

FIGHT-
ING FOR
VISIBILITY



Pauline Lehmaier *Head of an Old Man*, c. 1908, oil on canvas, 39.5 × 31.5 cm

FIGHT- ING FOR VISIBILITY

WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE NATIONALGALERIE BEFORE 1919

For the Nationalgalerie of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
edited by Yvette Deseyve and Ralph Gleis



Nationalgalerie
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

REIMER

CONTENT

WORDS OF WELCOME	6
from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media	
WORDS OF WELCOME	8
from the Director of the Nationalgalerie	
PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION	11
Yvette Deseyve, Ralph Gleis	
FROM DOROTHEA THERBUSCH TO ANNA PETERS PAINTERS FROM 1780 TO 1880 IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONALGALERIE	17
Birgit Verwiebe	
WOMEN ARTISTS NEVERTHELESS! STRATEGIES OF WOMEN PAINTERS IN THE GERMAN EMPIRE	49
Ralph Gleis	
“THEY HAVE NOT YET BEEN SEEN WIELDING PYGMALION’S CHISEL” THE WOMEN SCULPTORS OF THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONALGALERIE	79
Yvette Deseyve	
A COLLECTION IN MOTION LOANED, PROSCRIBED, AND LOST WORKS BY WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE NATIONALGALERIE	105
Yvette Deseyve	

CONDITIONS OF CREATIVITY ON THE BIOGRAPHIES OF WOMEN ARTISTS	113
Nuria Jetter	
BIOGRAPHIES OF WOMEN ARTISTS	123
WOMEN PAINTERS OF THE NATIONALGALERIE LIST OF WORKS PRODUCED BEFORE 1919	173
WOMEN SCULPTORS OF THE NATIONALGALERIE LIST OF WORKS PRODUCED BEFORE 1919	187
LOSSES OF THE NATIONALGALERIE LIST OF LOST WORKS PRODUCED BY WOMEN ARTISTS BEFORE 1919	196
BIBLIOGRAPHY	203
REGISTER OF ABBREVIATIONS	215
NAME INDEX	217
PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS	223
IMPRINT	224

WORDS OF WELCOME

FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER FOR CULTURE AND THE MEDIA

“I want to have an effect in my time”, wrote the artist Käthe Kollwitz. Together with other women pioneers of Modernism, in 1904 she demanded that the academy open its doors to women. It was a long and rocky path until, in the spring of 1919, the first women artists could commence a regular programme of studies at the Academy of Arts in Berlin, today’s Berlin University of the Arts. Their admission took place 100 years ago, almost contemporaneously with the introduction of women’s suffrage – another important milestone on the path to the equal status of men and women.

I am delighted that in the course of this centenary the Nationalgalerie is presenting the works of women artists produced until the end of First World War in a thematically concentrated show, opening up new perspectives on these collection holdings. Works by women artists entered the Nationalgalerie collection even before 1919, despite the significant social opposition confronted by professional women painters, who were frequently pejoratively referred to as “Malweiber” (painter-women).

Already in the second half of the nineteenth century women in large German cities began founding women artists’ associations – the first one in 1867 in Berlin. But the professional art scene remained firmly in the hands of men. Academic art training, artists’ associations, and exhibitions at established galleries were open to women only in exceptional cases or not at all. It is thus all the more gratifying that a whole group of works produced before 1919 is represented in the collection of the Nationalgalerie.

Among the women artists presented are familiar names, such as Käthe Kollwitz, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Elisabet Ney, and Sabine Lepsius, as well as some lesser-known women painters and sculptors worth discovering. When and how their works became recognised, how their artworks ended up in the collection, and the lives behind them, unconventional in many ways – all this is described impressively in the exhibition catalogue.

It is surely no longer as hard for women today to assert themselves in the field of the visual arts as it was around the turn of the century – but it is still much harder for them than for their male colleagues. Their works yield lower prices and are less often exhibited. Although today women make up sixty percent of students at the German art universities, in the German and international art rankings men always occupy the foremost places. Apparently in many places in the art scene, in keeping with the traditional cult of the male genius, brilliant artistic achievements are still overwhelmingly ascribed to men. Added to this is the fact that, in the past, it was predominantly men, as museum directors, art historians, and art critics, who laid claim to the prerogative of interpretation and thus also decided what entered the collections. This is surely also a reason why even today many talented women artists still remain unknown. With the exhibition *Fighting for Visibility* some of the women painters are now finally finding the public recognition they deserve.

The consequences of centuries of discrimination against women cannot be undone overnight, for traditional role mod-

els are apparently still deeply rooted in society. Just how powerful the effects of this discrimination remain even today has been clearly illuminated by a study by the Deutsche Kulturrat (German Culture Council), funded by my ministry: Women are and remain underrepresented in the corridors of power of cultural institutions and media outlets as well as in the art trade – across all areas. In response to the study, during the last legislative period we initiated a round table that developed recommendations for action for greater gender justice. These are being implemented at present by the Projektbüro Frauen in Kultur und Medien (Project Office for Women in Culture and the Media) at the Deutsche Kulturrat and with measures from

my own ministry. A crucial finding of the round table was the need for more female role models if we want to ensure that women are more successful in culture and the media in the future. It is important to continue to give new impetus for positive changes and initiate pilot projects – the Project Office has been working on this for over a year and a half.

The exhibition *Fighting for Visibility. Women Artists in the Nationalgalerie before 1919* reminds us that although the fight to contribute and be perceived equally in the cultural arena already began over 100 years ago, it is far from being won.

Not least for this reason I wish the exhibition a great many enthusiastic visitors.



Prof. Monika Grütters MdB

Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media

WORDS OF WELCOME

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONALGALERIE

The most effective and lasting statement of feminist institutional criticism was probably the one offered by the Guerrilla Girls, the anonymous collective of women artists founded in New York in 1985, who by now are working across disciplinary boundaries. Their question, circulated in a poster action in 1989 – “Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?” – was answered with sardonic humour by the group themselves; they added a statistical tally of the proportional relationship between male and female artistic positions in the Metropolitan Museum: “Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Arts sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female.” Thirty-three years after their founding the ‘protest celebrities’ continue to draw attention to the underrepresentation of women and people of colour in the art world. In doing so, their signature style is provocative, focussed and, above all, statistically well-founded. Using the aliases of famous deceased women artists such as Käthe Kollwitz, Frida Kahlo, and Eva Hesse, today the Guerrilla Girls fight against the historicizing of their protest. To this end, new facts are continuously collected, museum directors and institutions questioned, and their statements – but also their silence – are made public by name. The exhibition *Fighting for Visibility. Women Artists of the Nationalgalerie before 1919* and its accompanying publication may also be seen as a reaction to this well-founded institutional criticism and present extensive factual material. Which works created by women artists before 1919 made it into the Nationalgalerie’s collection and how and why? What prices were paid for works by women artists? Which ones were integrated into the collections in the form of donations? Which women

artists of the long nineteenth century are still represented in the Nationalgalerie today? Which collection losses caused by the Second World War affected the works of women artists? It is striking to note in this that only six percent of the works were collected before 1919! The political upheavals helped women, and especially women artists, to attain more rights, but changes in the institutions’ thinking took place only very slowly and only with great difficulty. Works by women were collected but not as intensely and systematically as the work of their male colleagues were. Even today, works by women artists make up only two percent of the entire holdings of all works produced before 1919 in the Nationalgalerie.

But numbers and statistics reveal little about the actual visibility of the works. The women artists themselves had already demanded of the respective museum directors of the time that their works be exhibited. Some of the works have thus been fixed parts of the permanent exhibition for years, but visitors have – justifiably – also repeatedly raised questions about women artists outside the well-known canon. The exhibition *Fighting for Visibility. Women Artists in the Nationalgalerie before 1919* now presents for the first time all women artists – without exception – whose works produced before 1919 entered the Nationalgalerie.

An exhibition of women artists in the Nationalgalerie was already on Ralph Gleis’s programmatic wish list when he applied to manage the Alte Nationalgalerie two years ago. My heartfelt thanks to him for this impetus and the idea for the exhibition, as well as – together with Yvette Deseyve, the curator of the exhibition – for the exhibition’s conception. Many

thanks to her for realising the project with such care and well-founded knowledge. I would additionally like to thank Nuria Jetter for her curatorial assistance on the exhibition as well as the entire team of the Alte Nationalgalerie. My gratitude also extends to all the colleagues and interns who pored over numerous acquisition files, documents, and historical exhibition catalogues to painstakingly compile the statistics of the presence of women artists at the Große Berliner Kunstausstellung and the Berlin Academy exhibition, producing genuine, foundational scholarly work.

The Atelier Chezweitz gave the exhibition its striking appearance. We want to thank the team for the exhibition's successful graphic design and its outward visibility. This exhibition would not have happened without the generous financial involvement of the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung. In particular we would like to thank Thomas Kempf and Volker Troche as well as Ingomar Lorch for assuming the conservation costs of several objects, many of which had not been in a condition to be exhibited since the war. In this connection my thanks also go to the head conservator of the Alte Nationalgalerie Kristina Mösl with Kerstin Krainer, Alexandra Czarnecki, and Theresa Bräunig as well as the freelance conservators whose efforts helped the works by women artists achieve a new exhibition presence.

Sustained visibility and international recognition are guaranteed first and foremost by the exhibition catalogue. The

catalogue is simultaneously conceived as a collection catalogue for the Nationalgalerie's works by women artists produced before 1919 and facilitates access to and knowledge about these holdings for future research in museums and universities. I want to thank the Dietrich Reimer Verlag and its employees for the careful and professional design of the publication as well as the scholars at the Alte Nationalgalerie for the informative contributions gathered here from their respective departments. We are indebted to our photographer Andres Kilger for the fact that all the objects in the catalogue could be reproduced in their restored condition. None of this would have been conceivable without the tireless dedication of the entire team at the Nationalgalerie.

This exhibition makes it clear that research on women artists is collaborative research. Our thanks also go to all our colleagues outside the Nationalgalerie for expert advice and support: especially Petra Winter and her team at the central archives of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Our thanks are also owed to the art library as lender as well as the direction of the Kupferstichkabinett for the generous loan of one of Antonie Biel's landscapes. It is one of the works by a woman artist that was located in the Nationalgalerie's collection of drawings until the reorganisation of the holdings and today is in the care of the Kupferstichkabinett. This exhibition is thus also conceived as a contribution towards further research on this subject in the future.

Udo Kittelmann
Director of the Nationalgalerie



PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

Yvette Deseyve, Ralph Gleis

Exactly 100 years ago the first women were allowed to commence their regular art studies at the Berlin Art Academy. Only the irreversible political upheavals following the First World War and the women artists' many years of tenacious protest made it possible for Berlin women, too, to equally take part in an academic art training and to have unrestricted access to the public art sphere. But despite all the earlier adversity there had already been numerous successful women artists, many of whom have faded into obscurity today. This exhibition focuses on exactly those women painters and sculptors who already made it into the public art sphere before 1919 and whose works entered the collection of the Nationalgalerie.

But today the question arises of whether a target look at female artistic creation is still justified. The answer is yes, and unequivocally continues to be! The justification for this lies not in a gender-ideological rationale for artistic equality or even in the attempt to discern a specifically female artistic conception, but in becoming aware of and (re-)discovering a variety of artistic creative work by women in the long nineteenth century, work that intensive research is gradually bringing to light once more.

As early as in 1910 women artists had curated their own exhibition, into which they intentionally integrated women artists already "processed" for the museums, such as Catharina van Hemessen (1527/28–1583), Sofonisba Anguissola (c. 1535–1625), Judith Leyster (1609–1660), Mary Beale (1632/33–1697/99), Marguerite Gérard (1761–1837), Angelika Kauffmann (1741–1807), Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), Rosa Bon-

heur (1822–1899) and many more, in order to site themselves within a long tradition of female art creation.¹ This concept attained worldwide recognition when it was taken up by Linda Nochlin for the Los Angeles County Museum of Arts in *Women Artists 1550–1950* in 1976.² The exhibition created the impetus for many museums and collections to search specifically through their storage for forgotten positions of female art creation. But in contrast, it was scarcely noticed that in 1975, already a year before Nochlin's pioneering exhibition, the Nationalgalerie (in East Berlin) had opened an exhibition under the title *Deutsche bildende Künstlerinnen von der Goethezeit bis zur Gegenwart* (German Visual Women Artists from the Age of Goethe to the Present). Unnoticed by the West due to the political situation, this exhibition – as the first show of women artists organised by a museum – made museum history in both parts of Germany.³ The curator at the time, Claude Keisch, already raised the question posed above, namely, "What is the purpose of reserving an exhibition for women artists? Is art not a republic in which no one is questioned about their gender or background?"⁴ Even if the Nationalgalerie (in East Berlin) attempted to answer these questions in accordance with what was "achievable and possible" at the time,⁵ now, after over forty years of international research on women artists, the questions still arise and are more relevant than ever, not only in light of the discussion – which flares up repeatedly – of gender equality in organising exhibitions. It becomes clear in this debate that exhibitions have a prominent significance in the fight for visibility, for they often entail prestigious purchases by the exhibiting institution, thus

increasing the public visibility of the artistic oeuvre. Impressive historical evidence of this is provided by the two memorial exhibitions in 1881 organised by the Nationalgalerie for the painters Antonie Biel (1830–1880, Fig. p. 55) and Maria von Parmentier (1846–1879, Fig. p. 55).⁶

Even if the presence of women artists at exhibitions can by no means be described as sufficient, it is nonetheless surprising how many women artists in the nineteenth century were represented at Berlin's "academic" exhibitions. Alone in the years from 1893 up to and including 1918, over 920 different women artists took part in the Große Berliner Kunstausstellung. This is an average of over ninety women artists annually!⁷ Additionally, for the time period from 1786 to 1892 more than 660 various women are recorded as having participated at the Berlin Academy exhibitions.⁸ Today, works by twenty-five former participants at the Große Berliner Kunstausstellung and nineteen at the academy exhibitions can be found in the collection of the Nationalgalerie.⁹ These numbers are astonishing, above all, in view of the basic political, social, and economic conditions, which differed starkly from those of their male professional colleagues.¹⁰ Women were by no means prohibited from working as artists – to the contrary! But on the way to making art their "life's vocation", women artists frequently had to take rocky detours and prove themselves against the accusation – cemented in gender ideology – of lacking creativity.¹¹ In this, the women artists' networks, which began to be established in the late nineteenth century and spanned the continent, could offer orientation and support. But they could by no means replace the status of academic artist and the associated opportunity of access to artists' associations and systems of stipends.¹² The doors to the most traditional German-language art academies, for example, could first be pushed open only after the political upheavals of 1918.

The history of academic training in the nineteenth century was shaped in general by the continuous striving for artistic autonomy, leading repeatedly to reforms and restructurings of the curricula and the organisation of the academies. In this, women's participation in the academic system from the French Revolution to the Weimar Republic was by no means a linear development, but rather experienced various sudden increases. Women artists, such as Marie Ellenrieder (1791–1863), could not only study at the Academy in Munich as a regular student in the first half of the century, but later also occupy a

position as Baden court painter. But these few great exceptions reinforced an unspoken rule of male dominance in art. This was also similarly expressed in the topos – observable throughout the entire nineteenth century – of good art created by women artists being considered "male" art or a successful woman artist being described as working as well as a man. With the increasing numbers of artists, the defence mechanisms barring women from equal participation intensified accordingly. Only as late as 1879, for example, did Anton von Werner change the rules of the Berlin Academy to specifically exclude women. While women artists met the challenge of obtaining good training and recognition in different ways, at the same time an anti-academic trend can be detected at the end of the nineteenth century. Beginning with the Secessions, a process of erosion can be observed in the academic structure and operations. The rules of the traditional academic system were fundamentally questioned and the possibilities for an autonomous art outside of those rules expanded rapidly. To state it somewhat pointedly, women first obtained unrestricted access to academic training only when it had long since lost much of its significance.

The exhibition *Fighting for Visibility* shows the works produced before 1919 by all the women artists represented in the Nationalgalerie. Over sixty works by thirty-three women painters and ten women sculptors can be seen. Some of these have been part of the permanent collection for years, such as the paintings by Caroline Bardua (1781–1864, Fig. p. 21), Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann (1819–1881, Fig. p. 41), and Sabine Lepsius (1864–1942, Fig. p. 58). Others will be able to be seen in the Nationalgalerie once again after many years in storage, including works by the women portrait and history painters Friederike O'Connell (1822–1885, Figs. pp. 30 f.) and Paula Monjé (1849–1919, Fig. p. 148), and a large number have never before been shown in the rooms of the Museumsinsel. These include the paintings by Pauline Lehmaier (born 1871, Fig. p. 2) and Gertrud Zuelzer (1873–1968, Fig. p. 170) and the sculptures by Katharina Felder (1816–1848, Fig. p. 94), Julie Genthe (1869–1938, Fig. p. 83) and Ambrosia Tønnesen (1859–1948, Fig. p. 95). A wide variety of motivations are behind the various works' admission into the collection:¹³ the first actual purchase of a work by a woman artist was made by the Nationalgalerie already in 1876, one year before the opening of the main museum. The purchased work was a portrait of Carl



Schnaase, the lawyer and Hegel student and co-founder of art history as a scholarly discipline who had died that same year, by the painter Marie Wiegmann (1820–1893, Fig. p. 40), who was affiliated with the Düsseldorf school of painters and socially well connected. Other works entered the collection as bequests or were specifically donated to the Nationalgalerie to be shown permanently, such as the bust *Der Geiger Bronisław Huberman* (*The Violinist Bronisław Huberman*, Fig. p. 89), modelled by Tina Haim-Wentscher (1887–1974) and procured by James Simon. Yet other works, such as Paula Modersohn-Becker's (1876–1907) *Mädchen mit Blumenkranz* (*Girl with Flower Garland*, Fig. p. 68), Maria Slavona's (1865–1931) *Häuser am Montmartre* (*Houses in Montmartre*, Fig. p. 161) and Anna Peters' (1843–1926) still life *Rosen und Trauben* (*Roses and Grapes*, Fig. p. 32), lost today due to the war, were purchased at exhibitions and integrated into the public collection. The various additions to the collection do not lack a certain arbitrariness. The question arises of where the international positions – already famous at the time – such as that of Camille

Claudel (1864–1943), Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), or Berthe Morisot (1841–1895) are. These were not purchased at the time nor were they collected retroactively. A collection strategy that takes this into account will be a task for the future. The generous gift a work by Paula Monjé on the occasion of this exhibition compensates the respective war loss and points the direction for future acquisitions.

The paintings and sculptures produced by women artists before 1919 nevertheless present a highly heterogeneous collection, which, however, reflects exemplarily the general state of what has come down to us of the works created by women during the long nineteenth century. In this, appreciation and state of survival are mutually dependent. Intense scholarly research can foster this appreciation and promote the survival at least of the works that still exist. With the help of the extremely generous support from the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung for the meticulous conservation and re-framing of numerous works, this “fight for visibility” could be won by the women artists of the Nationalgalerie.

1 The exhibition *Die Kunst der Frau* took place for the founding of the Vereinigung Bildender Künstlerinnen Österreichs (Austrian Association of Women Visual Artists), at which many colleagues from German associations also took part, see exhib. cat. Vienna 1910, Kuzmany 1911, and most recently exhib. cat. Vienna 2019.

2 See exhib. cat. Los Angeles 1976. Nochlin had already ensured awareness of the subject with her provocative 1971 “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”.

3 Our thanks for the communication about this subject with Tina Mendelsohn, who is presently working on the theme of exhibitions of women artists. The exhibition *Künstlerinnen international: 1877–1977*, initiated by the Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst and shown at

the Kunstverein Frankfurt and in Schloss Charlottenburg in Berlin, is thus not – as is often claimed – “the first [exhibition] in Germany exclusively dedicated to women”, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frauen_in_der_Kunst#Ausstellungsorte_und_Ausstellungen [accessed on 1 July 2019]. See also the exhibition – important for Berlin – *Das verborgene Museum*, exhib. cat. Berlin 1987.

4 Exhib. cat. Berlin 1975, n. p.

5 Exhib. cat. Berlin 1975, n. p.

6 On this see the essay by Ralph Gleis in the present catalogue.

7 This includes all the women artists who ever took part in a Große Berliner Kunstausstellung. Often they were involved in several of the Berlin art exhibitions, which give an average number of over ninety

women artists for each exhibition year. The tally included listed all years without gaps. It would be a worthwhile research project to place these in relation to the male participants.

8 The tally included all years without gaps. Each of the women artists exhibiting in the specified periods of time were cited by name and counted. But many of the women artists took part in several academy exhibitions, resulting in an average participation of around twenty-three women artists per year. The “amateurs” listed separately in the first catalogue were not included and are thus not reflected in the statistic.

9 For the Vienna Secession a participation of even up to a third women artists can be ascertained, see exhib. cat. Vienna 2019, p. 15.

10 On this see the numerous historical sources and studies devoted to these various conditions, including the fundamental Muysers 1999 I, Berger 1986, and Krull 1984.

11 To be mentioned here in particular are the remarks by Karl Scheff-

ler, but also Ernst Guhl and Otto Weininger, see Scheffler 1908, Weininger 1908, and Guhl 1858.

12 Contemporaries were well aware of these disadvantages, see Voss 1895, quoted from Muysers 1999 I, here esp. pp. 274 f.: “The prejudice of the public against the artistic achievement of women was nurtured especially deeply by many of our old artistic institutions. [...] Our academic bodies refused to admit women. An artist who is designated a regular member of an academy obtains from this title from the outset a certain esteem in the public opinion. [...] There are exhibitions to which only works by the members of a specific academy are accepted. [...] The commissions that have to make decisions about the acceptance of works, about the more or less favourable hanging of the pictures but also about the exhibiting of the sculptural works and ultimately about the awarding of prizes are composed of – men.”

13 See the acquisition notes in the lists of surviving and lost works by women painters and sculptors in the present catalogue.