

The Gaze, Sexuality and the Nude

4 May 2023

- Why have there been no women artists?
- Debating the Canon
- Questions of Representation: the Female / Male Nude
- The Gaze, Fetishism, Castration
- Fetishism



Linda Nochlin

**Why
have
there
been no
great
women
artists?**

Thames
&Hudson

50th anniversary edition

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Table 2.2. The fifty most cited artists in the *BHA* database, 1972–1987, with the number of citations for each.

Rank	Artist	No. of citations	Rank	Artist	No. of citations
1	Picasso	757	26	Poussin	202
2	Dürer	616	27	Ingres	201
3	Rubens	600	28	Manet	200
4	Michelangelo	537	29	Blake	199
5	Leonardo	526	30	Giorgione	191
6	Raphael	460	31	Velázquez	181
7	Rembrandt	442	32	Piranesi	180
8	Titian	418	33	Friedrich	177
9	Goya	391	34	Bosch	163
10	Palladio	377	35	Rodin	162
11	Van Gogh	283	36	Duchamp	161
12	Turner	270	37	Brughel the Elder	160
13	Cézanne	267	38	Ernst	159
14	Brunelleschi	243	39	Degas	156
15	Klee	240	40	Munch	155
16	Matisse	224	41	Cranach	154
17	Bernini	220	42	Watteau	152
18	Alberti	218	43	Monet	151
19	Courbet	215	44	Viollet-le-Duc	151
20	Le Corbusier	214	45	Gauguin	147
21	Schinkel	213	46	Donatello	145
22	Caravaggio	211	47	Van Eyck	145
23	Delacroix	209	48	Tiepolo	144
24	Kandinsky	205	49	Constable	141
25	Giotto	203	50	Lotto	141

Source: James Elkins, 'Canon and Globalization in Art History' in A Brzyski, ed., *Partisan Canons* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2007) p. 66



Laurits Tuxen
Male Nude in the Studio of Bonnat (1876-1877)

Jacques Louis David
'Patroclus' (1780)





Rosa Bonheur – The Horse Fair (1853)



Johann Zoffany, The Royal Academicians (1771-1772)



L: Angelika Kaufmann
Self-Portrait (1770-1775)



R: George Romney
Portrait of Mary Moser (1770)

Debating the Canon



Judith Leyster, Self-Portrait (1630)



Mary Cassatt, Tea (1880)



Helen Chadwick
From *Ego Geometria Sum* (1983-86)



THE STORY OF ART

WITHOUT

MEN

KATY HESSEL

Katy Hessel, *The Story of Art without Men* (London, 2022)

Paula Modersohn-Becker,
Self-Portrait, Age 30, Sixth
Wedding Day, May 25, 1906



stomach. She was not pregnant, but burgeoning with her new life. Assertive like her contemporaries, she appears free from all authority other than herself.

Unfortunately, with her limited finances, by 1907 Modersohn-Becker was back in Worpswede. She gave birth the following November to a daughter, Mathilde, but due to complications she died just a few weeks later, aged thirty-one. She never achieved recognition in her lifetime – she had sold just a handful of paintings, yet left behind hundreds.

Her first solo exhibition was staged posthumously in 1919 in Berlin (by which time, postwar Germany had embraced modernism). In 1927 the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum opened in Bremen, the first ever in Europe to be devoted to a female painter.

Although she died on the cusp of her moment, scholars have since viewed Modersohn-Becker as an exponent of German Expressionism.



Florine Stettheimer, *A Model (Nude Self-Portrait)*, 1915

ism – a style, as we will discover in the following chapter, which favoured emotion over rigid narrative-led academicism (as Modersohn-Becker wrote, 'Personal feeling is the main thing').

The influence of French Modernism extended to America, where it is evident in the work of Jazz Age visionary Florine Stettheimer (1871–1944), who synthesised the styles she encountered during her extensive travels and studies in Europe with her bohemian eccentricity. Stettheimer painted glittering scenes of Manhattan life in blazing hues of reds, greens and oranges, sprinkled with shards of thick

Eliot and Jane Austen, tenth-century Japanese poet Murasaki and Pre-Raphaelite Elizabeth Siddal; a collaboration with Duncan Grant). Not only does this showcase the versatility of her artistic range, but, seen from a twenty-first-century perspective, it seems extraordinarily progressive – even more so considering it pre-dated Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* by nearly half a century (p. X).

Like Bell, who worked across a range of mediums and verged on abstraction in paint, artists in Russia and France also experimented with these distinct elements of 'modern' art.

As the pace of life grew ever frenzied and the First World War loomed, artists ventured further towards abstraction with styles evoking the dynamism (and destruction) of the modern world. In 1911, the Ukrainian-born, Saint Petersburg-raised artist Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979), now living in Paris, pioneered a new strand of Cubism known as 'Orphism'. She was inspired by, in her words, the 'Cubist conceptions' involved in the process of piecing together a blanket for her newborn son. Free of narrative, perspective and representation, the kaleidoscopic and interlocking swirls of Orphism reflect the pace and vibrancy of modern life. You can almost sense the bright electric lights adorning sprawling boulevards, with the cars careening through. Borrowing its name from Orpheus, Greek god of music and poetry, the style presented colours as visual harmonies, like musical notes chiming in concentric forms. Taking it



Sonia Delaunay, *Prismes électriques*, 1914

further into the modern realm, Delaunay translated her designs to fabrics, interiors, ceramics – and even cars!

In Russia, Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962) was becoming the most successful artist of the era, having been in 1913 the first avant-garde artist (of any gender) to achieve a major exhibition at a Moscow museum (showing over 800 works).

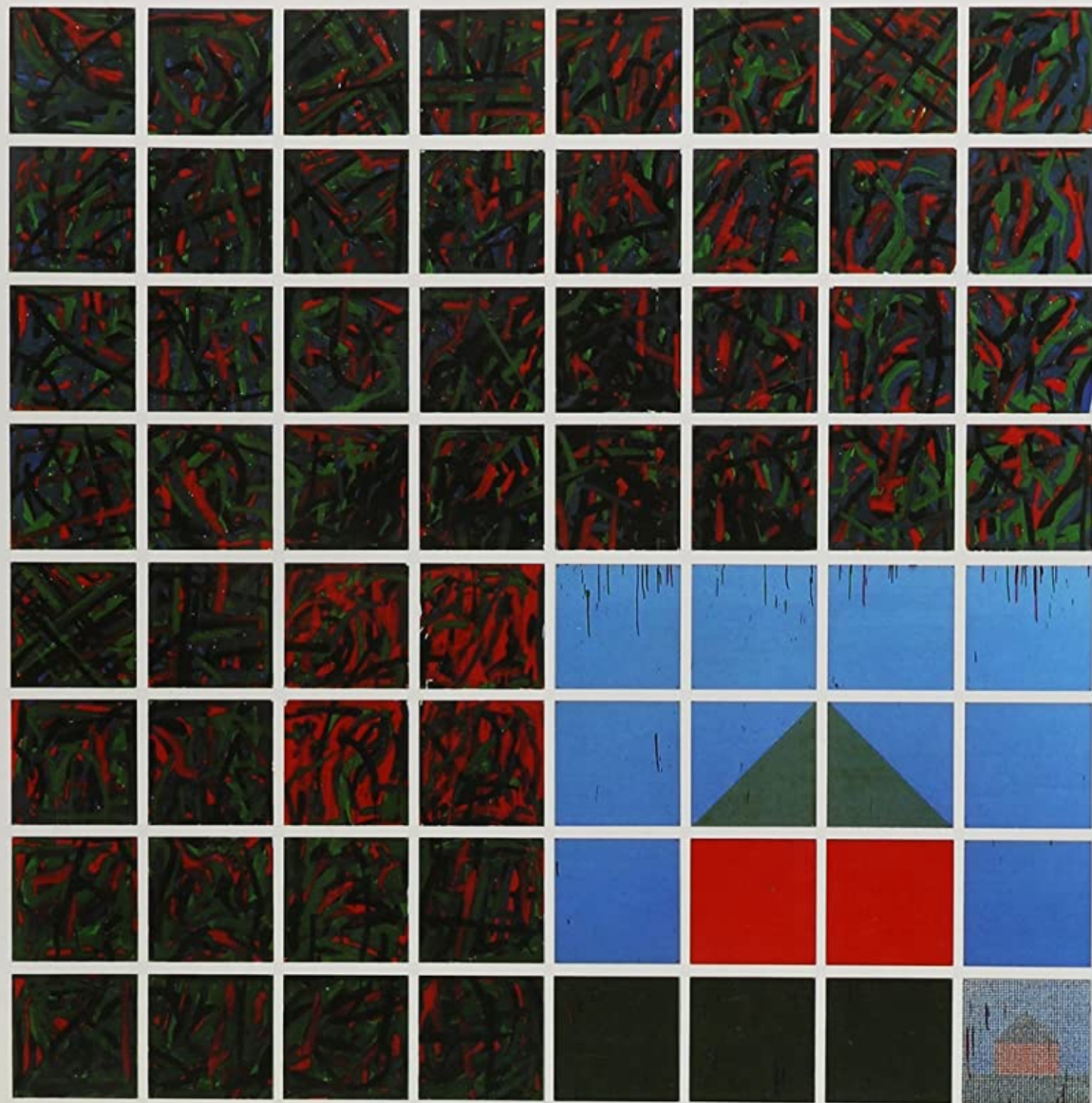
Previously, she had embraced a style melding Modernist aesthetics with Russian Folk Art, but in the 1910s she switched to pioneering a style known as Cubo-Futurism. Integrating the shattered shapes of Cubism with the speed and dynamism of Italian Futurism, Goncharo-



Vanessa Bell (with Duncan Grant), *The Famous Women Dinner Service*, 1932

Making Their Mark

Women Artists Move into the Mainstream, 1970–85



‘counter-discourses ... Recuperate the feminist project back into a mainstream (white, Western, male) humanist or critical theory project ... A recent exhibition catalogue is entitled *Making their Mark* .. Even aside from the phallic connotations of “making a mark” ... what does the term “mainstream” imply ... ? ... the show relied on the premise that women artists desire to enter a “mainstream” ... ‘

Amelia Jones, ‘Post-feminism: A Remasculinization of Culture?’ in Hilary Robinson, ed., *Feminism Art Theory* (Oxford, 2001) p. 499.

Cincinnati Art Museum, 1989



More than a collection of valued objects/texts or a list of revered masters, I define the canon as a discursive formation which constitutes the objects/texts it selects as the products of artistic mastery and, thereby, contributes to the legitimation of white masculinity's exclusive identification with creativity and with Culture. To learn about Art, through the canonical discourse, is to know masculinity as power and meaning, and all three as identical with Truth and Beauty. So long as feminism also tries to be a discourse about art, truth and beauty, it can only confirm the structure of the canon,

Pollock, *Differencing the Canon* (London, 1999) p. 9

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MENU

Judith Leyster. "Self-portrait." c. 1633. National Gallery of Art: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss. 1949.6.1

Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400-1800

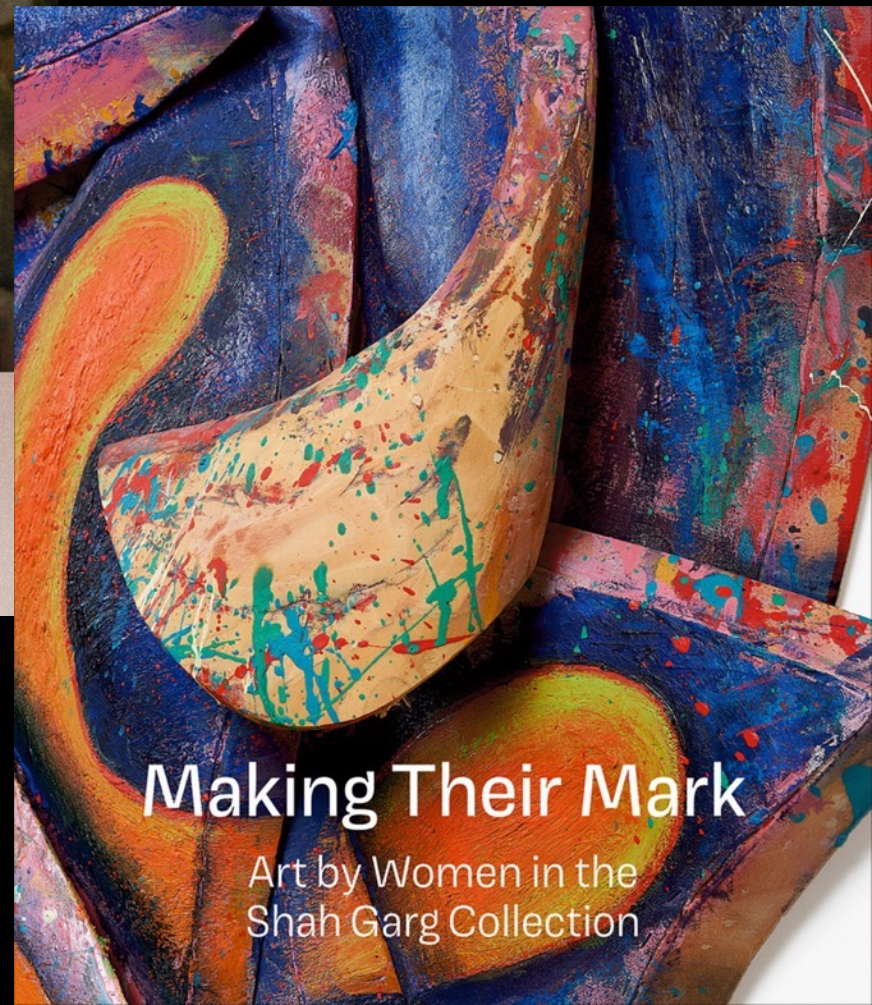
October 1, 2023 - January 7, 2024

Overview

- Overview
- Location
- Press

L: Baltimore Museum and Art Gallery website

R: Mark Godfrey, ed, *Making their Mark* (Los Angeles, 2023)



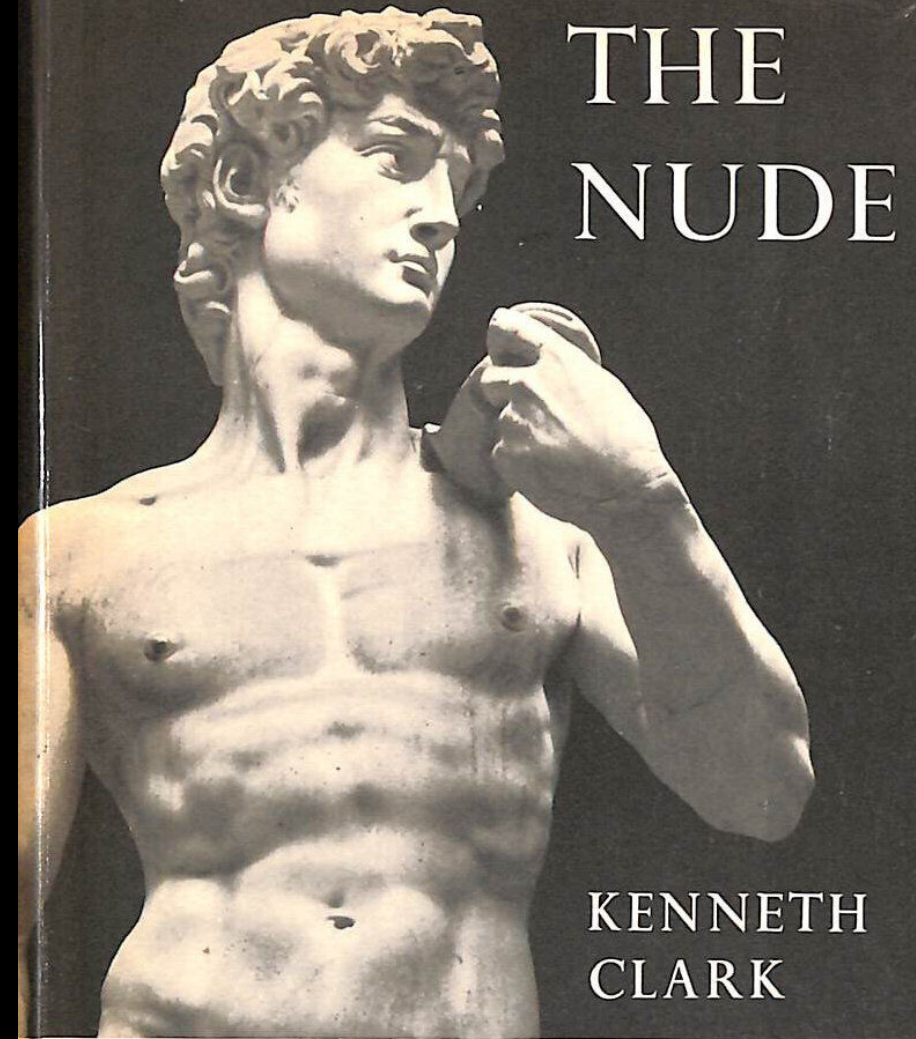
The Naked and the Nude

It is widely supposed that the naked human body is in itself an object upon which the eye dwells with pleasure and which we are glad to see depicted. But anyone who has frequented art schools and seen the shapeless, pitiful model that the students are industriously drawing will know this is an illusion. The body is not one of those subjects which can be made into art by direct transcription—like a tiger or a snowy landscape. Often in looking at the natural and animal world we joyfully identify ourselves with what

we see and from this happy union create a work of art. This is the process students of aesthetics call empathy, and it is at the opposite pole of creative activity to the state of mind that has produced the nude. A mass of naked figures does not move us to empathy, but to disillusion and dismay. We do not wish to imitate; we wish to perfect. We become, in the physical sphere, like Diogenes with his lantern looking for an honest man; and, like him, we may never be rewarded.

Consciously or unconsciously, photographers have usually recognized that in a photograph of the nude their real object is not to reproduce the naked body, but to imitate some artist's view of what the naked body should be.

Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*
(London, 1956) pp. 5 -7



A Pelican Book 9/6



John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, BBC, 1972)



WAYS OF SEEING

JOHN BERGER

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.

But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.



The Surrealist painter Magritte commented on this always-present gap between words and seeing in a painting called *The Key of Dreams*.

The way we see things is affected by what we

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually.

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, 1974) p. 46



Men survey women before treating them. Consequently how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated. To acquire some control over this process, women must contain it and interiorize it. That part of a woman's self which is the surveyor treats the part which is the surveyed so as to demonstrate to others how her whole self would like to be treated. And this exemplary treatment of herself by herself constitutes her presence. Every woman's

One might simplify this by saying: *men act and women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.

The Nude



Titian, Venus of Urbino (1538)

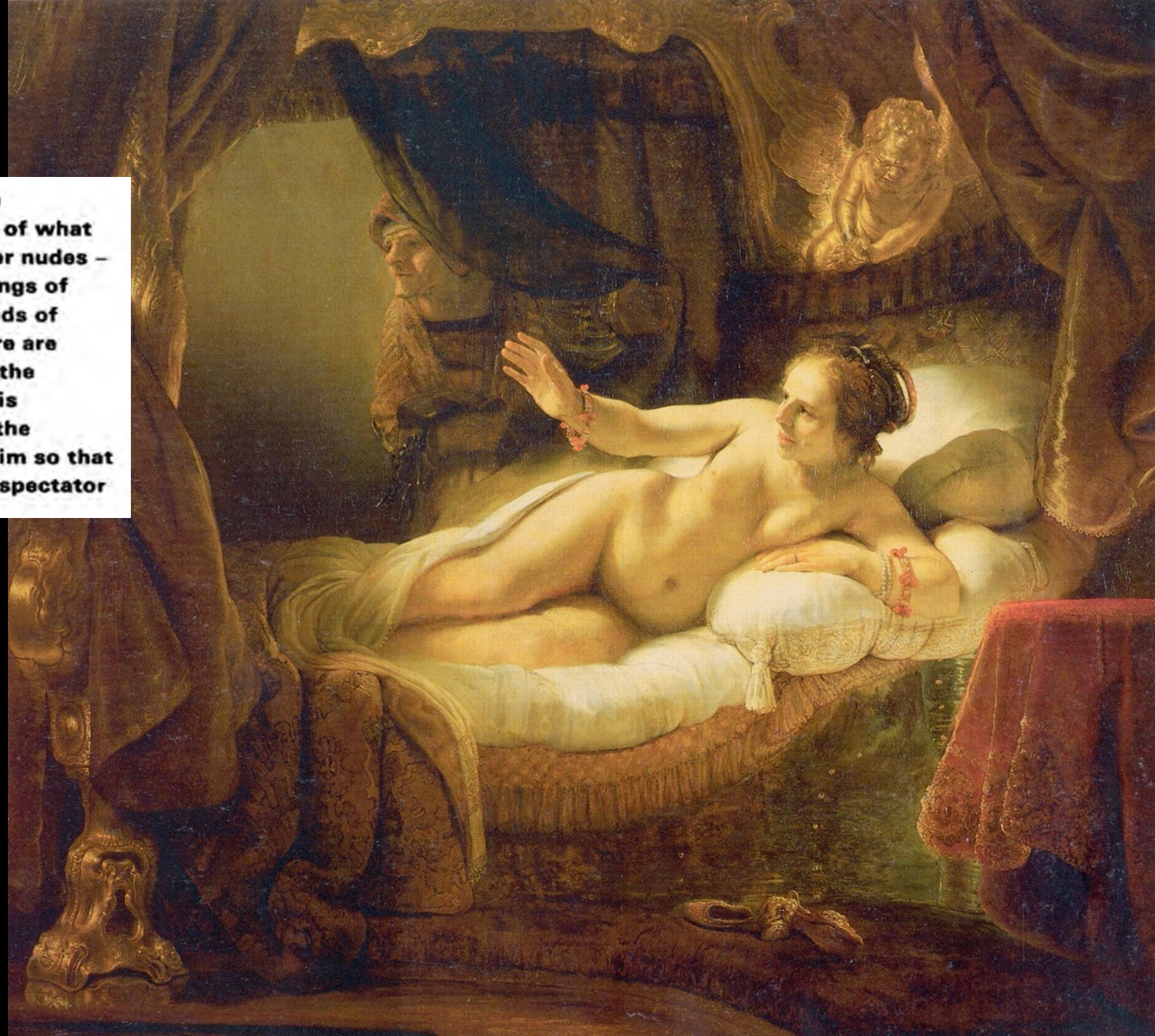
Sir Peter Lely, Nell Gwyn (before 1680)

Rubens, The Judgement of Paris (1636)

The Naked

There are a few exceptional nudes in the European tradition of oil painting to which very little of what has been said above applies. Indeed they are no longer nudes – they break the norms of the art-form; they are paintings of loved women, more or less naked. Among the hundreds of thousands of nudes which make up the tradition there are perhaps a hundred of these exceptions. In each case the painter’s personal vision of the particular women he is painting is so strong that it makes no allowance for the spectator. The painter’s vision binds the woman to him so that they become as inseparable as couples in stone. The spectator

Berger, *Ways of Seeing* p. 57



Rembrandt, Danae (between 1636 and 1643)



‘The maid's simple washing stand allows a space in which women outside the bourgeoisie can be represented both intimately and as working women without forcing them into the sexualized category of the fallen woman. The body of woman can be pictured as classed but not subject to sexual commodification’

Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference* (London, 1988) pp. 88-89.



‘The artistic output of the Brücke abounded in images of powerless women. In Heckel’s *Nude on a Sofa*, 1909, and his *Crystal Day*, 1913, women exist only in reference to—or rather as witnesses to—the artist’s frank sexual interests. In one, the woman is sprawled in a disheveled setting, in the other, she is knee-deep in water—in the passive, arms-up, exhibitionist pose that occurs so frequently in the art of this period. The nude in *Crystal Day* is literally without features (although her nipples are meticulously detailed), while the figure in the other work covers her face, a combination of bodily self-offering and spiritual self-defacement that characterizes these male assertions of sexual power.’

Carol Duncan, ‘Virility and Domination in Early 20th Century Vanguard Painting,’ *Artforum* (1973)

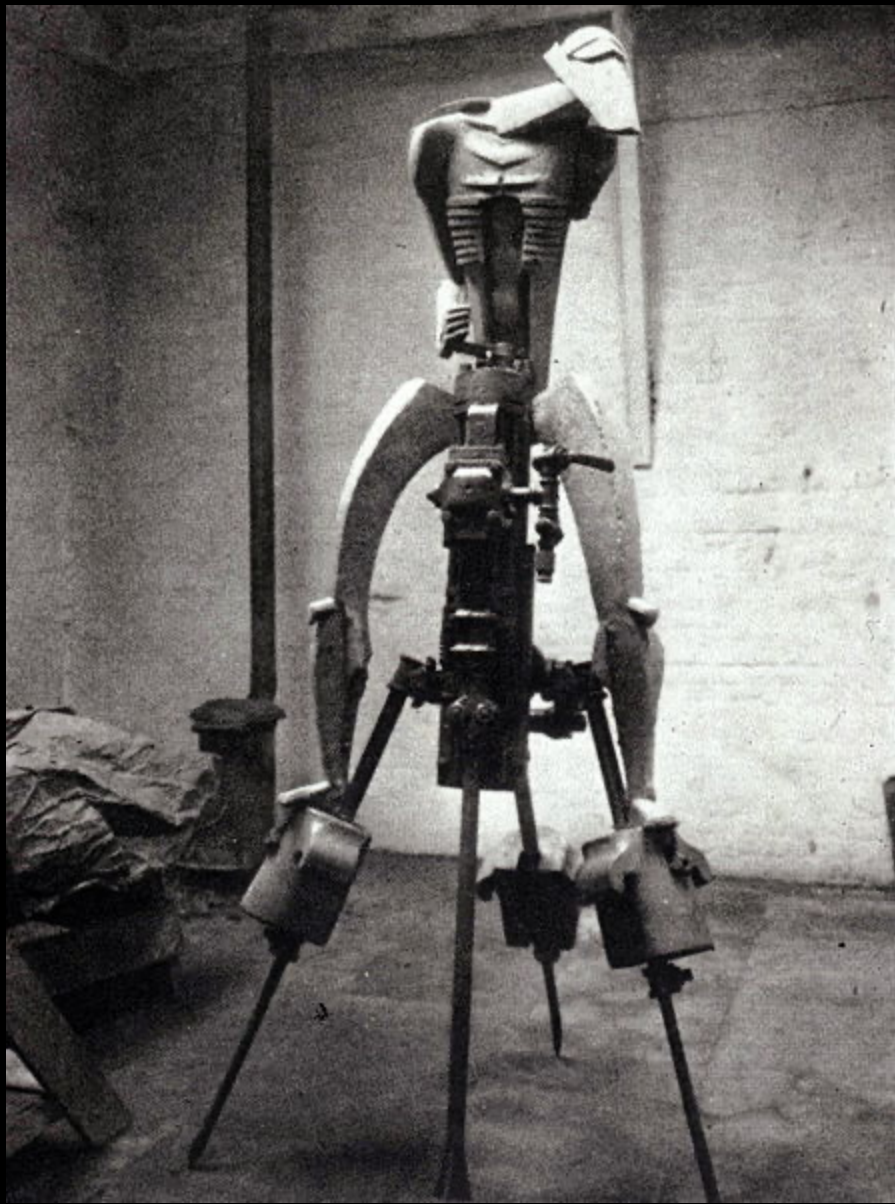


Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

L: Fränzi with Doll (1910)

R: Self-Portrait with Model (1907)

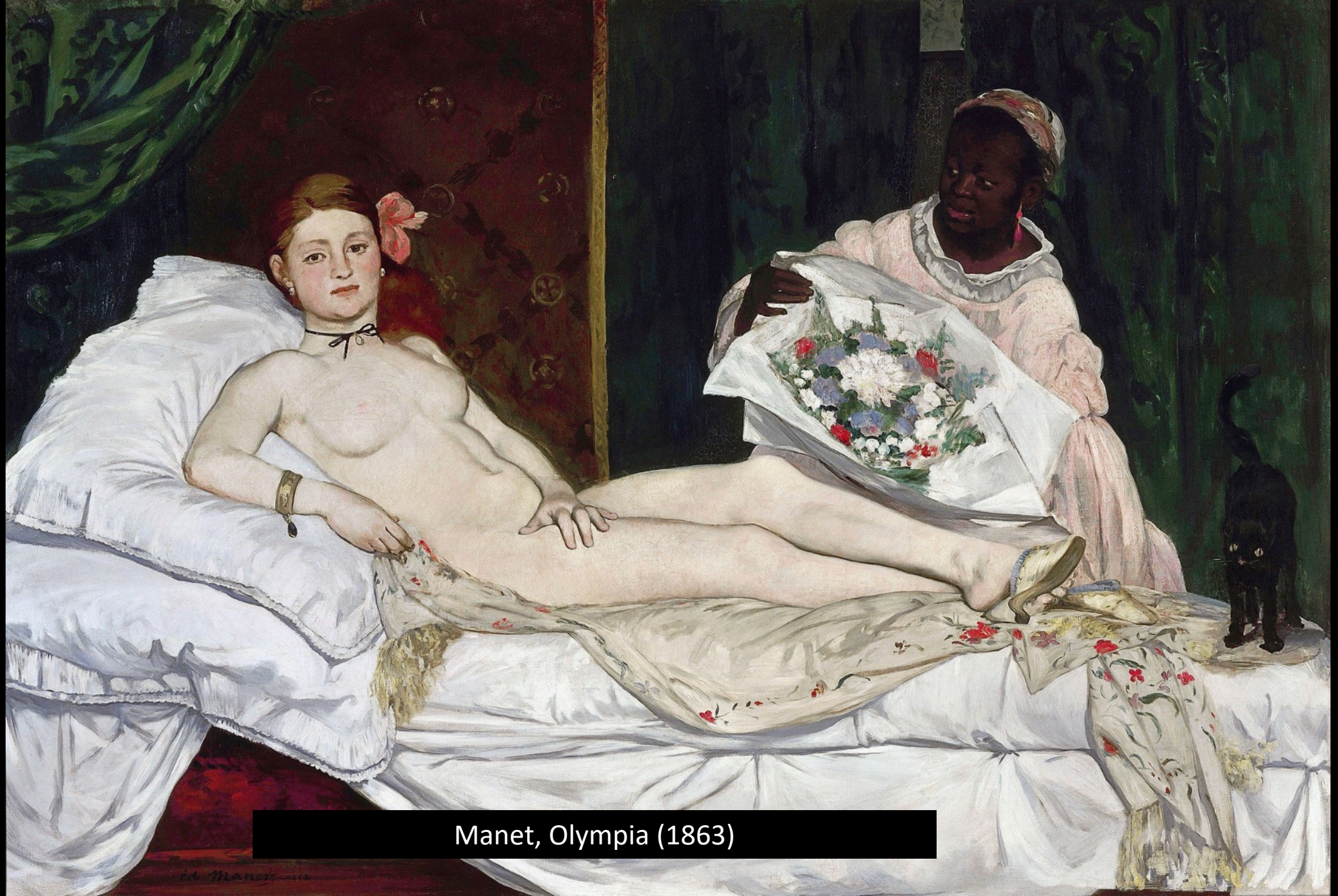




L: Jacob Epstein, Rock Drill (1913)

R: Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, The Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound (1914)





Manet, Olympia (1863)

William-Adophe Bouguereau,
Bather (1864)





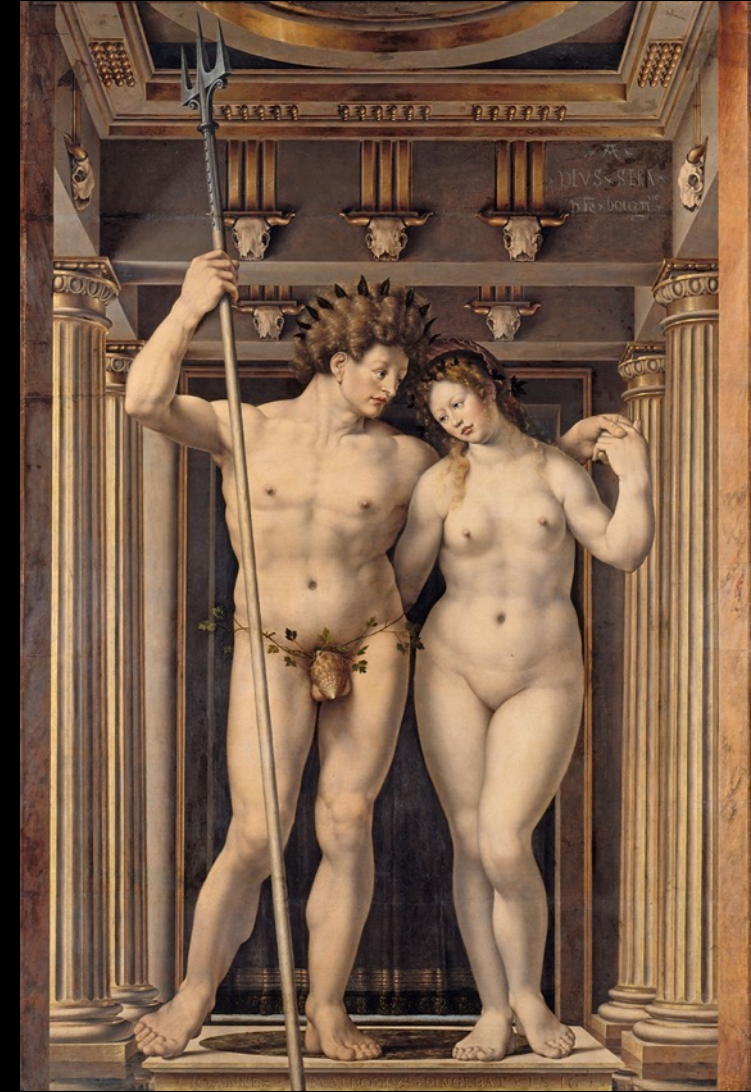
Here a partially draped female model lies on a table opposite the draughtsman. They are separated by a framed screen which is divided into square sections. The artist gazes through the screen at the female body and then transposes the view on to his squared paper. Geometry and perspective impose a controlling order on the female body. The opposition between male culture and female nature is starkly drawn in this image; the two confront each other.

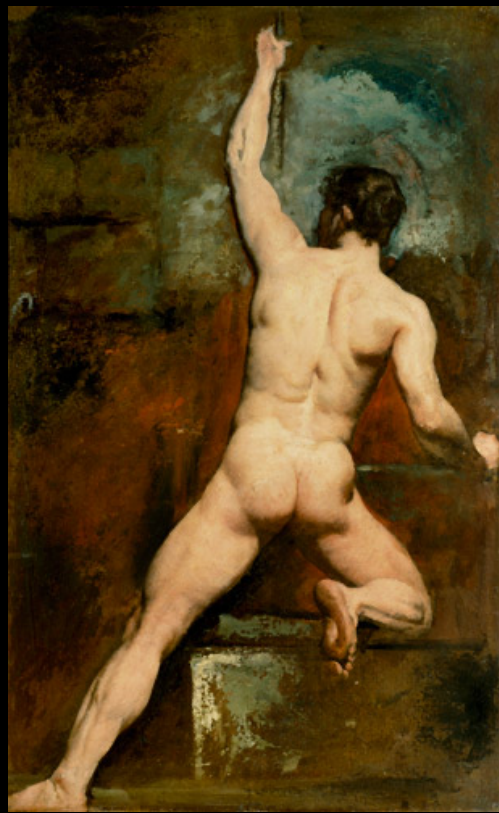


The woman lies in a prone position; the pose is difficult to determine, but her hand is clearly poised in a masturbatory manner over the genitals. In contrast to the curves and undulating lines of the female section, the male compartment is scattered with sharp, vertical forms; the draughtsman himself sits up and is alert and absorbed. Woman offers herself to the controlling discipline of illusionistic art.

‘ ... meaning is organized and regulated at the edges or boundaries of categories. These borderlines are important, they are powerful, for, as [Mary] Douglas writes, “all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered.” This notion raises possibilities for a feminist critique of patriarchal representations of the female body and may suggest some directions for alternative ways of representing – through art practice and criticism – the female body. The classical, high-art tradition of the female nude plays on the ideal of wholeness and contained form. Its formal integrity then offers to the discerning connoisseur the attractions of an uncompromised aesthetic experience. It may well be, then, that these values can be questioned ... ‘

Nead, *The Female Nude* p. 33





William Etty (1787 – 1849)

Male Nude Studies



L: Georges Rouault, *The Girls or Prostitutes* (1905)

R: Georges Rouault, *The Girls or Prostitutes* (1906)



L: Linda Benglis, For Carl Andre (1970)

R: Carl Andres, 144 Magnesium Square (1969)

The Gaze, Fetishism, Castration

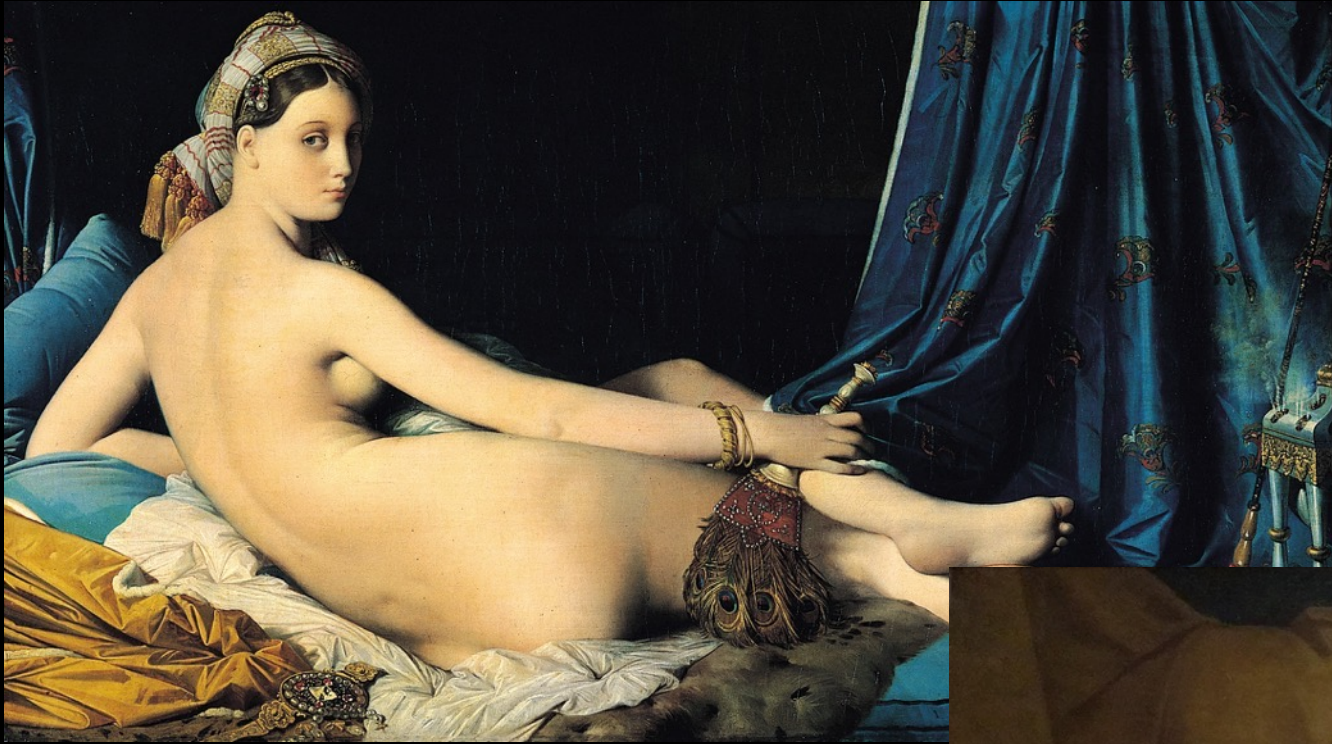
Scopophilia and the Gaze

‘Visual impressions remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused; indeed, natural selection counts upon the accessibility of this pathway ... when it encourages the development of beauty in the sexual object. The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake. This curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts. It can, however, be diverted (‘sublimated’) in the direction of art, if its interest can be shifted away from the genitals on to the shape of the body as a whole.’

Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *Complete Works of Freud Vol. VII* (London, 1949) p. 156



Diego Vélazquez, *The Toilet of Venus* (1647-51)



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, The Grande Odalisque (1814)



Jules Lefebvre, Odalisque (1874)

Fetishism

‘There are some cases which are quite specially remarkable—those in which the normal sexual object is replaced by another which bears some relation to it, but is entirely unsuited to serve the normal sexual aim ... What is substituted for the sexual object is some part of the body (such as the foot or hair) which is in general very inappropriate for sexual purposes, or some inanimate object which bears an assignable relation to the person whom it replaces and preferably to that person's sexuality (e.g. a piece of clothing or underlinen).’

Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *Complete Works of Freud Vol. VII* (London, 1949) p. 153



Alonso Sánchez Coello, *Woman in a fur wrap* (1577-79)



Meret Oppenheim, Fur Cup (1936)

Helmut Newton, Shoe (2004)



Castration , Violence and the Monstrous Feminine

In the course of these investigations the child makes the discovery that the penis is not one of the possessions common to all creatures who are like himself. The accidental sight of the genitals of a little sister or a little playmate is the occasion of this. In unusually intelligent children the sight of girls urinating arouses the suspicion even earlier that something is different here ; for they will have noticed the different position adopted and the different sound heard, and have taken steps to repeat their observations in such a way as to find out the truth. We know how they react to their

first perception of the absence of the penis. They deny its absence, and believe they do see a penis all the same ; the discrepancy between what they see and what they imagine is glossed over by the idea that the penis is still small and will grow ; gradually they come to the conclusion, so fraught with emotion, that at least it had been there and had at some time been taken away. The absence of the penis is thought to be the result of a castration, and then the child is faced with the task of dealing with the thought of a castration in relation to himself.

the child imagines that only unworthy female persons have thus sacrificed their genital organ, such persons as have probably been guilty of the same forbidden impulses as he himself.

Sigmund Freud, 'The Infantile Genital Organization of the Libido,' in Freud, *Collected Papers II* (London, 1924) p. 247-8



R: Rubens, Medusa (first quarter of the 17th century)



L: Edvard Munch, Love and Pain (1895)

R: Francis Bacon, Right panel from Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion (1944)





Judith and Holofernes, by:

- Orazio Gentileschi (1608-12),
- Artemisia Gentileschi (1639)
- Gustav Klimt (1901)
- Trophime Bigot (1640)



L: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Slave Market* (1866)

R: Victor Giraud, *The Slave Merchant* (1867)



The Colonial Harem

Malek Alloula

Translation by
Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich

"... readers of *The Colonial Harem*, whether photographers, historians of colonialism, feminist theorists, or literary critics, bring to the photographs ... other conditions of observation. These are not directly involved perhaps in the French-Algerian controversy, but they are complicit nonetheless in the global politics of history and literature and in the regional distribution of power which is the context of these picture postcards."

from the introduction by
Barbara Harlow

Theory and History of Literature, Volume 21

