knife in hand, the artists forgotten in Gombrich's Story of Art, whilst the second spent a whole year from June 2017 carrying out an action on her Facebook page entitled "Tal día como hoy" (A Day like Today) in which she revealed the work and lives of women artists consigned to invisibility. In 2018, among her many works related to gender stereotypes and consumerism, Yolanda Domínguez, has produced #Estamosaquí ("we are here"), a project to make women visible in the cultural sphere. The project was produced to coincide with ARCO, where, for yet another year, the number of Spanish women represented was very low (around 6%, according to data gathered by MAV). These figures are, undoubtedly, surprising, as is the fact that 7 out of every 10 awards are given to male artists, when 6 out of every 10 Fine Arts students are women. A study by the University of Luxembourg found that women's art is sold 47% cheaper than art made by men. It is also inexplicable that the world's great contemporary art museums devote less than 20% of their exhibitions to women. These figures are not confined to the creative sphere: in Spain 80% of management posts in museums are occupied by men and the number of researchers in universities with management responsibilities drops the higher up the management scale you look, in spite of the fact that the number of women students is greater than that of men. We should not forget the outstanding role in this effort to include women artists in art history discourse played by independent curators like Susana Blas or by associations like *Blanco, Negro y Magenta*, set up by thirty women who work on giving greater visibility to women artists and denouncing male chauvinist violent and injustice by organising a huge number of activities, including the publication of their fantastic journal: <https://issuu.com/magentasweb/docs/revista2low>

All over the world there has been extensive debate on exclusion and the possibility of a feminine art that is different to men's art, with major work being done on strictly feminine territories, particularly on the body, sex and gender. The dialogue is rich and full of paradoxes and self-contradicting purposes, as we are reminded by Carolyn Korsmeyer, author of a ground-breaking book: *Gender and Aesthetics*<sup>1</sup>, who we are honoured to have as guest author presenting this issue of the journal with her text: *Wild Effervescences: A Retrospective Look at Feminist Art*, translated and annotated by Professor Rosa Fernández Gómez from the University of

<sup>1</sup> Korsmeyer, Carolyn, *Gender and Aesthetics* (2004), London, Routledge.

Malaga. In her piece, Korsmeyer takes a critical look at the contributions made by feminism to Art History, from Nochlin through to the most recent and controversial removal of John Waterhouse's pre-Raphaelite work *Hylas and the Nymphs* from the Manchester Art Gallery. In her essay, the author puts some fundamental questions on the table and encourages us to correct the historical register into which we have been inserted. It must be said, however, that this is not, by any means, a contemporary issue; the abuse of the weak by the powerful is nothing new, and the fact that supremacy is in the hands of white men has been well known since Antiquity. Art has been reflecting this since the early days of the feminist movements. Jenny Holzer's legendary book *Abuse of Power Comes as No Surprise*, part of her *Truisms* series, is a kind of aphorism that served the artist back in the 1970s, when feminism was embarking on its path in Art History, to stir up awareness and provoke the viewer through the language used by advertising messages on hoardings, iconic locations and major monuments. The artist was trying to awaken people's consciences on major issues through small warnings, making reference to what she considered to be a necessary reflection in view of humankind's immersion in the consumer society. It appeared on the giant advertising screen on top of the Times Square building and to do this, the artist had to take over not only the electronic signage devices and the advertising spaces, but also the public space itself and the power to attract the gaze of passers-by to her work. This appropriation, placing the woman artist in the place of power and the sphere of the private in the public domain, highlights many important issues that are dealt with in this issue of the journal. Her work has since been widely published, major exhibitions have been held and important centres have been set up, such as the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, housed in the Brooklyn Museum in New York and the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC.

Back then it is very possible that many spectators went straight past Jenny Holzer's work without noticing them and it was not until the 1990s that the artist returned to territory that many essentialist feminists had already explored and to which all reflections on feminism and identity necessarily return over and over again: the body and the memory that remains on it. In her chilling work *Lustmord*, produced in the 1990s, the artist reminded us, hinting at the war crimes committed in the Balkans war: "I am awake in the place where women die", a phrase that she also announced as an illuminated sign, but that she decided to tattoo on the skin of people who attended her performances, fixing, for always, the commitment that she, as a woman, took on with her sisters who were raped, tortured and murdered during the conflict. Many of us women and men connected with the world of art and visual production cannot let our guard down in the face of the constant use of the feminine body in international conflicts and also in our everyday lives, the relationship between the body and power, the continuing debate between the personal and the political.

There is no doubt that the most widely heard speech at the Golden Globes was that of Oprah Winfrey, but perhaps the most significant from the point of view of art was that of Meryl Streep, who hit the nail on the head when she mentioned some of the key issues in these matters: the question of art when it becomes reality, the mission of the actor/artist to enter other people's lives and make them feel different, art as a territory for freedom of expression and, in short, art as a territory for freedom. Meryl Streep, who coincidentally studied at Vassar, the university where

Linda Nochlin taught, finished her speech quoting princess Leia when she said “take your broken heart, make it into art”, an appeal to the healing and rebuilding quality of art and of aesthetic education, perhaps one of the few we have left to make the world a habitable, egalitarian place.

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