

How is gender represented in modern times compared to history? How is gender identity represented and in what ways has it progressed/ changed?

In this essay I will be drawing attention to the progression of gender identity and how it has changed. The ways of change in society in recent years has allowed both males and females to become fluid in the way they present themselves and are perceived. I will be highlighting some artists who have led/ are participating in this change through their work and the ways that they are achieving this open-mindedness to gender identity.

I will be answering my question through comparing the changes to recent society and the past; one of the main things that I will focus on is the way that gender identity in art is being perceived and taken on board with the consumers. I will include examples of the positive and negative responses and effects through gathering sources on the subject matter.

The context of this essay is that I will be gathering artists' work and their statements on the aim of their work. Artists that are creating with androgynous and flamboyant ways of gender expression mainly hope to gain a positive effect on society by creating a safer, more accepting space. For example, Grayson Perry's work often explores gender expectations in society. It is their belief that "our surroundings play in defining who we are", and that "gender and identity are co-created by society and the people around us" this is why I strongly support the growing attention of artists that bend social norms in their work as their art can reach those who are not supported by their circle and are then able to turn to others who share their beliefs for support. Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Grayson Perry: My Pretty Little Art Career.

<https://www.mca.com.au/learn/learning-resources/grayson-perry/>

Through creating artwork that makes an important social statement, those who believe in it/ relate to, can be brought together and are felt seen and heard. It can also create a community to be a part of where others share your mindset.

In preparation for writing this essay I have gathered research on some artists whose work has paved a way and has questioned what is seen as “normal” in society. These thought provoking artists have paved the way for others to create freely and identify as they like with less questioning. One of the first people that I found during my research is Marcel Duchamp. Marcel was a participant in the DADA Movement. The aim of this



movement was for artists to attempt to put a spin on the traditional values of art and to make people question everything in the aftermath of WW1. During this time, art was controversial and very silly; Marcel released a series of photos of himself giving into his female alter-ego. Rose Sélavy, his female alter-ego, drew attention to the possibilities of cross-dressing or being non-binary before genderqueernes even had a name.

Furthermore, Andy Warhol also released a series of photographs delving into his feminine side. Warhol's friend Christopher Makos, photographed him in drag on a



polaroid. It is said that these photos were a homage to Marcel Duchamp's previously released feminine alter-ego photos. KazoArt Blog. 6 Artists that broke gender norms.

<https://www.kazoart.com/blog/en/6-artists-that-broke-gender-norms/>.

As seen from this, artists can pull from the daringness of artists before them and can get their inspiration from those who are willing to question things about society and are willing to make changes. Warhol was inspired by Duchamp's stand.

An artist that takes a more aggressive approach in their work is Suzanne Lacy. Suzanne is a strong feminist figure in the artworld. Their work is targeting the inequality of gender,

drawing attention to issues that are mostly swept under the rug and questions the way of society standards. She has stated that art can “incite the viewer to question the social and political landscape, and through this questioning, possibly affect the world and bring change toward equality.” The Art Story. Feminist Art.

<https://www.theartstory.org/movement/feminist-art/>

Hannah Gluckstein is an artist who is queer and has shredded herself of her past name and image. They are known as Gluck and they have barbered hair. Their paintings are



androgynous and the gender of the people shown are unintelligible to decipher. Gluck’s depiction of the female gender goes against the stereotypical image that many hold. It is refreshing to view the women in their paintings and see strength, power and strong features. One of their most known paintings is a portrait of Gluck and her female lover, Medallion (YouWe), 1937. Gluck posing for

magazines in her signature masculine clothing was viewed as modern and very different from what was seen as “normal”, this controversial display of identity resulted in feedback such as being used for a “guess the gender game”.

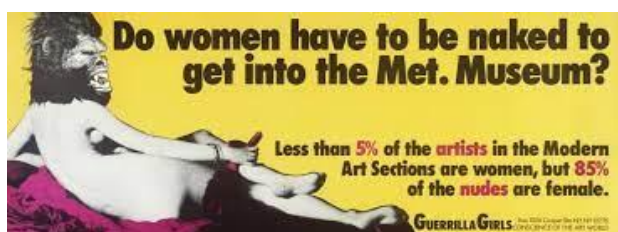
AnOther. The Early 20th-Century Artist Who Pioneered Modern

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In classical art, the qualities associated with the female gender are domesticity, softness, (weakness) and beauty. On the contrary, males are held in high regard and are tied to qualities such as power, dominance and privilege. The way that women are presented in classical art compared to males is that women are being identified as the weaker sex and the less respected. The percentage of artists that are showcased in the

Met. museum who are women are significantly less than male artists.

However 85% of the material seen is of nude women. This has created a lot of



attention and questioning for what the reasoning could be as 5% of the art in the Modern Art Section being women artists.

One of the most pushed questions is, “Do women need to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?” Guerrilla Girls. Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into The Met. Museum?

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/guerrilla-girls-do-women-have-to-be-naked-to-get-in-to-the-met-museum-p78793>

During my research, I looked for artwork that represented women being confident in



their sexuality and in their female form. An example of this is 'Dripping Flowers' by Karenina Fabrizzi.

Karenina created this strong and sensual piece in 2017. It depicts a woman that is sensual, in control of herself and is daring viewers to find her attractive. I believe that the flowers dripping resembles her tie with nature as the plants are growing out of her and the woman is showing no signs of concern but instead seems to be owning it.

Continuing my search for the representation of strong female identities in art, I found a painting created by Mikela Henry- Lowe.



Its title is 'Motherhood' and it was made in 2016. The vibrant painting shows a mother with her child holding it in a protective, yet undeniably loving way. The representation that women are creators and protectors is an empowering message and image. The powerful emotions felt by the mother in the painting shows the unbreakable bond between mother and child and highlights the capacity women have for intense emotions.

Rise Art. 5 Artworks That Celebrate Strong Women.

<https://www.riseart.com/guide/2237/art-collections-she-said-it-5-pieces-that-celebrate-strong-women>



Stated above are recent examples of the representation of strong female identities, I will now include a historical artist whose work was strongly supported by LGBT communities and by women as they shared her battles against prejudice and sexual



violence. Artemisia Gentileschi created paintings of strong Biblical women defending themselves with violence or purely showing the struggles women face. Which sadly still applies the same way in the 17th century to recent years.

Artemisia's work breaks gender rules and she expresses a strong female viewpoint in her paintings. Some of her greatest paintings included "Judith Beheading Holofernes" and "Susanna and the Elders".

Susanna and the Elders is a painting of a nude woman being gawked at by grown men. The woman in the painting is the Biblical Hebrew wife Susanna, she is showing signs of distress and is noticeably uncomfortable with her audience. Artemisia's take on the story in comparison to many other depictions created by mainly male painters is drastic. In many other representations of the story the woman seems mildly uncomfortable but can be seen engaging with the elders. In Artemisia's painting of Susanna, the elders are violating her privacy and are predatory. The scene is alarming and disturbing- a true representation of what a woman would feel in the situation. QSpirit. Artemisia Gentileschi paints strong Biblical women.

<https://qspirit.net/artemisia-gentileschi-paints-women/>

Conclusion.

In this essay, I have covered the importance of gender identity representations and a few ways that artists have broken gender roles/ stereotypes. I have also included the effect that some artists' work have had on viewers and also on other artists in terms of inspiring similar work. The discussion of gender identity in art and in what ways it is evolving, shows that it is becoming more normalized and is gaining attention to experiment and portray our identity as fluid. I have included artists who identify as non-binary, transgender or who just like to experiment. The artists that I have mentioned

in this essay have represented themselves breaking gender norms or have expressed their anger against stereotypes in their work.

The examples that I have included show how refreshing it is to see and how inspirational it can be for gender to be represented in alternative ways than what is expected by society's standards. My view on the subject is that it should be encouraged and supported to play into your feminine/ masculine side and to question society's expectations on gender. I found writing this essay very enlightening as I had little knowledge on the subject prior to beginning. I plan to continue looking out for artists' work similar to what I have included throughout the essay to expand my knowledge and open my mind further to the possibilities.

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