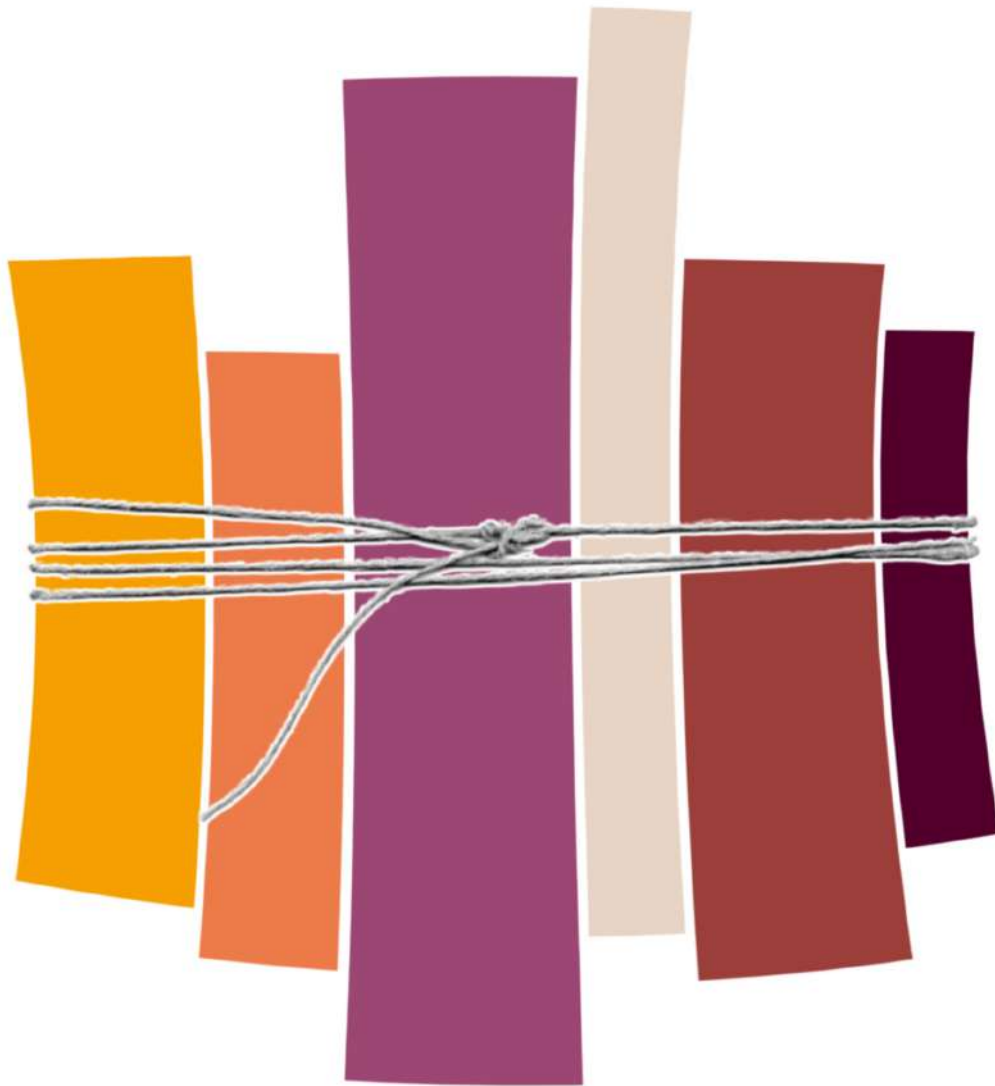


Reflecting on gender inequality in the museum

Itineraries and activities



Exploring Gender and
Power through/in Art

COLOPHON

Reflecting On Gender, Power and Empowerment Through Art. An Educational Tool for Facilitators, Art Educators and Young People

These educational material has been made by POWER project (POWER – WHO NEEDS EMPOWERMENT? EXPLORING GENDER AND POWER THROUGH/IN ART, Erasmus+ Project, 2020-2-FR02-KA205-017944) through a collaborative action and it has been coordinated by De L'art et D'autre (DADAU), Paris, France.

Each of the partners (CoW, DADAU, EARTDI UCM, ELAN and MOH) made a 6 hours workshop with young people using artworks inviting participants to discuss questions related to gender, power and empowerment. We would like to thank all the young participants who contributed to the different workshops that took place in Paris, Ljubljana, Bari and Madrid. Without them this material would not exist.

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Exploring Gender and Power through/in Art

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élan interculturel



Introduction

This manual was produced as part of the “Who needs empowerment?” Erasmus plus project, which aims to reflect on the interrelation between power and gender roles. In every society, power is unequally distributed among citizens, and therefore not everyone has an equal influence on decisions made within society, not everyone has the same rights, and duties can be unequally allocated as well. It appears that gender roles are an important aspect of this unequal distribution of power. It seems to be a constant phenomenon that women are given less power and rights than men across different eras and civilisations. People belonging to sexual minorities, experience these inequalities even more disproportionately. Art, being a human creation and form of knowledge, does not escape discrimination. In museums and art spaces too, one is forced to experience a symbolic order that affects the conceptualisation of women and the feminine figure as subaltern. Art institutions generally educate our gaze from an androcentric perspective.

In order to understand more thoroughly these observations and the different manifestations of inequalities linked to rights and powers, we felt it was important to design an activity book where young people aged 18-30 could reflect on such issues in the framework of an indirect approach and a non-formal pedagogy. Thus, in order to facilitate entry into the subject and to guarantee the possibility of a diversity of interpretations, we chose to build our method on a corpus of works of art. Art communicates in a versatile and equivocal fashion. Therefore, it enables the coexistence of multiple meanings and approaches and, in turn, the emergence of cultural discourses that sustain and legitimise behaviours of inequality on a symbolic level.

In this manual, the reader will find five thematic itineraries. They offer the possibility of analysing how culture at large, and museums specifically, interpret the past. The activities provide tools to understand what perspectives are privileged, and turn participants into active and critical visitors to interpret the past or the present. Each chapter offers itineraries that have been designed to be used either in specific museums or in a classroom by projecting the images. Each itinerary is composed of five steps organised around: a work of art, information about the work, and two activities related to the specific theme. These activities can take place in the museum space or outside the museum. They create the framework for a dialogue between the viewer and the work on one hand, and between peers on the other hand (be it members of a visitor's group, a person or a support group who would like to develop better knowledge of the powers at stake regarding gender roles in society).

The UCM's itinerary offers a reflection on Presentism as an androcentric historical interpretation of the past and proposes to demonstrate how to reinsert women into universal art history through five artworks. DA-DAU's itinerary looks at the presence of women in public space and takes the reader back to the 17th century to understand what specific issues and circumstances occur when men and women share the same public space. MOH's itinerary reflects on the difference between the terms ‘male gaze’ and ‘female gaze’, one of which does not describe the opposite of the other, and attempts to interpret these notions in relation to the artworks. COW intends to discuss how individuals can gain power in ways that enhance rather than diminish the power of other. It presents artworks that can help us to formulate some answers. ELAN triggers questions on the interrelation of gender and interculturality, in regards to artworks.

These itineraries were designed in four different countries and five different museums. The activities were tested in pilot workshops with young people aged 18-30, from a wide range of socio-cultural backgrounds. Some adjustments were made to the material after these sessions, so as to successfully meet the needs of this manual's target audience.

The workshop participants were asked to record audio podcasts, where they shared personal testimonies on the subject of their itinerary, in regards to the works of art and exchanges they had with other group participants during the museum visit. These recordings form part of our source material. They can be downloaded and listened to at any time: either at the museum, in front of the referenced artworks, in the classroom or in front of the computer. They are also offered as an active methodology for questioning how we interpret the past. They are available online in the website: <http://www.explorepower.eu/podcasts>

ITINERARY 1 – Presentism and Uchrony



First traces, first misinterpretation: attributing to only one gender, activities performed by both. Erroneous attributions for the creation and use of instruments, considered as made exclusively by men.



Second mistake: women as a homogenous universal symbol, or women as plural and diverse?



Third mistake: strong, independent women as myth or reality? Making myths outside of the androcentric canons.



Fourth mistake: assuming the existence and pre-eminence of men in archaeological discoveries.



Fifth mistake: presupposing the violence-masculinity binomial. Discovering men in history aligned with equality and care.

Presentism and Uchrony – A Presentation

The history we know, the one we have studied as a science, has been told with a bias from a present position interpreting the past. In the 19th century, some historians (Western-white-men) decided to create historiography, and from it, set out to demonstrate the superiority of the present over other moments in history. Thus presentism was born.

The constitution of the “presentist” history of science at the end of the 19th century was linked to the triumph of positive science and the rise of certain philosophies of knowledge such as empiricism and inductivism. Thus, the aim of historians was to show the superiority of science over other forms of knowledge that they considered pseudo-science. In this way, the past was judged in the light of what was considered scientific at the time; in other words, this “presentism” marked the character of a history of science understood as a verification of the philosophy of progress (Fichant & Pécheux 1969). A progress that is only considered as such for a small part of humanity who, on the basis of this progress, discarded or misinterpreted facts, data, objects, knowledge that did not conform to the dominant values.

Approaching gender from this presentist view of history means questioning one’s own history, knowing how to distinguish between what I really see and what I have been told or what other stories have been hidden or ignored. For years, the academic feminist movement has been warning against this false traditional historiography, which had voluntarily excluded women from universal history (apparently representative of the whole society). In an androcentric historical discourse, women do not exist and when they appear, they do so as the exception that proves the rule.

In every era, society constructs and validates gender codes that have been transmitted to us from many spheres, including museums. Museum institutions are places where our collective memory is kept; they are custodians of what a society considers worthy of valuing and preserving for future generations. For this reason, beyond the pieces housed in them, it is important that current and future citizens know how to read their heritage and cultural legacy.

Based on all the ideas set out above, we have created this itinerary with five pieces from the National Archaeological Museum, chosen because the interpretation given to them is one of many other possible ones. Thus, the activities we propose are based on four common axes that leave behind this inherited historical presentism:

1. We must continue to call for a permanent “reinvention of the museum”, and of heritage sites, developing new narratives based on direct contact with the works.
2. We must revise the exhibition discourse, starting with questions such as: what is known about women (as a plural and diverse group)?
3. We must ask ourselves why some works are exhibited, and others aren’t.
4. It is necessary to reread history, avoiding the dilemmas and blind spots of the current dystopian discourse.





Iconographic references

Author: Unknown

Title: Manzanares Biface

Date: Lower Paleolithic

National Archaeological Museum, Room 5, Showcase 5.4



Background information on the artwork:

The biface, or hand axe, is one of the earliest stone tools made by humans. It is also one that best demonstrates their ability to transform stone into a useful object. The perfect match of material, form and function of this tool is a testament of the intelligence and skills of early humans.

It is a multi-purpose tool used for cutting, digging, extracting, beating, fleshing and skinning. For this purpose, the flint stone was carved on both sides, hence the name biface. This enabled them to obtain a contact edge, i.e. the edge, which would be retouched by pressing it with a wooden or bone striker. This biface, associated with Acheulean technology, comes from the terraces of the Manzanares River (Madrid).

We have no evidence that either manufacturing or use of bifaces was practiced specifically by men only. There is no evidence of a differentiation of functions or spaces by gender. However, due to presentism, in history books and manuals, and some museums to this day, both creation and use by men have been taken for granted, projecting contemporary preconceptions and distorting a more reliable interpretation of the past.



Description of activities

Number of participants: 10-15

Activity time: 20 minutes.

Materials: Post-it notes, markers, poster board.

I see-I think-I wonder:

In front of the piece, youngsters write down:

what they see: write it down (without interpretations)

what they think: the ideas that it suggests to them

the questions that come to mind

The sharing, in which each person justifies his or her perception, shows the different perceptions of the same object or reality. This activity relates the direct, objective observation, without cognitive intermediation, without the possible influence that their original social context has on their thinking.

Hints: what is the shape of the image, what colour, what material is it made of, what can it be used for, are there similar objects today?

Everyday tools with gender biases.

Like the biface, a tool that could be used by anyone regardless of gender but which traditional historiography has always associated with the male gender and violent warfare activities.

We chose five “masculine” tools and five “feminine” tools.

We share perceptions, and we discuss what scientific basis (if any) underpins these divisions. This activity shows that gender roles are a social construct.

Hints: Why did you choose these tools? In what context are they used? What are they used for? Could they be used for something else?





Iconographic references

Author: Unknown

Title: Greek Hydria of the castanets seller

Date: 540-520 a-c

National Archaeological Museum, Room: 36



Background information on the artwork:

The hydria is a vessel intended to collect, transport, contain and pour liquids and, like any other Greek vessel, its shape responds to these functions: its large ovoid body serves to contain the liquid, while its tall neck with a large circular mouth is to collect water and pour it. Moreover, this vessel is closely linked to women's lives, as it was used by women in their daily lives or in wedding or funeral rituals in which women played a prominent role. The scene that decorates it, alludes to precisely one of these events. It shows a woman selling castanets in the Greek agora.

This piece has been chosen because it shows that Greek women were plural and diverse, dismantling the myth of the Greek matron.



Description of activities

Number of participants: 10-15

Activity time: 20 minutes.

Materials: magazines, cut-outs from advertisements, markers, poster board.

Don't be so good/nice.

Divide the group into subgroups to analyse the image of women in the written press. Once the work has been carried out in small groups, the facilitator will collect the contributions summarizing key ideas.

Based on the analysis of the press samples, they will answer the following questions:

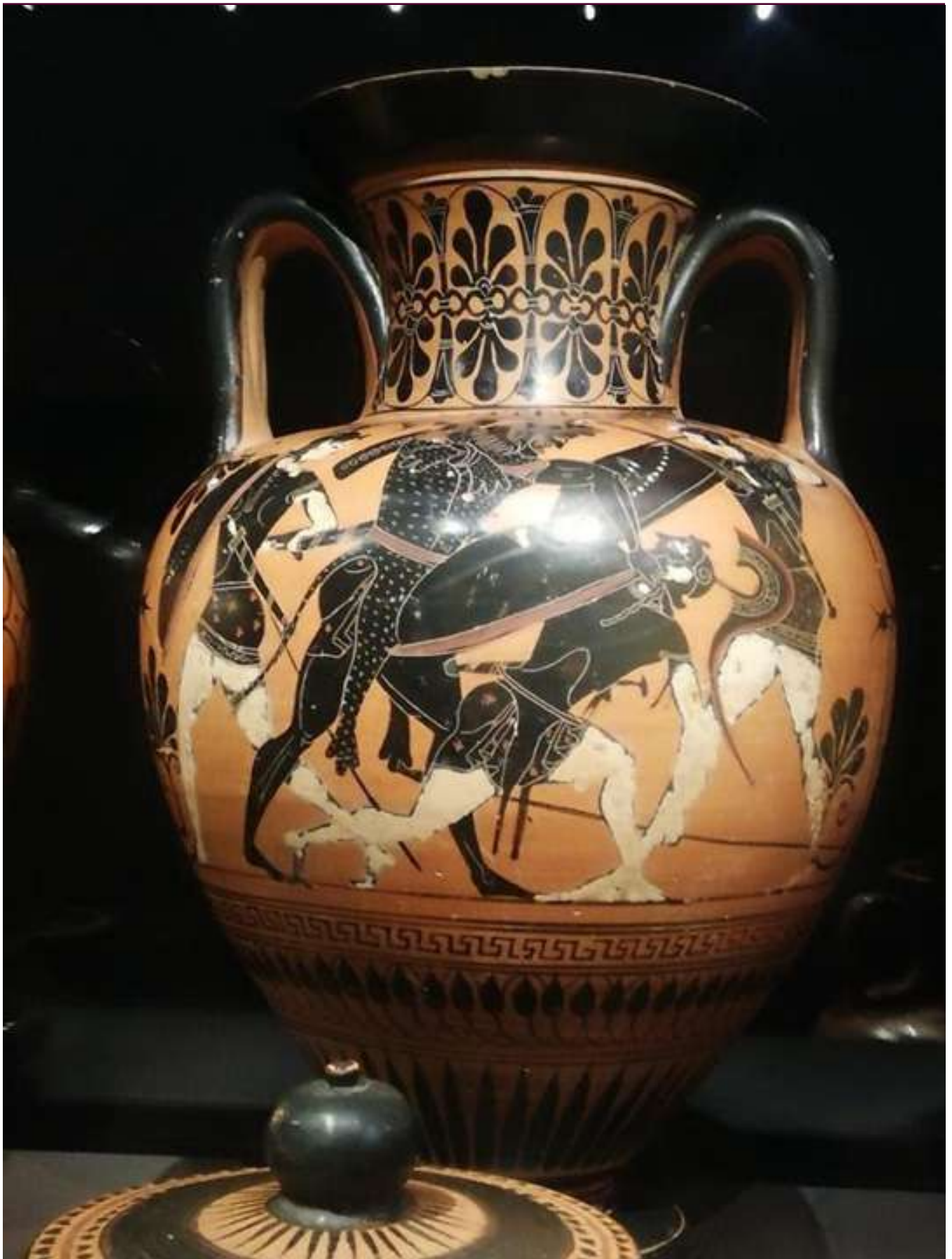
- In which themes/sections do women tend to be the protagonists?
- Is there a greater presence of female or male figures?
- What do the women who appear in the publication look like?
- In advertisements, what products do we advertise?

Hints: Try to offer different kinds of newspapers to show diversity.

A woman's story, a man's story.

The group forms two concentric circles, so there is one group outside and another inside. The group inside will start the story of a woman. Then they switch, the group outside moves to the centre and starts to construct the story of a man in the same way.

Hints: They are asked to imagine a scenario or an environment and they are asked the following questions to shape the story: What do they do in that place? How do they behave? What do they talk about? How do they express their feelings? How do they relate to each other?





Iconographic references

Author: Unknown
 Title: Attic amphora
 Date: circa 500 ac

National Archaeological Museum, room: 36



Background information on the artwork:

Amazon women are among the most unique figures in Greek mythological imagery, and represent a perfect counter-model to the Athenian androcentric concept of the embodiment of the “other”, par excellence. The confrontation between the Amazons (warrior women) and Greeks, through different iconographic schemes, is very popular among Attic ceramists, and to a lesser extent in Surithalic production. The MAN’s collection of Greek vases enables us to approach this singular “mythical” figure through a large group of representations on ceramic supports, which are the work of different workshops and painters.

Looking at these productions, we can analyse how some figures that do not fit the historiographical canon are mythologised or turned into symbols, thus depriving them of a political, historical or social character.



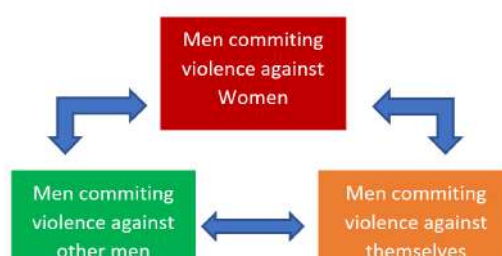
Description of activities

Number of participants: 10-15
 Activity time: 20 minutes.
 Materials: post-it notes, markers, poster board.

The triad of violence.

In this activity, Michael Kaufman’s triad of violence, which exemplifies the model of hegemonic masculinity, will first be explained to the group:

These three scenarios will be discussed with the group in first person, asking for volunteers. They will be given at least two examples of physical violence for each part of the triad; and two examples of psychological violence. They should then explain if they identify with these examples and if they see them regularly around them.



Hints: it is important to guide the men with questions that can lead them to identify with the examples that will be written on post-it notes. Once the activity is finished the post-it notes will be burnt to symbolize leaving the triad of violence behind.

The double negation.

This is one of the dynamics on which differentiated socialization is built and which consists of the construction of masculinity on the basis of:

- I am not a girl/woman
- I am not a homosexual/"fag"

Everything "feminine" is the opposite of being a man: weakness, cowardice, cheesiness, vulnerability, clumsiness or evil.

This dynamic consists of reflecting on this out loud.

Hints:

What does what you have heard suggest to you?

Do you see any reflection of this in a man you relate to? The three scenarios will be discussed with the group in first person, asking for volunteers. They will be given at least two examples of physical violence for each part of the triad; and two examples of psychological violence. They should then explain if they identify with these examples and if they see them regularly around them.

It is important to guide the men with questions that can lead them to identify with the examples that will be written on post-it notes. Once the activity is finished the post-it notes will be burnt to symbolize leaving the triad of violence behind.





Iconographic references

Author: Unknown

Title: Lady of Baza

Date: First half of the 4th century BC

National Archaeological Museum, Room 5, showcase 5.4



Background information on the artwork:

The Lady is interpreted as the representation of a woman of the aristocracy of the city of Basti (Baza, Granada), heroised by means of an outstanding funerary ritual.

Its uniqueness lies in its function as a cinerary urn and in the symbolic elements that accompany it: the winged chair, symbol of divinity, and the pigeon in her hand, interpreted as a link between the mortal woman and the goddess who acts as protector of both the bird and the bones of the deceased. The typology and decoration of the ceramic pieces in the trousseau are reminiscent of the Oriental world, emphasizing the antiquity of the deceased's lineage. The metal trousseau, consisting of four warrior's panoply placed at her feet like an offering, can be interpreted as similar funeral honours as for warriors after battle.

Until a few decades ago, it was thought that the ashes found inside belonged to a man and that therefore, the burial and the objects that made up the grave honoured his memory. Only since the use of modern techniques, have the ashes been identified as belonging to a woman, radically changing their meaning and interpretation.



Description of activities

Number of participants: 10-15

Activity time: 20 minutes.

Materials: coloured pencils, cardboard.

The tree of self-esteem.

According to Marcela Lagarde, self-esteem problems refer to what society values and demands of women.

- Self-esteem and gender. Brainstorming on what self-esteem is.

Each participant draws a tree with his/her name on it. On the roots they write their qualities and on their achievements.

Afterwards, we make a round where participants help each other in watering each tree, i.e. they recognise more qualities and achievements in other participants.

Hints: We can ask these questions to help start the activity:

-
- What activities are you good at?
 - Which of the things you do, make you happy and which do not?
 - What is/are your greatest achievement(s)?

When the sex of what is interpreted changes.

We explain to the group the concept of “reifying” and we give examples of how songs, movies, stories, advertising, etc. present women as natural objects at the service of patriarchal power.

Then, we ask what would happen if we changed the male protagonist to become a woman in the movies or songs... and we ask the following questions:

- Does it mean that such women exist or would exist (“Lara Croft-like”); has the traditional patriarchal model disappeared or has it been transformed?
- Is this what we want: hierarchical, competitive relationships, violence to solve conflicts, mutilation of emotions, lack of compassion and empathy, etc.? Is it also what men want?





Iconographic references

Author: Unknown

Title: Plaque of the Marquis and Marchioness of Las Navas

Date: Circa 1563

National Archaeological Museum, Room 5



Background information on the artwork:

Pedro Dávila y Zúñiga, was Marquis of Las Navas, Count of Risco, Lord of Villafranca, Steward of the House of Burgundy of Prince Philip, Ambassador Extraordinary to England, Steward of Juana of Austria and Ensign Major of Ávila. He wanted his wife, María Enríquez de Córdoba, to head their epitaph on the bronze tombstone of their shared sepulchre, which is placed under the main altar at the church of San Pablo de Las Navas. He, and not she, would be remembered for posterity as her consort, and it was her virtues (“mother of the poor, in goodness and beauty the most distinguished of the Hispanic women, most pious wife”) that he wanted to be highlighted in this surprising inscription.

This work proves that, despite the transmission of a hegemonic masculinity linked to power and violence, there have always been men who subverted imposed roles – just like women – people who have made their own values related to equality and care.



Description of activities

Number of participants: 10-15

Activity time: 20 minutes.

Materials: Post-it notes, markers, pencils and cardboard.

The value of the word:

Men, due to their socialization process and education, do not usually maintain interpersonal relationships in which they discuss emotions or show signs of weakness.

The aim of this activity is to provide a space in which participants can talk about these issues so that they can reflect on behaviours.

What is masculinity? Write down the adjectives you associate it with on different posts-it. Positive values: once they have reflected on masculine behaviour, they are given other post-it notes with the following values: honesty, kindness, love and trust. Participants are asked to classify post-its according to how these characteristics are socially attributed to one sex or the other. A debate related to these questions is then initiated.

Hints: What characteristics make you a good person, and are they the same as those traditionally attributed to “masculine” and “feminine”?

Reconstructing the world

Male students will be asked to draw a figure of what society wants women in their community to be like, describing physical, psychological and emotional characteristics. Afterwards, the female students will be asked to do the same, but with a male figure.

Once finished, the two groups will exchange these models. Each group will analyse whether they themselves fit with this model. A reflection on constructed gender inequalities will take place.

Hints: Each participant will be asked how he/she felt

ITINERARY 2 – Public Space and Gender Roles



In pre-modern societies, wells, fountains and washhouses were places of female sociability, where women could meet and talk to each other.



Music scenes bring together men and women in very heterogeneous and varied contexts. Music is a vehicle between social backgrounds and a basic pillar of education for girls from wealthier strata.



The political arena had little room for women in the 17th century. The figure of Cleopatra, often depicted in premodern times, is surrounded by myths, but many of these legends stem from propaganda developed during her lifetime.



The space of justice appears diversified in 17th century paintings. Judgements are not only conducted in courts, but by sovereigns, lords or simply by public opinion.



Urban space, greatly revisited and redeveloped in the 17th century, opened up new possibilities for exchange and sociability for city dwellers.

The sharing of public spaces in the 17th century – A Presentation

Space is a social construction that reflects the way a society understands, configures and distributes its use. Therefore, to study the occupation of spaces by men, women, the elderly, children, etc. we also need to consider the power stakes generated there, the gender inequalities and disparities.

If we focus here on gender inequalities and disparities in spaces — more particularly in public spaces in the 17th century — it is clear that the sharing of knowledge, skills and information depends considerably on the configurations of places and their uses.

Access to knowledge, a basic pillar of empowerment, shows a very reductive picture of girls compared to boys. The latter have a much more sustained and diverse education than their sisters in the 17th century. Learning space is a significant factor; for example, many girls learn by listening to their brothers' lessons in the same room.

Empowerment or independence is also achieved through the acquisition of specific skills; particularly in a shared workspace where men and women were often required to work together. Some of the workshops included women, as did the trading activities where poor girls, wives or widows learned the rudiments of a trade alongside their male colleagues (often relatives). Despite not being always assigned to the same activities, women thus acquired professional knowledge and skills in crafts, trade, finance and personal care.

Working enabled women to be in contact with the outside world and not remain confined to home. It is surprising to note that many women enjoyed greater and more diversified spatial mobility than men: for example, male peasants worked in the fields in spring and autumn, often in the company of only a few companions from the same village, while women opened stalls, made and sold products at markets, maintained a network of mutual aid and exchange with the neighbourhood, etc. In short, they had more social interactions and information than the labourers.

In France, among the upper social class, the 17th century saw the appearance of the Salons, which constituted a space mixing genders, where men and women discussed, exchanged ideas. The first hostesses of the Salons organised their space in a concrete and abstract way: the new spaces and decorations were arranged and created for entertainment purposes; yet, at the same time, they regulated manners and tastes. The phenomenon of separation between men and women in living spaces became more pronounced in the nineteenth century, and was more pronounced in wealthy classes.

Space not only reflects and makes visible the histories of social, cultural and religious inequalities, it also predetermines and perpetuates them. We discuss the interrelationships between space and power, space and inequalities or gendered disparities in the context of the seventeenth century, through some examples provided by painters, such as Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Valentin de Boulogne.





Iconographic references

Author: Nicolas Poussin

Title: Eliezer and Rebecca at the Well

Date: 1648

Musée du Louvre



Background information on the artwork:

The subject, taken from Genesis, deals with the story of Abraham. Wishing to marry his son Isaac, he sends his servant, Eliezer, to find a suitable wife. The servant asks for God's help: the girl chosen for Isaac will be the one who will give something to drink to Eliezer and his camels. Rebekah gives water to Eliezer, who then tells her that she has been chosen by God to be Isaac's future wife and gives her bracelets and earrings.

If the moment of the meeting between Rebecca and Eliezer is a subject often treated by painters, the representation of the bride-to-be surrounded by her numerous companions is much less so. To supply the house with water is a traditionally female task. Consequently, village wells are a traditional place of sociability for women, where they meet and talk to each other. In this frieze-like composition, Poussin depicts a great diversity of attitudes and expressions of women, witnesses of Eliezer's divine announcement.

In the seventeenth century, some places of sociability in villages constituted gendered spaces: apart from the wells or fountains, on washing days, the riverbank or the washhouse were (almost) exclusively female meeting places.



Description of activities

1.- Instructions:

Participants are invited to write down adjectives, feelings, actions that they associate with the notion of public space. Each term should be marked on a separate post-it note (at least 5 post-its/person).

On a card or on the floor, the facilitator places a card entitled "POWER", the participants choose from their pack of post-its the notions that can be linked to "POWER" and stick them around this central card. A discussion follows in which participants explain the choice marked on the post-its and the relationship between their term and "power".

The activity continues with one or two other central concepts, with participants using and drawing from their same pack of post-its.

A second round can be organised with the "EQUALITY" card.

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 15 minutes.

Materials: Post-its, two cards with a word printed on each.

Hints: The participants can be invited to form categories from the post-its that have been put down or to create a tree structure where all the post-its must find a place.

2.- Instructions:

Let's start a discussion with the group and list together public spaces where women were present in the 17th century. Then ask if there were places where women were excluded.

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 10-15 minutes.

Hints: Facilitators can suggest spaces and ask the group to make assumptions on the gendered use of these places.



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Iconographic references

Author: Valentin de Boulogne
 Title: Concert with Eight People
 Date: c. 1628-1630

Musée du Louvre



Background information on the artwork:

Concert scenes and figures of musicians are a central and recurrent subject in Valentin's work. Through the theme of music, the painter addresses more complex notions of harmony, but also melancholy and love. In his paintings, he depicts a wide variety of musical instruments, from the most popular to the most sophisticated, providing an exhaustive picture of instruments used in the first half of the 17th century. The diversity of instruments is depicted in very heterogeneous spaces (some in cabarets, others in salons), which matches the diversity of characters and their specific context of social mixing.

Concerts, or times when people played together, were a moment par excellence of gender mixing: men and women often played and listened to music together, not only in outdoor spaces, but also in public spaces, ranging from taverns to the most distinguished aristocratic salons.

Moreover, musical education was an integral part of the education for girls and young women in the more affluent circles. Music masters and art teachers gave private lessons, first at home and then in the parlours of convents where girls destined to the world continued their education.



Description of activities

1.- Instructions:

In order to facilitate the understanding of the interrelation between space and gender, it is necessary to introduce themes from which participants can approach the topic and mobilise their own experience. We propose the following themes: Work; Age/Invisibility; Justice; Literature; Violence; Politics. Participants are invited to look for, and associate public spaces with these notions.

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 10-15 minutes.

Materials: Paper, pen for taking notes, possibly post-its.

Hints: Participants can collect their ideas by creating spaces on post-its, which they can then put on a large sheet of paper and structure in a debate.

2.- Instructions:

Participants walk through the four adjacent rooms of the museum in which the five works of the itinerary are located and write down on a sheet of paper all the paintings they think are related to the themes proposed in the previous activity (Work; Age/Invisibility; Justice; Letters; Violence; Politics).

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 30-40 minutes.

Materials: Booklet with reproductions (see “Hints”)

Hints: It is advisable to prepare a sort of contact sheet of the paintings exhibited in the chosen rooms and to give each participant/pair a booklet with miniature reproductions of the works and iconographic references in order to facilitate the constitution of the categories.





Iconographic references

Author: Claude Gellée

Title: The Disembarkation of Cleopatra at Tarsus

Date: c. 1642-1643

Musée du Louvre



Background information on the artwork:

While Cleopatra's life and death are amply depicted in paintings, her meeting with Mark Antony is much less so. The story is known to Plutarch; Mark Antony summons Cleopatra to Tarsus to justify her policy. Apart from the political negotiation where both parties try to consolidate the situation of Egypt and the eastern part of the Roman Empire respectively, a kind of political concubinage also takes place between them, a common practice at that time.

In order to destabilise this political alliance, Octavian, the future emperor Augustus, leads a propaganda campaign against the couple Mark Antony and Cleopatra. The queen is portrayed as a foreign sorceress who dominates the consul and leads him into vices and debauchery in order to conquer Rome. This malicious and misogynistic interpretation dominates ancient accounts and often modern chronicles as well.

Claude Gellée depicts this story at a time when, at the French royal court, a form of political presence and influence is often attributed to 'favourites', but these political actions remain mostly hidden and surrounded by suspicion.



Description of activities

1.- Instructions:

Before revealing the actual title of the painting and the story depicted in the foreground, participants are asked to create titles by highlighting women in the painting. Then the scene depicted and the characters are identified. A discussion can then be launched: do the imaginary titles hold up in the light of the real story? Does the painting take part in the usual misogynistic interpretation of this encounter or, on the contrary, is a more balanced, egalitarian representation put in place?

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 10-15 minutes.

Hints: This activity can be extended to all the paintings in the same museum room. Each participant chooses two to three works and writes imaginary titles. Then, in a plenary session, these titles are pronounced, and participants try to guess to which artwork(s) they belong.

2.- Instructions:

Several pictorial representations of Cleopatra and Mark Antony are distributed or shown to the participants and/or extracts from Plutarch's description. The participants, in pairs, are invited to compare the scenes, focusing particularly on the representation of power relationships between the two protagonists. Then, a plenary discussion allows for debate on the different points of view and interpretations.

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 20-30 minutes.

Materials: pictorial representations of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, and/or extracts from ancient texts describing their history

Hints: Each pair can receive a different representation and can then compare it with the painting by Claude Gellée





Iconographic references

Author: Valentin de Boulogne
 Title: The Judgement of Solomon
 Date: c. 1627-1629

Musée du Louvre



Background information on the artwork:

The theme of the Judgement of Solomon is very popular among caravaggesque painters, and Valentin de Boulogne devoted several versions to it. The story, taken from the Old Testament, features two prostitutes, mothers who live in the same house. The child of one of them dies during a night and each claims to be the mother of the survivor. The young King Solomon orders the living child to be cut in two and given one half to each of the women. One woman begs the king to give the other the child and, above all, to spare him. Solomon recognises the true mother in her, and gives her back the child alive.

Despite the fact that judicial reports from the 17th century are incomplete, sources show a very low rate of crime among the female population (around 10-20%). Even if these figures were underestimated, it is striking that museum walls are adorned with many more scenes depicting women on trial rather than men, especially if we consider that a majority of the women judged would have been innocent or acquitted. Only men could occupy the position of judges, so these paintings accustom us to the representation of men being in a position of decision, delivering judgements.



Description of activities

1.- Instructions:

The participants receive a black and white reproduction of this artwork. They have to choose one single element of the painting, and change it in such a way that power relations are transformed in the scene, in regards to the symbolic occupation of space. They can add or remove an element with a black felt-tip pen or a white corrector.

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 10-15 minutes.

Materials: Black and white reproduction of the work, black markers and white correctors.

Hints: Participants can first copy the human figures and study their positions by drawing simple stick figures.

2.- Instructions:

Working in small groups, participants are invited to compare paintings that represent women on trial in different situations: a court of law or a street gathering. Each group is asked to make a list of the common points between these representations. Then, in plenary session, they share their lists and debate on the possible discordant elements.

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 20 minutes.

Materials: Sheets for taking notes.

Hints: During the plenary discussion, facilitators can distribute the same pictures in reproduction. Participants are then invited to cut out the figures and make comparisons, supporting their arguments with a study of the body postures, the power relationships, ignoring spatial context.





Iconographic references

Author: Nicolas Poussin

Title: Plague of Ashdod

Date: 1630-1631

Musée du Louvre



Background information on the artwork:

The painting, borrowing its topic from the Old Testament, depicts the city of Ashdod, where a plague has just broken out as a divine punishment against the Philistines, who had stolen the Ark of the Covenant from the Jews, and placed it next to the statue of Dagon, one of their main deities.

Poussin gives a complex role to architecture: it functions as geographical and historical clues, symbolising life, death, past greatness and divine punishment.

Poussin's epoch coincides with important urban developments, new spaces being created by the widening and straightening of streets, the opening of squares, and houses now carefully ordered. These urban spaces made it possible to intensify exchanges and increased dramatically female presence in the streets. Encounters, friendship and solidarity multiplied. In this painting, the urban presence of women, mingled with men and participating in a major historical moment of their city, is more a reality of Poussin's time than of biblical times.



Description of activities

1.- Instructions:

Participants are invited to compare this painting with that of *The Abduction of the Sabine Women* by Nicolas Poussin (Louvre Museum). What is the role of architecture in the two scenes depicted? What are the similarities and differences between the two urban spaces depicted?

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 10-15 minutes.

Hints: Participants can work in pairs and share the results of their observations at the end of the activity or, for a smaller group with active participants, the discussion can start directly in plenary. For example, in turn, each participant adds one item to the list of similarities, and in the next turn, to the list of differences.

2.- Instructions:

In the light of the answers to the previous activity, participants are invited to compare the representation of men and women in the two paintings. How do the two paintings express pictorially the physical and symbolic place given to women?

Number of participants: 10-12

Activity time: 10-15 minutes.

Hints: Participants can be separated into two groups, working on one of the two works respectively. Then, observations can be shared in the form of a dialogue between both groups, comparing the paintings with precise arguments and descriptions.

ITINERARY 3 – Female versus Male Gaze



Maddalena: depicted as a sinner, looks down, as a symbol of her shame.



Saint Apollonia: representation of the saints looking upwards as they ascend towards heaven. Symbology is one of the few female representations (saints or sluts).



Aristocrat: the only woman who can look the viewer straight in the eye.



Virile portrait: the term virile refers to a characteristic of the man and among other meanings has: brave, fearless. Under “antonyms” we find feminine, puerile, weak, and insecure.



Painting depicting a man, there is no reference to the man's social occupation and he can look at the viewer

Female versus Male Gaze – A Presentation

“The woman has to look at herself all the time. She is almost constantly accompanied by the image she has of herself. [...] Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being watched. This determines not only the bulk of the relationship between men and women but also the relationship of women to themselves.”[1]

From an early age, especially if we are women, we introduce the so-called “objectifying gaze”, we get used to the idea of being watched, evaluated, we get used to always feeling on display, to worry about how we will be perceived outside.

We walk on the street and we are looked at, followed, in the worst cases, in addition to the gaze, words and physical proximity are inserted as if we had to be a “sexual object” always welcoming we are victims of the act that is called “catcalling” which is at the base of the pyramid of rape.[2]

This power relation is replicated in the world of art: as men have defined art and Visual media, only men “see” and women “are seeing” as an object of contemplation.

Women have been considered by our society as objects of men’s sexual desire. As men’s gaze has been considered universal, cinema, television and art have taken female bodies as targets of male/universal contemplation.

Talking about the ‘male gaze’ means becoming aware that in the world of art, particularly in cinema, there is an important disparity between the two sexes. A disparity that significantly shapes the judgement on female directors, relegating their works to a female audience.

The female gaze arises in response to the male gaze: is a feminist film theoretical term that represents, precisely, the gaze of the female spectator.

This definition was theorized by feminist film critic Laura Mulvey in the article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975)[3], in which she discusses the aspects of voyeurism and fetishism in the heterosexual male gaze. This is meant not only as the gaze of the male spectator but also the gaze of the male character and the male creator of the film.

In contemporary use, the female gaze is used to refer to the perspective that a female screenwriter, director, or film producer brings to a film, which would be quite different from a male point view on the subject.

The act of reclaiming the lens and redefining the female gaze of a woman towards another woman is thus more than ever a subversive act, laden with socio-political implications, and is one of the most important revolutions in the field of fashion photography of the last decade.

[1] Berger John, Nadotti Maria, “Questione di sguardi. Sette inviti al vedere fra storia dell’arte e quotidianità”, Il Saggiatore 2015

[2] Vagnoli Carlotta, “Maledetta sfortuna. Vedere, riconoscere e rifiutare la violenza di genere” Fabbri, 2021, pag. 22

[3] <https://www.asu.edu/courses/fms504/total-readings/mulvey-visualpleasure.pdf>





Iconographic references

Author: Venetian painter

Title: Mary Magdalene

Date: The beginning of XVII century

Pinacoteca "Corrado Giaquinto" - Bari



Background information on the artwork:

The painting came from the convent of Santa Maria Vetere in Andria and passed to the Pinacoteca Provinciale in Bari in 1891. The Magdalene is portrayed here as "penitent". Usually, Christian cis-gender historiography represents Magdalene in two ways, depending on the context, as a sinner or as a redeemed. In this case, if we pay attention to her eyes, we can see that she does not look in our direction but rather looks at the ground, almost as if ashamed and shying away from confrontation. In the history of Christian art, the iconography of Magdalene is often depicted in this way: among the most famous examples are the Scrovegni Chapel, Donatello, and the Vatican Pinacoteca.

Trying to see through our own eyes and thinking of the theme of the "male gaze", this painting, the representation and figure of Magdalene, in general, becomes almost fundamental to help us understand the impact that an external gaze has on us.



Description of activities

1 Guess the artwork, focus on the gaze. - Instructions:

Distribute the different artwork titles to the groups. Make them assign a title to this artwork, focusing mainly on the gaze of the subject. - Why did you make this choice? - Do you think the name of the subject is connected to the social role covered?

Number of participants: 2 groups of 3 people.

Activity time: 5 minutes.

Materials: Print of the titles of different artworks + tape (optional).

Hints: Remove/cover the original title near the artwork.

2 Words that describe male and female victims / the society's gaze on newspapers.

- Instructions:

Take words, sentences cut from newspapers/magazines and put them on the floor or on a table. Make the participants choose which ones they think are referred to as men and which ones are women. On a big sheet of paper, let them put men on one side and women on the other. Reflect on which social gaze is filtered in newspapers and magazines.

Number of participants: groups of 2.

Activity time: 10 min + 5 min reflection.

Materials: Magazines/newspapers cuts + an A3 paper divided into two, on one side written “Men” and on the other “Women”

Hints: Give us another example of a male/female social role that is associated with a particular characteristic.





Iconographic references

Author: Massimo Stanzione

Title: Saint Apollonia

Date: 1635

Pinacoteca "Corrado Giaquinto" - Bari



Background information on the artwork:

Saint Apollonia, portrayed as a half-length figure against a leaden, uneven background, is wearing an indigo dress with detached sleeves that clings to her florid breasts, a transparent veil framing her neck, and a wide brick-red mantle. Her head is uncovered, slightly raised as are her eyes, which are turned towards the sky, and her mouth is half-open. With her left hand, she is holding the palm of martyrdom, while with her right hand she is pointing to her tooth (her common iconographic attribute, since the saint, was martyred by having all her teeth removed), resting on a stone shelf in the bottom right-hand corner. Talking about saints from a gender perspective is at least interesting. We know that women are often represented according to a very precise dichotomy and divided into 'saints or whores'. With reference to the gaze, starting from Magdalene's previous work, we can easily see the similarities that connect them. Neither of them looks at us and pays attention to us. But if we try to look deeply and dialogue with the artwork, we realise that the Saint does not look at us out of shame, on the contrary. Her gaze is validated, legitimised by its author, a man.



Description of activities

1 Guess the artwork, focus on the gaze. - Instructions:

distribute the different artwork titles to the groups. Make them assign a title to this artwork, focusing mainly on the gaze of the subject. - Why did you make this choice? - Do you think the name of the subject is connected to the social role covered?

Number of participants: 2 groups of 3 people.

Activity time: 5 minutes.

Materials: Print of the titles of different artworks + tape (optional).

Hints: Remove/cover the original title near the artwork.

2 The message of the gaze. - Instructions:

Ask the participants: What do you think the gaze of the subject of the work wants to communicate? Let them write the answer (it can be more than one) in post-it and discuss their answers later

Number of participants: 10
Activity time: 10 min + 5 min discussion.
Materials: A3 paper + post-it + markers.

Hints: Make other questions that can trigger a reflection.





Iconographic references

Author: Giuseppe Bonito

Title: Portrait of a Lady

Date: ca 1755

Pinacoteca "Corrado Giaquinto" - Bari



Background information on the artwork:

Purchased on the Neapolitan antiques market in 2000, the painting, which has recently been restored, shows, beneath a blue-grey satin curtain, the half-length portrait of a mature woman with a full face animated by large dark, slightly bovine eyes and a coquettish mole on her left cheekbone, who addresses the viewer with a good-natured and slightly ironic expression. In this case, regarding the gaze, the protagonist of the work looks us straight in the eye. How come? By paying attention to the title of the work, and the way she is dressed and adorned, we realise that the woman in question is part of the bourgeoisie. We are in the 1700s and we are helped by Mary Wollstonecraft who, on the subject of the gaze (she was writing in those very years), declares "the education of women and the construction of femininity are directed towards satisfying men, towards making their male gaze the only one that properly looks while women are looked at and conform to that gaze. Even the power they gain is a power guaranteed by the fact that they best correspond to male expectations through seduction, beauty, fragility, all traits that women use to guarantee themselves a liveable life" (1).



Description of activities

1 Guess the artwork, focus on the gaze. - Instructions:

Distribute the different artwork's titles to the groups. Make them assign a title to this artwork, focusing mainly on the gaze of the subject. Questions :

- Why did you make this choice?
- Do you think the name of the subject is connected to the social role covered?

Number of participants: 2 groups of 3 persons.

Activity time: 5 minutes.

Materials: Print of the titles of different artworks + tape (optional).

Hints: Remove/cover the original title near the artwork + what difference do you see with the gaze of other artworks?.

(1) Cossutta C., "Avere potere su se stesse: politica e femminilità in Mary Wallstonecraft". Palazzo Roncioni, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2020, P 201.

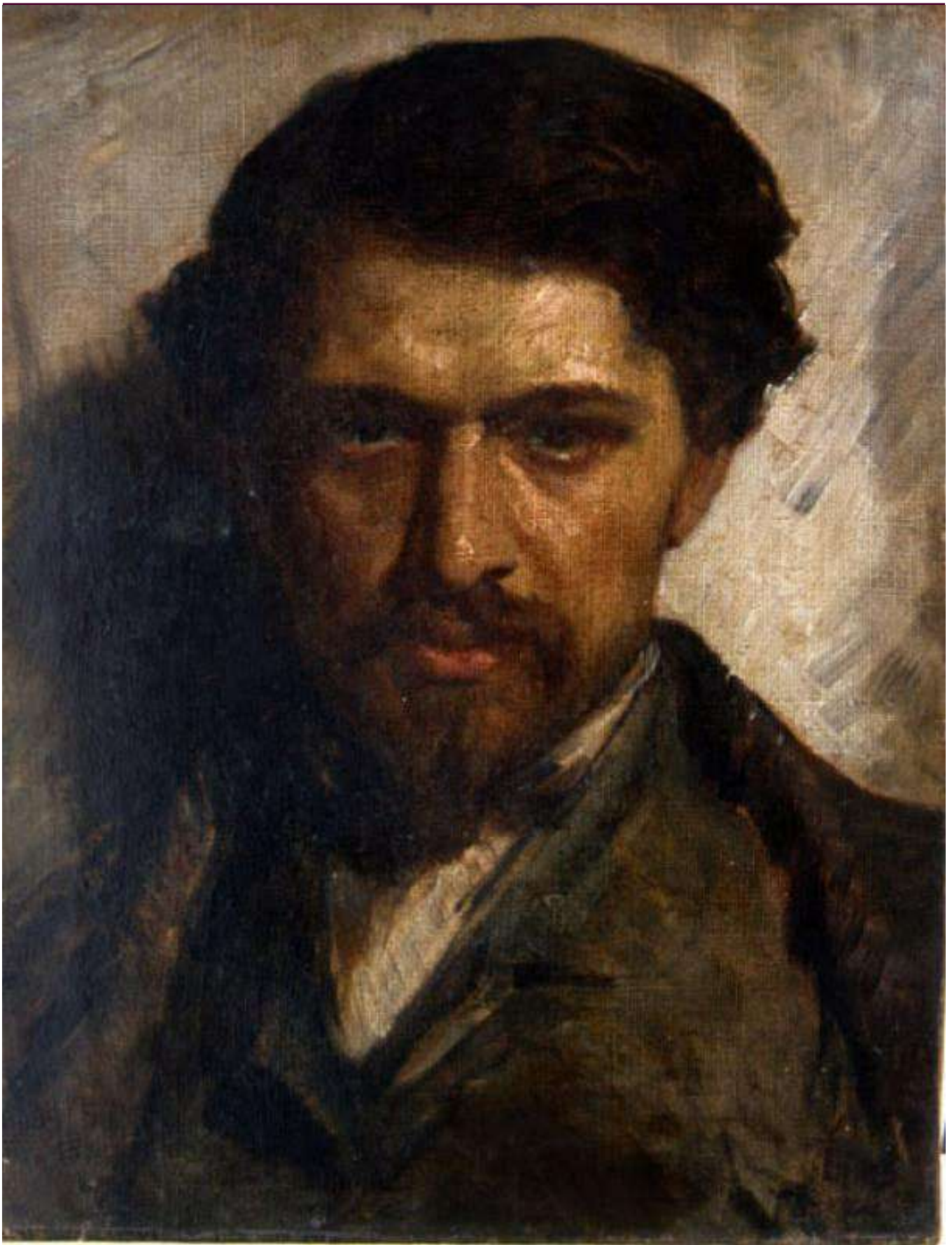
2 Iceberg on Female Gaze. - Instructions:

What can you see directly and what can you perceive? Let the participants imagine and reflect on a scene of a look in the middle of the street, where a woman looks at a man. What are the visible elements (eyes, mouth, sounds...) and what are the non-visible elements (thoughts, inner emotions/feelings, assumptions...)? Write them on post-its - Draw or print an iceberg and make them stick the post-it on the part of the visible element (the part of the iceberg you can see) and on the non-visible elements (the part of the iceberg submerged in water).

Number of participants: 8

Activity time: 10 min of reflection + 5 min to stick the post-its + 5 min for discussion.

Hints: Iceberg is divided between: Observable + Not Observable. The participants should imagine a scene where they do not know the people involved.





Iconographic references

Author: Bernardo Celentano

Title: Manly Portrait

Date: XIX century

Pinacoteca "Corrado Giaquinto" - Bari



Background information on the artwork:

Belonging to the Ferrara donation (1936), the painting was attributed to Celentano in the previous catalogues of the Pinacoteca. This portrait is called the 'virile portrait'. What does it mean 'virile' from a gender perspective and what does it have to do with the male gaze? Virility is a 'characteristic' given by nature to the 'real man', which in this case is reflected in the male gaze, directed at the viewer, without hesitation, almost swaggering. How is 'virility' constructed? Pierre Bourdieu (2) in his book *Masculine Domination* explains that "men also remain prisoners, and deviously victims, of the dominant representation. [...] The status of man in the sense of 'vir' implies a duty to be, a 'virtus', which is imposed on the register, it goes without saying, without discussion. [...] Male privilege is also a trap and has its counterpart in the permanent tension and confrontation, sometimes pushed to the point of absurdity, which every man sees imposed on him by the duty to assert his virility in all circumstances."



Description of activities

1 Reflect on male artists. - Instructions:

Take your smartphone and search for male artists and authors (e.g. Van Gogh, Pirandello, etc.). Now write down on a post-it the first adjective you can read, referred to the male artist/author that you found on Wikipedia. Do you think the same adjective would be used for women artists/authors?

Number of participants: 6/8

Activity time: 15 min + 5 min reflection time.

Materials: Personal smartphones + A3 paper + post-its.

(2) Bourdieu P., "Masculine Domination". Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, Milano, 1998. Pp. 61 - 62.

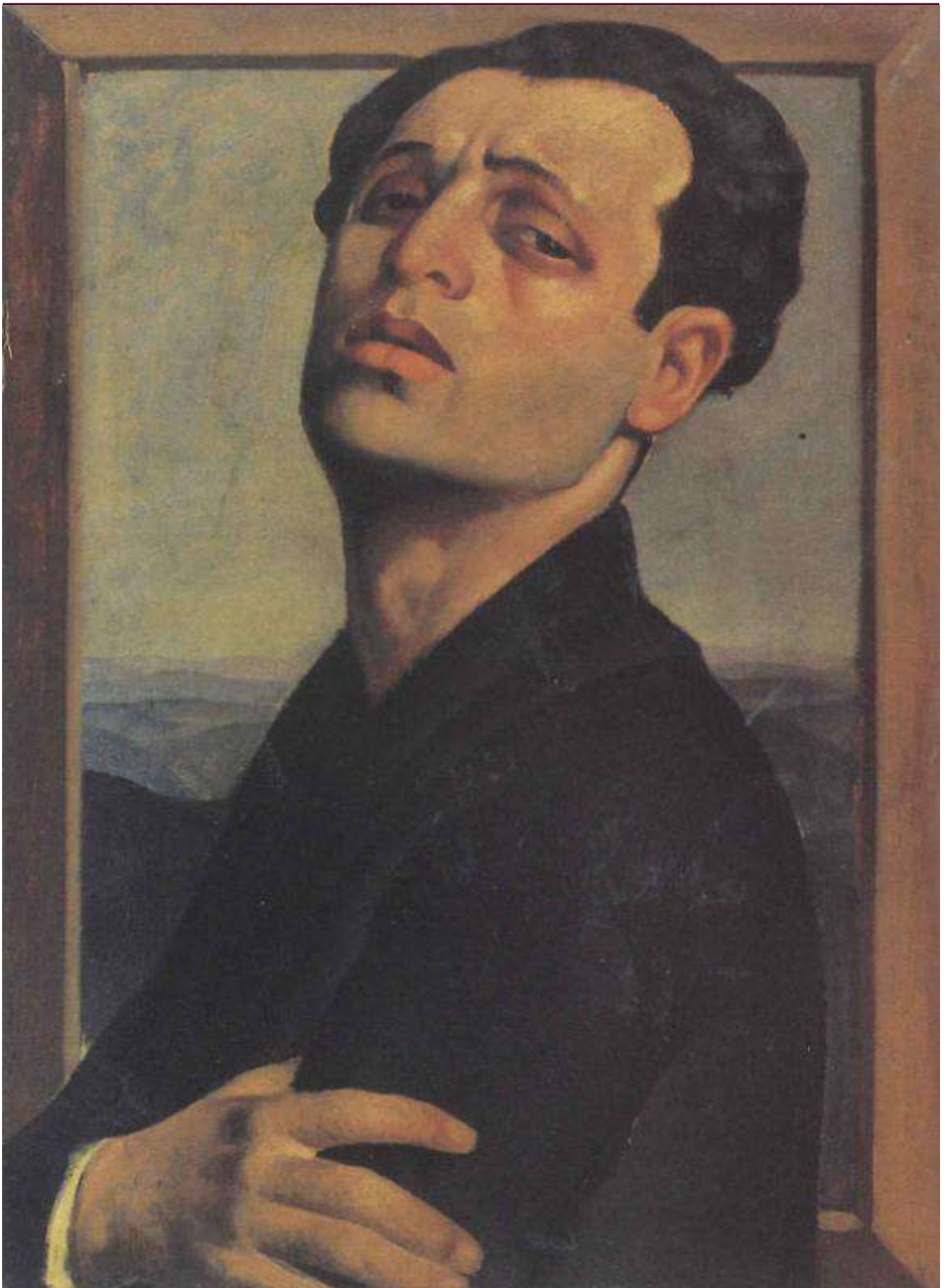
2 Iceberg on Male Gaze. - Instructions:

What can you see directly and what can you perceive? Let the participants imagine and reflect on a scene of a look in the middle of the street, where a man looks at a woman. What are the visible elements (eyes, mouth, sounds...) and what are the non-visible elements (thoughts, inner emotions/feelings, assumptions...)? Write them on post-its. Draw or print an iceberg and make them stick the post-it on the part of the visible element (the part of the iceberg you can see) and on the non-visible elements (the part of the iceberg submerged in water).

Number of participants: 8

Activity time: 10 min of reflection + 5 min to stick the post-its + 5 min for discussion.

Hints: iceberg is divided between: Observable + Not Observable. The participants should imagine a scene where they do not know the people involved.



**Iconographic references**

Author: Domenico Cantatore

Title: Self-portrait (Torment)

Date: 1925

Pinacoteca "Corrado Giaquinto" - Bari

**Background information on the artwork:**

This is a self-portrait in which the artist, just nineteen years old, portrays himself in a serious and solemn pose, his restless gaze tinged with melancholy. It is symptomatic that he entitled it Torment, dated from the initial period of his move to Milan in 1924. We have seen in previous works of the itinerary how the female gaze was filtered through the male gaze, and how, in order to be able to look us in the eye, the woman had to have a role and certain characteristics.

We included this work in our itinerary because reading the works according to the filter of the gaze, we realised that for all the men represented in the Pinacoteca di Bari, there was no need for roles and/or characteristics in order to look up, look at us and self-determine themselves. Having been assigned as a man at birth was enough. Men didn't need to be 'repentants', 'saints' or 'aristocrats'.

**Description of activities****1 Draw yourself - Your own gaze. - Instructions:**

Invite participants to draw a self-portrait, and ask themselves: "What would my life be like if I only cared about the way you look? Imagine that you are the protagonist, the perceptions of others does not count, they aren't your concern."

Number of participants: 6/8

Activity time: 15 min for drawing + each person explains his/her self-portrait.

Materials: Papers + colourful markers.

Hints: Make them reflect on their own gaze, without any influence from the outside.

2 How do you see yourself?. - Instructions:

Imagine that you can see concretely the paths you have taken so far in your life. Get participants to draw two lines on the different arrows of the Annex 1. How far have you come? How far would you like to go?

Number of participants: 8

Activity time: 10 min + 10 min group-reflection.

Materials: A4 sheets printed with arrows and topics (see Annex 1) + 2 coloured pens per participant.

Hints: Exercise to reflect on one's own abilities and to provide empowerment to participants.

ITINERARY 4 – Sex Related Power-Relations



The performance Incantation addresses the various expressive potentials of a body as well as ways to break out of confining roles ascribed to genders. The courage necessary to act and perform, as well as questions regarding how nude bodies are perceived in different contexts are addressed.



Focusing on aspects of institutional aggressions and inequalities they reinforce, this work opens up questions surrounding religion and state, as well as tensions between an individual and the society. Through symbolism represented in the image, specifically the roles of women within those contexts are addressed.



As a spatial installation that can be entered, Winterhilfsverein opens up the possibilities and questions of approaching an artwork in tangible ways, going beyond the visual and contemplative approaches to art. Through the installation, we address the artist's as well as visitor's physical relations to the artwork.



Through the collages Private - Public, normative visual representations of genders are addressed, their heroic and mundane aspects, as well as juxtaposed dichotomies themselves. Balance, dynamics, strength, stability: their visualisations and their opposites are discussed.



Dealing with the motif of a wedding, The Wedding opens a discussion on intimate relationships between genders, their assigned roles as well as refusal to submit to the latter. The institution of marriage, its religious and civil functions and the artist's position in relation to it are addressed.

Sex Related Power-Relations – A Presentation

The concept of power is central to many feminist debates. However, feminist accounts of power tend to have a one-sided emphasis either on power as domination (power-over) or on power as empowerment (power-to). Some authors argue that power-over and power-to refer to fundamentally different concepts and that it is a mistake to try to develop an account of power that integrates them. According to Amy Allen who tried to do so, existing feminist views on power could be roughly divided in the following way:

Power as resource: power is understood as a resource that is unequally and unjustly distributed between men and women; hence, one of the goals of feminism would be to redistribute this resource in more equitable ways.

Power as domination: power is understood as a relation of domination and subordination. Feminists who conceptualize power in this way, speak of “oppression,” “patriarchy,” and “subjection”, but whatever the term, they see power as an unjust or illegitimate power-over relation. They are interested in understanding and critiquing gender-based relations of domination and subordination, and the ways these intersect with other axes of oppression. Most importantly, they ask how such relations can be transformed through individual and collective resistance.

Power as empowerment: this view is focused on power-to, rather than power-over. Power-to is understood as the capacity to empower, the ability to transform oneself and others through individual or collective action.

Many authors who see power as empowerment, claim that the focus on power-over is masculine. This conception of power has indeed dominated the social sciences. It was most famously articulated by German historian Max Weber in 1922 as the probability of individuals realising their will despite the resistance of others. In his view, power can be obtained by force (subjugation is enabled by fear of sanctions that would follow ones’ disobedience) or by authority (subjugation is enabled by trust in the knowledge, ability and experience of those we give power to).

Refusing force as a legitimate way to obtain power, the crucial feminist question remains: how can the subjugated become powerful authorities without subjugating others? In other words, how do we gain power in ways that simultaneously enhance rather than diminish the power of others? This itinerary, and the artists it features, offers several answers to these difficult questions.





Iconographic references

Iconographic references: shamanism, folklore, rituals, mind-body dualism.

Author: Katalin Ladik (1942, Novi Sad)

Title: Incantation

Date: 1970 (2010)

Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana, Slovenia



Background information on the artwork:

The artwork presented is a large-format photography of a performance by Katalin Ladik in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. Katalin Ladik (1942, Novi Sad) is an actress, performer and a poet. The context in which the performance was carried out was that of a relatively chauvinistic and patriarchal society that understood nude female bodies as scandalous. Yet, the artist herself defied expectations revolving around her gender as well as around poetry that she wrote by using her own body as an instrument and merging different artistic media into new forms of expression. She opposed the ideas that would favour mind over body by ways of hiding or shaming the latter. Her own artistic approaches thus advocate and celebrate the union of mind and body – be it through sound poetry or performative actions. She opposed the confining expectations imposed on her as a female artist through the daring actions of performing naked, being grotesque and vulnerable. Turning to body poetry as an act of defiance against the art of blue stocking, she believed that if one is to be the most vulnerable in one's poetry, it should be performed through the body and with sounds – as some sort of Gesamtkunstwerk.



Description of activities

1 - Instructions:

Each participant is given a scarf to cover their eyes and asked to find a comfortable position in the space. The participants are told they are about to listen to a sound piece (sound poetry) by one of the artists and asked to pay attention to where and how the music resonates in their bodies. After everyone is set, a 15-minute-long sound piece, made by Katalin Ladik (Phonopoetica) is played. After the music goes silent, participants can open their eyes and make notes about their experience. (What did you hear? How did you feel? Can you relate sounds to specific body parts?)

Number of participants: Variable.

Activity time: 20 minutes.

Materials: A cloth to cover participants' eyes, paper, pen, speakers to play the music.

Hints: Pay attention to how and where the sound poetry resonates within your body. You can find the music on Youtube.

2- Instructions:

Think of one object that associates you with the gender and bring it. Place the items on the table. Take a good look at them and write 3 associations for each. When you're done, share with others what the associations were and consider what objects can symbolize it, asking why?

Number of participants: 10

Activity time: 30 min.

Materials: Objects you bring.

Hints: Symbols are something that is rooted in us. Which ones are in you?





Iconographic references

Author: Zofia Kulik (1947, Wrocław)

Title: Self-portrait with the Palace

Date: 1990

Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana, Slovenia



Background information on the artwork:

This multiple exposure photo collage was made at the beginning of Zofia Kulik's solo career after she parted ways with Przemysław Kwiek, with whom she had formed the KwieKulik duo. After the duo parted, Zofia Kulik's artistic interests shifted from Open Form practice (work with focus on documenting of the process, not so much the finished product) to Closed Form – focus on the musealising her own work, such as is the case in Self-portrait with the Palace.

This large-format self-portrait is a composition of the artist's own photographic archive and intended to be exhibited in a museum. The centre of Zofia Kulik's practice in this period became archiving as such. Her multiple-exposure photographs are symbolically loaded, ornamental and full of historical references. She dealt profusely with relations between an individual and the society – especially reflecting on the political regime, religion and nation. In Self-portrait with the Palace, the Palace of Culture and Science stands upside down on top of her head, simultaneously as a crown and as an impending weight upon her. The two stars covering her body also allude to tensions between an individual, socio-political movements and religion. The image is as much a reflection on her position as an individual in the Polish society of that time, as on her role as a (female) artist. Merging self-portrait and the representation of the Virgin Mary (the composition is namely based on a baroque painting, The Assumption of the Virgin Mary, 1630), her nude, upright figure in the centre also reminds us of mythical female leaders of uprisings. Antagonisms between the rebellious heroine and immaculate virgin, as well as between an individual juxtaposed by the nation, religion and politics, can be read as tensions and unrest throughout the collage.



Description of activities

1 - Instructions:

Before any iconographic analysis is done, titles or artists given, all participants are asked to interpret the artwork without knowing any background information. The titles and names are covered and participants are given papers and pens, on which they can make notes. What do you see? Are there any emotions? How do you understand the different elements?

Number of participants: Variable.

Activity time: 20 minutes.

Materials: Paper, pen.

Hints: Besides interpreting the visuals, try also to think about who the artist behind the work might be.

2 - Instructions:

Collect old papers and look for symbols in them that depict religious, political, or national moments or stories in history. Cut them out and make a collage. Under the collage, write how you felt reading stories from the newspapers and where you recognized your personal discrimination. Let the collage be your own experience.

Number of participants: Variable.

Activity time: 30 minutes.

Materials: Old newspapers, glue, paper, scissors, pens.

Hints: Think how history still makes us who we are today.





Iconographic references

Author: Mirosław Bałka (1958, Warsaw)

Title: Winterhilfsverein

Date: 1994

Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana, Slovenia



Background information on the artwork:

Winterhilfsverein was originally exhibited in Mala galerija, Ljubljana; it was later added to the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova. The original exhibition opened in winter, which adds another layer to the meaning of its title, Winterhilfsverein. The latter alludes to the turbulent 20th century and its wars as well as the season it was exhibited in – in both cases referring to a time of sharpened circumstances. Simultaneously, it also reminds us of solidarity and salvation.

Mirosław Bałka's works form an intricate connection with bodies – especially his own. Although his sculptural language from 1990s onwards moved towards abstraction, there are still strong allusions to corporeality. In this particular case, the dimensions of the metal elements are based on the measurements of the artist's own body, and the structure symbolically inhabited the white cube of the exhibition space with memories, reflecting the artist's personal and working space (the doorstep, which was originally placed at the entrance, was made of the same linoleum as the floor in his burnt-down studio in Ot-twock). Although the doorstep does not coincide with the actual entrance into the white cube anymore, the installation can still be entered and walked through, thus inviting us to experience it physically, allowing us to get closer to the artist's personal memories as well as his bodily presence. The artwork is both anthropomorphic and autobiographical.



Description of activities

1 - Instructions:

Participants are invited to enter the artwork, walk through and pay attention to possible associations it evokes: is it a space, a body, a process that we are walking through? What does it mean to experience a work physically in a gallery space? Do we walk through it as if through a room, does it have a narrative, can the entire work perhaps be seen as a body?

Number of participants: Variable.

Activity time: 5 minutes per person.

Hints: Hints towards expanding the associative field can be given.

2 - Instructions:

Take a group walk around the city. On a walk, anyone can decide at any time and choose a certain location where they do not feel comfortable because of their gender. After everyone has chosen a location, let them write down on paper why they feel uncomfortable there, or if have they ever been there before, what was their experience? The team exchanges the written stories and situation and discusses why they felt the way they did, and what could they do to ensure that this does not happen again. Take a picture, that supports your narration.

Number of participants: Variable.

Activity time: 30 minutes.

Materials: Paper, pen.

Hints: A public space is also a space of gender discrimination, think about your own situations.





Iconographic references

Author: Sanja Iveković (1949, Zagreb)

Title: Private – Public (Man's pictures – Woman's Pictures)

Date: 1981

Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana, Slovenia



Background information on the artwork:

Sanja Iveković is continuously working with socio-political topics in her conceptual practice – mainly in the media of video, collage and performance. The core of her work is characterised by feminist questions – the position of women in society within specific political contexts, gender representation in popular media, commodification of women's roles etc. She was part of the New Art Practice, a group of artists known mainly for their shift out of artists' studios into the public space.

In the juxtaposed photo collages, the artist presents the questions of politics of power, collective memory, gender relations and their representations. In the centre of each frame, we can see examples of socialist heroic monumental sculpture – two male fighters on the left and a heroine on the right, representing the ideals of their socio-political context. Surrounding them are smaller photographs of ballerinas and gymnasts. The latter are shown as similarly heroic as the central image of the monument, posing grandiosely, showing off their strength and power. The firmness is additionally emphasised through the contrast to images in the juxtaposed collage, which are obliquely placed around the centre. The photographs of a girl in a pirouette are not only contrasting in relation to the other collage, but form a tension also within the frame. The public ideals and representations thus seem to be starkly different, even opposed, to the private ones.



Description of activities

1 - Instructions:

Each participant is asked to write down a characteristic they would use to describe themselves with (e.g. thoughtful, assertive, imaginative), then fold it and put into the bag. The attributes are later drawn by each participant (in case their own characteristic is drawn it should be exchanged) and they are asked to describe themselves through someone else's features.

Number of participants: 5 -10

Activity time: Depending on the size of the group, 20 – 40 minutes.

Materials: Paper, pen, a bag or a hat to draw the attributes from.

Hints: How do we describe ourselves through features we do not identify with?

2 - Instructions:

Sit in a circle and think about what qualities are traditionally attributed to women and what to men (masculine stereotypes are mainly more accepted and valorised in society than female ones. Ex: strength vs. sensitivity). Think about your own life situations when you were discriminated against, or faced stereotypes. Write together a script that will help us react and position ourselves better in these situations.

Number of participants: Variable.

Activity time: 20 min.

Materials: Paper, pen.

Hints: How do we react when we feel discriminated against?





Iconographic references

Author: Vlasta Delimar (1956, Zagreb)

Title: The Wedding

Date: 1982

Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana, Slovenia



Background information on the artwork:

Vlasta Delimar was one of the protagonists of body art in Yugoslavia. She refused the traditional approaches to art and moved towards happenings, actions and performances, using her body as the primary means for artistic work. She also refuses to be identified with political movements or ideologies, and thus also does not identify herself or her art as feminist.

In the 1980s the artist worked primarily with the position of a woman in various social roles: an artist, lover, mother, housewife, and the relations between genders. Together with Željko Jerman, she carried out several performances – The Wedding being one of them. The artists were a couple in real life and thus the wedding was simultaneously an artistic performance and institutionalisation of their relationship. The ceremony was carried out in two parts – the civil and the catholic one, respectively. After the catholic ceremony, the wedding guests were invited to celebrate the newlyweds at a gallery, where photos from the civil wedding were already hanging. Later, documentation from the catholic ceremony was also added, making the real life event become a documented performance. Through this approach, the event becomes somewhat alienated and allows for a distanced point of view towards the wedding as institution and the gender relations within it.



Description of activities

1 - Instructions:

Working in pairs, one person is blindfolded and the other guides them around the space only by holding their hand, without talking. The person who is guided may signal at any point, if they feel uncomfortable or do not wish to continue. They are encouraged to pay attention to how space changes, if experienced without the sense of vision, as well as differences they notice in their perception of artworks before and after the activity. After 15 minutes the pair takes turns.

Number of participants: Pairs (number of pairs depends on the size of the space available)

Activity time: 30 minutes (the pair takes turns of 15 minutes)

Materials: A piece of cloth or scarf for blindfolding the person who is being guided.

Hints: Pay attention to how you sense the museum without seeing it – does it seem bigger or smaller? Are there characteristics in it that you didn't notice before? Do you trust the person guiding you?

2 - Instructions:

Remember the game rituals performed at traditional weddings between the wife and husband. For example, when a man takes off a garter from under a woman's skirt. What are these? Describe them? Choose one game and customize it by changing its roles and purpose. Then play it.

Number of participants: Variable.

Activity time: 40 min.

Hints: How does marriage as a ritual stigmatize the female sex?

ITINERARY 5 – Interculturality and Gender



The almost closed huge barrel of Louise Bourgeois is discharged with objects symbolizing motherhood and fatherhood, bringing us a worrying and even frightening theatre of childhood, intimacy and sexuality.



Sexy nurse, sick soldier, housewife... These images have been prevalent for decades in the mass media. How do they construct and reinforce gender stereotypes, couple norms and sexual fantasies?



An Italian male artist outsourced embroideries to refugee Afghan women in Pakistan. Not so much the work itself but its model of production makes us question the attribution of subcontracted artworks, the power relations that come with gender and social hierarchy.



Sophie Calle recounts her experience on the streets of New York in 1994, but it's not a unique, outdated experience – it will inspire young people to share their own experiences of public space related to their gender or/and race.



Constructed in the context of migration from China to France, Superfluidity represents the difficulties of the double culture that artist Shen Yuan herself has experienced as a woman.

Credits (from left to right):

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Interculturality and Gender – A Presentation

When people from different cultures (national, regional, professional, family, etc.) meet, they confront their values and moral codes, which are sometimes similar (equality, freedom, health, etc.) but which are surely expressed and lived differently – especially when it comes to gender, which is a “sensitive zone” (G. Hofstede, 1998). To approach gender in its intercultural dimension is to question how one conceives gender according to the cultural context in which one finds oneself – without, however, hierarchizing different cultures. For example, communication between a man and a woman may be physically close in one culture, but subject to more distance in another, and considered decent and acceptable in both cases. The way one interprets this difference as a danger or a contradiction to one’s own convictions can unbalance the encounter and lead to tensions.

In every era, and across geographic spaces, societies construct and validate codes of gender (including other parts of our identities like race, class, spirituality, etc.) that are passed down to us from childhood. Artworks are great visual examples in that regard: they help us to observe how norms are represented. That’s why we’re sharing our tips for creating a cross-cultural museum gender itinerary:

1. Choose works that can be linked to gender issues. Of course, in an entire public museum collection, only a few works deal directly with gender (feminist artists from the 1970s, for example). However, gender affects many dimensions of our lives, such as the occupation of private, public and geographical spaces (migrations), the distribution of roles in society (family, work, power etc.), intimacy (our relationships of friendship, love), and sexuality (expression of desires, pornography etc.). Thus, many topics in the works can be linked to gender issues.
2. Look for artists with a wide range of identities to show multiple perspectives and experiences. Gender minorities and racialized people are largely underrepresented in Western museums, so highlighting this diversity is to counter their erasure and give them back legitimacy and recognition (N. Fraser, 2000) in the public art institution and thus in society.
3. In the activities, we value a spontaneous experience of artworks by young people (feelings, personal interpretations, intimate testimonies), before providing information from the cartels. This creates a more horizontal relationship with the artworks, it values diversity of experiences and social identities within the group.

Now it’s up to you to create your own itinerary!





IMPORTANT NOTE : We recommend you to do activities without looking at the art cartel or the descriptive text until you see the instruction “Now, you may read the cartel and background description”. This way you can let your imagination and personal interpretation of the work run wild before learning about the artists’ intentions or the message of the work.



Iconographic references

Author: Louise Bourgeois

Title: Precious Liquids

Date: 1992

Centre Pompidou



Background information on the artwork:

French sculptor and visual artist, known late for monumental installations that explore the domestic universe, the family, the body, Louise Bourgeois instills in her work memories of her childhood, she symbolizes her emotions and subconscious imagination.

Around a huge barrel (old New York roof tank) appears a metal band engraved: “Art is a guarantee of sanity”. According to art curator M.L. Bernadac, “the precious liquids are, for Louise Bourgeois, the humours emitted by the body: blood, urine, milk, sperm, tears, everything that flows, fluid, under the blow of an emotional shock, love, fear, pleasure or suffering.” The bed can also represent fluids related to motherhood (menstruation, amniotic fluid or tears).

Opposite are two wooden spheres with a man’s long coat, covering a girl’s shirt with “Merci-Mercy” embroidered on it. This phallic composition symbolizes the father, who encircles the young child in a disturbing way. On the other side, two luminous rubber nipples are placed on the floor.

It is a place where the feminine and the masculine meet, forming a dynamic of horizontal and vertical objects. The work is like a small theatre stage where bodies and their fluids are symbolized with a childish imagination which questions family, sexuality, gender roles and fear.



Description of activities

1 Tell a family story - Instructions:

Imagine this room represents a traditional family (it can be yours or an imaginary, funny one), associate each object to a family member. Fill in Annex 2. In duos, explain your choices and the relationship between different members. To conclude, in little groups, you can share one personal testimony about a gender dynamic within your own family (it may be factual, no need to go for intimate and emotional sharing).

Number of participants: 10 persons.

Activity time: 30 minutes.

Materials: Annex 2 (at the end of this resource book), pencils, papers.

Hints: Facilitators can have previous conversation with participants about traditional family structures regarding gender roles (care, money provider, education, love, etc.), heterosexual “model”, and gender oriented education (games, clothes, behaviour, social injunctions for children etc.).

2 Remodelling the artwork - Instructions:

Now you can read the artwork’s description.

You will modify, delete, transform or colour some objects of Louise Bourgeois’s artwork, according to what you consider as ideal gender dynamics within a family (or an intergenerational group). In trios, with Annex 3 and materials provided, create a collage/drawing. Present your final composition to the group as an art exhibition.

Number of participants: Trios.

Activity time: 45 min.

Materials: Coloured paper, Annex 3 (at the end of this resource book), magazines, pen, scissors, glue, etc.

Hints: Invite participants to share their creation process, and their gender dynamic ideals and the compromises they might have made in their group.





Iconographic references

Author: David Salle

Title: In her hands

Date: 2019

Centre Pompidou



Background information on the artwork:

Since the 1970s, D. Salle has been part of the “Pictures Generation”, a group of American artists who make images created by artists of the past (photographs, advertisements, comics) their own by reorganizing them into collages. According to D. Salle, “to repaint them (these images) is to make a kind of history painting.”

This picture represents implicit sexual scenes and stereotypical North American depictions of men, with worker’s shoes, while women show exposed breasts and elaborate makeup. These black and white characters are mixed with brightly coloured everyday objects.

This artwork uses multiple techniques, and gives a grandiose dimension (1m88 x 2m64) to images from popular culture. As a testimony of a time and culture (USA, 1950s), it provides indications on modes of consumption, relations between women and men, professions, and daily life objects, etc. Collaged together, these elements humorously suggest a new meaning.



Description of activities

1 Make painting talk! - Instructions:

Imagine a story between the characters: Who are they? What is their relationship? What is the context? What are they saying/doing to each other? Fill in the speech bubble in Annex 4.

Number of participants: Trios.

Activity time: 15 minutes.

Materials: Paper, pen, Annex 4 (at the end of this resource book) printed, recording equipment (if needed).

Hints: If time and materials permit, invite participants in trios to record the dialogues, and then you gather them and create a listening session of all the recordings in front of the artwork.

2 Discussion in duo - Instructions:

Now you can read the artwork's description.

Based on the story you created, discuss in duos:

1. What objects in this painting do you associate with femininity and masculinity? Why?
2. What gender stereotypes do you recognize in the painting? How does your story reflect these stereotypes (or not)?
3. How do you interpret the title of this work: In Her Hands?
4. What would be your story if you reversed two characters' gender?

Number of participants: Trios.

Activity time: 45 min.

Materials: Paper, pen.

Hints: Here are some subjects that facilitators can orient their discussion to: division of household tasks, care of other(s), representation of fantasies and desire, gender dynamics in intimate relationships.





Iconographic references

Author: Alighiero e Boetti

Title: Tutto

Date: 1987

Centre Pompidou



Background information on the artwork:

Alighiero Boetti is an Italian artist member of the *arte povera* movement, which claims a social commitment and a criticism of the consumer society – particularly by a pronounced interest for the concept rather than the final aesthetic form of a work.

In 1971, Alighiero Boetti traveled to Afghanistan and discovered the ancestral traditions of the weavers – which he wanted to highlight in his art. Boetti practiced “artistic subcontracting” by commissioning a series of embroideries from Afghan women who had taken refuge in Pakistan (following the Soviet invasion). The embroideries were conceived by the Italian artist, but he gave the embroiderers free choice regarding colours, and possibly even the organization of forms on the tapestry. “I am a creator of rules. And then thanks to these rules, these games, these mechanisms, I can play or make others play”, said the artist. However, it remains complicated to know who did what in this collaboration, who are the real authors, how they were paid, and why only the name of the artist appears on the cartel.

At first glance, the composition seems abstract and chaotic. Inspired by images from the media and popular culture, the collage of forms and objects from magazines emphasizes harmony as well as diversity.



Description of activities

1 Rethink “Tutto” - Instructions:

Now you may read the artwork’s description.

Make sure that participants understand the context of creation of “Tutto”.

In duos, discuss:

1. If the artist was an Italian woman who had commissioned embroidery from “Afghan refugee” men, would that change your interpretation of the work?
2. What would you like to read in the cartel? Rewrite a cartel with title, author(s) and a short description. Suggestion: Don’t dismiss the power of parody.

Number of participants: 8 persons.

Activity time: 30 minutes.

Materials: Papers, pens.

Hints: Bring the participants to reflect on the importance of the cartel and how it can condition the reading and interpretation of a work.

2 Make your “Tutto” - Instructions:

Step 1: with magazines provided, choose images related to gender issues, then make a collage. You can cover as many gender topics as you want (inspiring figures, relation to body, sexuality...).

Step 2 (optional): using tracing paper, outline the images you selected, reproduce the contour on different coloured papers, then cut them out. Your final composition will be a collage of coloured silhouettes, like in Tutto.

Step 3: make an exhibition and present your work.

Number of participants: 8 persons.

Activity time: 60 min.

Materials: Magazines, A4 or larger papers, coloured papers, glue sticks, scissors, colour pens, printed photos of famous artworks (optional).

Hints: Facilitators can also print some art masterpieces to bring in cross-reflections of popular culture and institutional visual arts.





Iconographic references

Author: Sophie Calle
 Title: Gotham Handbook
 Date: 1994

Centre Pompidou



Background information on the artwork:

Gotham Handbook is the result of a collaboration between artist Sophie Calle and writer Paul Auster. The latter proposed to S. Calle a “User’s Manual for Embellishing Life in New York” in which he gave the artist a series of instructions to follow such as “smile no matter what”, “talk to strangers”, “adopt a place” or “distribute food and cigarettes to the homeless”. S. Calle embarks on the application of these instructions and this work is the result of her experimentation.

To carry out her project, she settles for a week in a telephone booth that she arranges with paint, postcards, flowers, a sign “Have a nice day”, etc.

The installation includes the photos of her phone booth, then texts where S. Calle documents day after day the results of her experiments in the form of photographs and audio recordings made without the public’s knowledge, as well as a logbook. She presents her positive and negative experiences, but also the way she is perceived and treated as a white woman in the public space, especially by men.



Description of activities

1 Your public space experience - Instructions:

Now, you may read the artwork description.

How does your gender/skin colour influence your experience and behaviour in public space? In duo, share a challenge/discrimination that you have experienced/witnessed: your reaction and your strategies if you have been able to “overcome” or help other people to “overcome” that.

Number of participants: 6 persons.

Activity time: 20 minutes.

Materials: Papers, pens.

Hints: As an introduction, facilitators can extract images or text fragments from Sophie Calle’s book “Gotham Handbook”.

2 Create your broadcast - Instructions:

If you could hack subway speakers, what messages would you broadcast? Write down your announcement and record it (30 seconds). You can create several ones.

It must be related to gender or race issues within the subway (or street). It can be new rules to make sure that everyone feels safe, whatever their social identity, look or behaviour. They can be humorous and wacky invitations to travellers and pedestrians to pay attention or do something.

Finally, organize a listening session.

Number of participants: 6 persons.

Activity time: 30 min.

Materials: Audio recorders, speakers, papers, pens.

Hints: Invite participants to imagine a more egalitarian and gender-sensitive public space. Contextualize this activity in your city. If you don't have subways, imagine speakers installed in the streets.





Iconographic references

Author: Shen Yuan

Title: Superfluidité (Superfluidity)

Date: 1994

Centre Pompidou



Background information on the artwork:

“When I arrived in France, I was unable to communicate with others in language, express my thoughts on my own, or defend myself”, Shen Yuan once said. The cultural and identity disruption caused by the migration experience became the starting point for Shen Yuan’s creation: she draws on the conflicts and experiences of everyday life to complete the dialogue between the multiple cultures she encounters. For her, it is also the responsibility of artists to give new value to everyday objects.

The Chinese slipper is placed in the lid of a shoebox on which is printed “Euro Club”. An ambivalent situation: the slipper does not belong in the box, but cannot come out either. This evokes a metaphor of the artist’s personal experiences: a migrant living in a “mid-ground” who moves between countries and cultures, forming multiple and complex identities, but always remaining physically but also culturally torn between them.

Nails were a symbol of women’s social status in feudal China. Women of the nobility wore long nails as a sign of their exemption from manual labor. Nails are still part of the criteria of female beauty today in many societies.



Description of activities

1 Discussion in duo - Instructions:

1. What was your first emotional and sensorial reaction to this work? Why?
2. Imagine the owner of these slippers (gender, nationality, age, lifestyle, personality, character)? Describe his/her/their portrait.

Now, you may read the artwork description.

1. Do you associate body care with a particular gender? Why and which body cares?

Number of participants: 6 persons.

Activity time: 30 minutes.

Materials: Papers, pens.

Hints: Facilitators can prepare some specific questions according to participants’ background. For example: ask participants from immigrant families about their female family members’ history, beauty standards in their culture of origin.

2 To my beloved body - Instructions:

Take a picture of a body part (or your whole body in a certain position) that you appreciate. Print it in black and white. With this image and provided materials, create a collage to express how and how much you love your body and gender.

Create an exhibition of body celebration and present your work.

Number of participants: 6 persons.

Activity time: 60 min.

Materials: Printer, magazines, coloured papers, pens, paint, scissors, glue, etc.

Hints: This activity aims to help participants feel empowered of their gender identity through body. Facilitators can ask some positive questions before taking the picture: What do you love about your body? How does your body make you feel powerful and proud of your gender?

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Annex 1 – Itinerary n°3, Female versus Male Gaze; Artwork 5 Self-portrait (Torment) by Domenico Cantatore.

How do you envision your path?

Imagine being able to see concretely the paths taken so far in your life.

- ☐ How far have you got?
- ☐ How far would you like to go?

Choose a colour for both questions and mark the point for each route.

Indipendence

Inner peace

Work/personal life balance

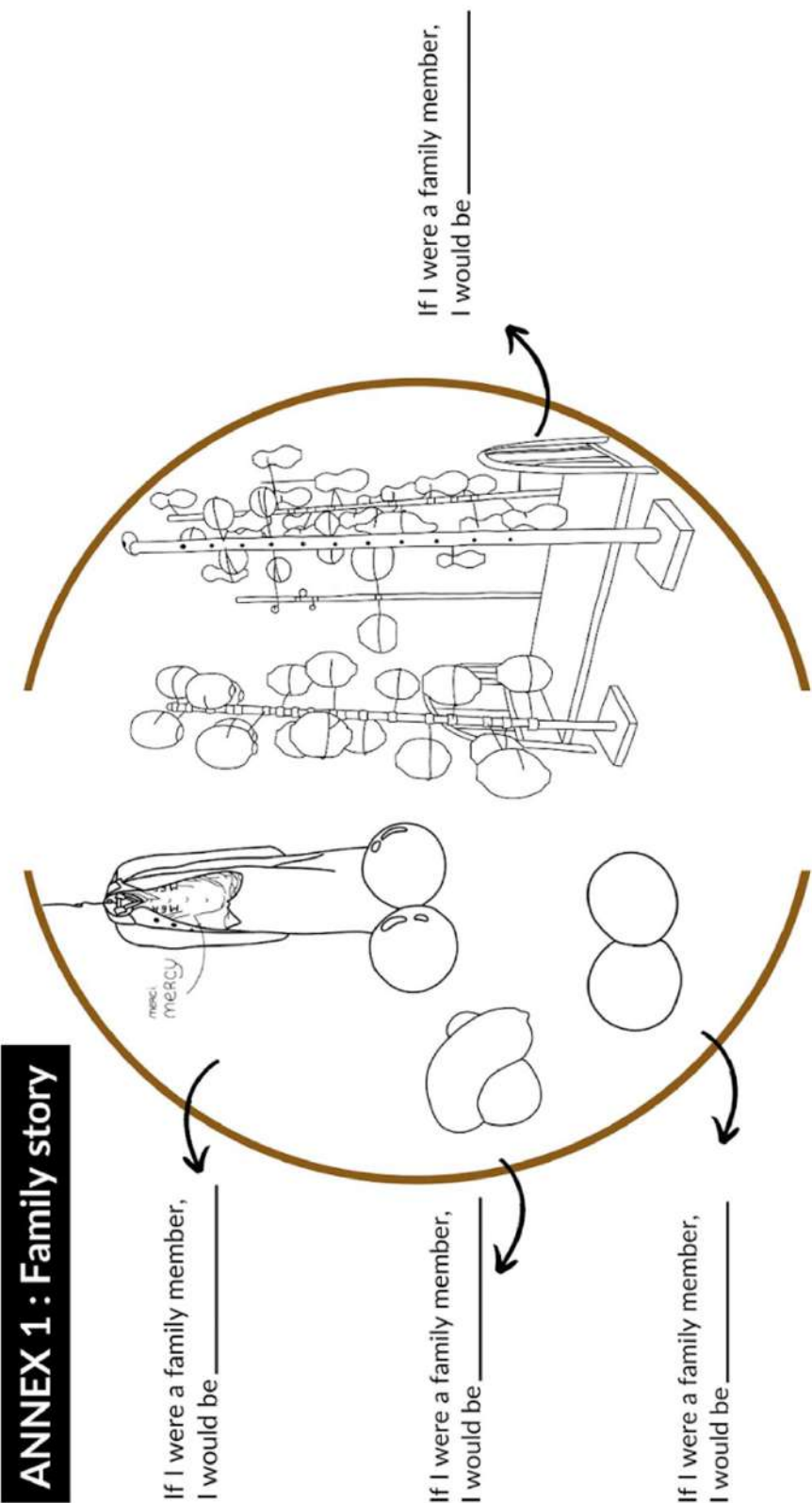
Academic/Work achievements

Family relationships

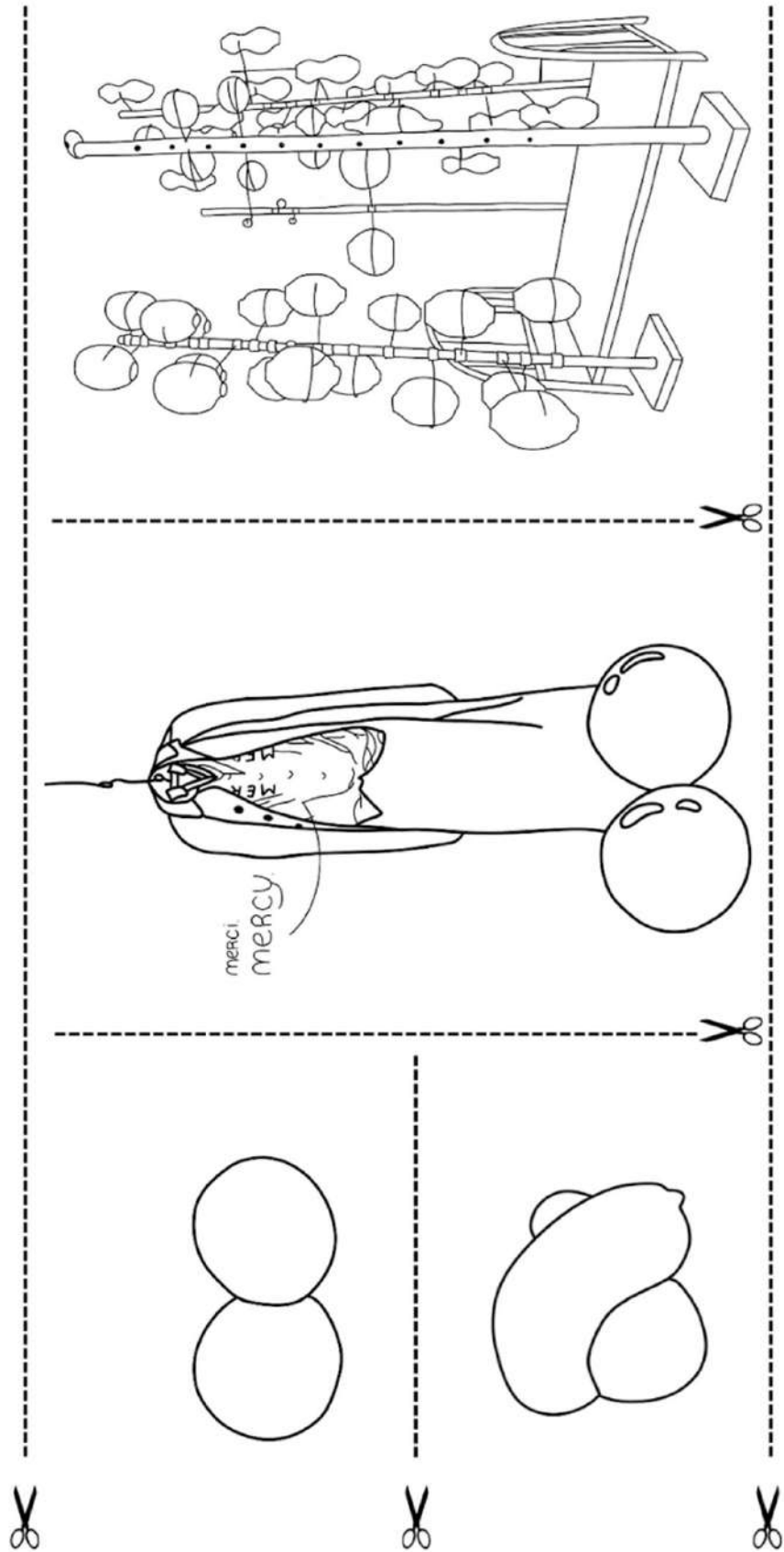
Connections with other people

Self care

Annexes 2 and 3: Itinerary n°5 Interculturality and gender, Artwork 1 Precious Liquids by Louise Bourgeois



ANNEX 2 : Remodeling the art



Annex 4: Itinerary n°5 Interculturality and gender, Artwork 2.: In her hands by David Salle



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