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**A “disaster beyond remedy”: on the intrusion of
women artists in public art museums
A case study of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen**

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Abstract

Art museums are currently undergoing transformation, expected to respond to calls for more diversity and inclusiveness within institutions. Over the past years in France there has been an increase in temporary solo and group exhibitions of women artists, raising awareness around artists either forgotten or ignored by the art historical canon. However, the lasting integration of women artists into art collections and permanent exhibitions has yet to be demonstrated. Indeed, French museum practice is only starting to include a gender perspective on collections. The case study of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen, which introduced a structured policy on gender equality within the institution in 2018, illustrates the theoretical and practical challenges, as well as possible pathways to incorporating a gender analysis of museum collections. This research discusses the way French museum practice integrates a gender perspective to its traditional universalist approach to culture; the practical steps that can be taken to include and promote women artists in collections; and the institutional approaches which might guarantee the sustainability of this process. Based on a qualitative analysis of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen’s policy and its implementation, six recommendations are proposed for adoption by French fine arts museums. They involve auditing and conducting research on the collections, introducing a structured policy on gender equality, training staff, creating educational programmes, monitoring progress, and evaluating impact.

Key words

Feminism, history of art, cultural policy

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Why read this research?

When I visited the Georgia O’Keeffe retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in December 2021, I experienced mixed feelings of joy and sadness. I felt the joy of discovering her body of work for the first time, of learning about her life, and of connecting to her and her work. But I felt sadness and disappointment too at the thought that I had lived up until then more or less completely unaware of her. The Centre Pompidou announced on its website that Georgia O’Keeffe was “one of the greatest figures of North American art in the 20th century”,¹ and yet this was her first monographic exhibition in France – over thirty years after her death in 1986.

At the time, I was already thinking about this research, namely the (quasi-)absence of women artists in art museums. This experience made me realise what exactly was at stake: the lack of visibility of women artists leads us to *miss out, individually and collectively*, on diverse bodies of work of potentially universal appeal. This sense of loss convinced me of the necessity of the work I was undertaking.

Bearing in mind the concentration of cultural institutions and activity in Paris, I wanted to look outside of the centre, just as I was looking outside of the traditional canon of art history when doing research on women artists. This led me to focus on the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen.

My approach is novel in several ways. First of all, I propose a cultural bridge between, on the one hand, American and British feminist curatorial practice and feminist literature in art history and museum studies and, on the other, a French museum practice attached to a universalist understanding of culture. Current political discourse in France around what is considered the “importation” of “woke ideology” from the United States illustrates the complexity of a conversation which, I believe, could be mutually enriching rather than polarising.

Secondly, in a context where interest for women artists is recent in French academia, and even more so in museum practice, my research contributes to a relatively limited body of literature. Over the past few years, the rise of what could be described as a fourth wave of feminism has led to an increased interest in women artists. This has translated into curatorial activity around temporary monographic or group exhibitions. But I propose to investigate the *lasting integration* of these artists in the *permanent exhibitions* of public art museums. This is an even rarer subject of academic investigation, but one I believe to be essential to ensure that current progress is not lost in the future.

This research aims at offering theoretical and practical perspectives for museum professionals and academics on the integration of gender issues in the art museum. On the basis of the case study of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen, I will show the challenges and possible pathways to exhibiting women artists in permanent exhibitions in a lasting way.

¹‘Georgia O’Keeffe’, Centre Pompidou, accessed 20 April 2022, <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/program/calendar/event/60bdJRm>.

Introduction

Referring to Marie Bashkirtseff,² French 19th century Symbolist painter Gustave Moreau described women's "intrusion" in art as a "disaster beyond remedy". He wrote that,

« L'intrusion sérieuse de la femme dans l'art serait un désastre sans remède. Que deviendra-t-on quand des êtres [...] aussi dépourvus du véritable don imaginaire viendront apporter leur horrible jugeote artistique avec prétentions justifiées à l'appui ? »³

Unfortunately for him, women have not only intruded into the art world, they now represent 68% of students in art schools in France,⁴ the majority of students in the sector of cultural heritage,⁵ and 60% of curators.⁶ Since the landmark exhibition of exclusively women artists, *elles@centrepompidou*, at the Centre Pompidou between 2009 and 2011, with exclusively women artists, there has also been an increase in the number of temporary exhibitions dedicated to women artists in France. In the past two years alone, the Musée du Luxembourg presented *Women Painters 1780-1830*, *The Birth of a Battle* (2021) and *Pioneers, Artists in the Paris of the Roaring Twenties* (2022); the Musée d'Orsay dedicated a retrospective to Berthe Morisot in 2019 and is preparing one on Rosa Bonheur in 2022; the Centre Pompidou organised the group show *Women in Abstraction* (2021), and the Georgia O'Keeffe retrospective (2022); and the Musée Thomas Henry in Cherbourg (Normandy) presented the group exhibition *Ni Muses Ni Soumises* (2022).⁷ This list is far from exhaustive, but shows that the "disaster" that Gustave Moreau described has undeniably occurred. They have not only intruded into the art world, but into art museums.

Yet perhaps he would find some consolation in the fact that the space given to women artists in art museums is still (very) limited. Despite the ambitious scope of *elles@centrepompidou*, in the rehang of the permanent collection in 2012, "just 10% of the works on view were by women – exactly the same as it was pre-*Elles*."⁸ The 2018 report on gender inequality in the cultural field of the *Haut conseil à l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes* (High Council for Gender Equality) showed that these exceptional (or token?) exhibitions remain marginal. Indeed, between 2012 and 2016, in thirteen of the most important

² Marie Bashkirtseff (1859 – 1884) was a Russian painter who studied at the famous Julian Academy in Paris. In her diary, which was published posthumously, she famously complained about the restrictions which hindered women from freely expressing their artistic creativity. See Catherine Gonnard and Elisabeth Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes: Paris, de 1880 à Nos Jours* (Paris: Hazan, 2007).

³ Gustave Moreau, *L'Assembleur de rêves, écrits complets* (Frontfroide, Bibliothèque artistique et littéraire, Fata Morgana, 1984) in Catherine Gonnard and Elisabeth Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes: Paris, de 1880 à Nos Jours* (Paris: Hazan, 2007), 12.

⁴ 'Observatoire de l'égalité Entre Femmes et Hommes Dans La Culture et La Communication' (Ministère de la Culture - DEPS, 2022), 53.

⁵ Bernadette Dufrêne, 'La Place Des Femmes Dans Le Patrimoine', *Revue Française Des Sciences de l'information et de La Communication*, no. 4 (15 January 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4000/rfsic.977>.

⁶ Danielle Bousquet, 'Inégalités Entre Les Femmes et Les Hommes Dans Les Arts et La Culture. Acte II : Après 10 Ans de Constats, Le Temps de l'action' (Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes, 2018), 90.

⁷ The title is in reference to the French feminist movement founded in 2002 called "Ni Putes Ni Soumises", which roughly translates as "Neither Whores Nor Submissives".

⁸ Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 88.

art museums, less than 15% of solo exhibitions were dedicated to a woman artist.⁹ Furthermore, in fine arts collections, there underrepresentation might be considered staggering. At the Louvre for instance, works by women artists constitute a mere 0,78% of the entire collection.¹⁰

Although, for historical reasons, there has been a lower proportion of women artists compared with men artists, this only partially accounts for their underrepresentation in fine arts museums. Research has shown there were *far more* women artists in the past than is generally accepted, but they were marginalised over the centuries and to this day.

Women artists have existed, have been present in many fields of the art world, and yet remain underrepresented in collections and permanent exhibitions. If temporary exhibitions raise the visibility of the artists at a given time, what is the lasting impact on their recognition? How do they influence everyday museum practice? As art historian Fabienne Dumont also puts it: “Apart from events reserved for women, how many artists are present in major exhibitions, win prizes, are bought by institutions and collectors, are included in the histories of art?”¹¹ These considerations are encompassed in my research question: **how to exhibit women artists in the permanent exhibitions of fine art museums in France?** This contains three sub-questions:

1. How to think about it? Within which theoretical and institutional framework do museum practitioners work when considering the place of women artists in their collections?

I shall discuss the progressive and sometimes difficult integration of societal issues within museum practice. Thinking about gender in museums is an aspect of the transformation museums are currently undergoing. However, the process of exhibiting women artists is necessarily *driven* by a structured policy or by a specific curatorial project.

2. How to get there? What are the practical issues around exhibiting women artists in permanent exhibitions?

A pre-requisite to exhibiting women artists is knowing about them: the first step is learning about the women artists in the collections. A more acute understanding of the collections can inform a pro-active acquisition policy and restoration plan. But it is not just a question of the *presence* of women artists on museum walls, it is also a question of their *visibility*: cultural mediation is a key aspect of increasing their visibility in permanent exhibitions.

3. How to stay there? How does one ensure that women artists not only get onto museum walls, but stay there?

The sustainability of this process can be ensured through mainstreaming a gender analysis within museum practice, transforming individual initiative into institutional policy, and communicating about it with visitors.

⁹Bousquet, ‘Acte II : Après 10 Ans de Constats, Le Temps de l’action’, 90.

¹⁰Bousquet, 90.

¹¹Fabienne Dumont, *Des Sorcières Comme Les Autres: Artistes et Féministes Dans La France Des Années 1970*, Archives Du Féminisme (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 9.

The paper will contextualise the topic through an international literature review drawing on art history, museum studies, and museum practice; present the case study of the Fine Arts Museums of Rouen and the methodology used; present my analysis and findings; and present my six recommendations for fine arts museums, involving auditing and conducting research on the collections, introducing a structured policy on gender equality, training staff, creating educational programmes, monitoring progress, and evaluating impact.

Interdisciplinary literature review

A feminist reassessment of women artists' contribution to and place in the art historical canon

Since the early 1970s, concomitant to the Women's Liberation Movement, feminist art history in the United States and the United Kingdom has drawn attention to the marginalisation of women artists from the dominant story of art presented in art museums and in academia, leading to a reassessment of their contribution to and place in the art historical canon.¹² Art historian and curator Linda Nochlin pioneered this movement with her landmark essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists" (1971), in which she challenged the concept of "artistic genius" and reflected on the historical and sociological context which led to the marginalisation of women artists. Feminist scholars re-evaluated the museum space, challenging the notion of a "neutral institution" with a role of "guardian of the great and good", and presenting museums "as both ideological and gendered in their construction and operation."¹³ Museums appear as places that reflect and construct gendered norms, as places of a ritualised "male transcendence", to use art historian Carol Duncan's term.¹⁴

The art historical canon itself appeared as flawed, deformed by centuries of prejudice against women and perpetuating the implicit hierarchies between women's and men's art. In *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (1981), Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock demonstrated the social and historical construction of a canon which excluded women artists, analysing the discourses and stereotypes which surround art by women and presenting types of artistic expressions traditionally associated with women which were marginalised.¹⁵

Feminist art history has also had symbiotic relationship with feminist curatorial practice. Katy Deepwell highlights the landmark exhibitions *Women Artists, 1550-1950* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1976, curated by Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris; and *Künstlerinnen International, 1877-1977: Frauen in der Kunst*, presented in 1977 at the Schloss Charlottenburg in Berlin. These two survey exhibitions aimed at "insert[ing] women artists into the standard narrative of art history and correct the bias which has contributed to their neglect,"¹⁶ focusing on biographical aspects which illustrated the obstacles these women faced.¹⁷ In 1996, Catherine de Zegher adopted a different strategy with the survey exhibition *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth Century Art In, Of, and From the Feminine*. It toured in Belgium, the USA, England, and Australia, and presented well-

¹² Katy Deepwell, 'Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s', in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2005).

¹³ Deepwell, 67.

¹⁴ Carol Duncan, *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹⁵ The authors mention for instance patchwork and embroidery in the chapters 'Crafty women and the hierarchy of the arts' and 'God's little artist', pp. 50-113.

¹⁶ Deepwell, 'Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s', 69.

¹⁷ The obstacles ones these exhibitions highlighted were the lack of access to formal academic education (in the 18th and 19th century), poverty, family commitments or attitudes, direct and indirect form of discrimination and personal tragedies.

established and lesser-known 20th century women artists from North and South America, Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East and Asia,¹⁸ in order to break the “dominant Euro-American agenda in feminist art history.”¹⁹ Rather than seeking to add to or correct the canon, she aimed at “identify[ing] and articulat[ing] a body of practice that [didn’t] ‘fit’ past histories and current debates,”²⁰ and negotiated the tension between using the ‘femininity’ of the artists as a mark of difference, whilst acknowledging each artists’ individuality.

Furthermore, feminist art history and ‘traditional’ curatorial practice together entertained a symbiotic relationship with feminist projects which created, in the 1970s and 1980s, new spaces of expression for women artists. Charlotte Foucher-Zarmanian highlights, for instance, the Feminist Art Program founded in 1971 at the California Institute of the Arts, or the Women’s Building in Los Angeles which opened in 1973. Several groups were formed in the United States at the same time, such as the Los Angeles Council of Women artists, the WAR (Women Artists in Revolution) or the WCA (Women’s Caucus of Art), and the Guerrilla Girls, who launched their first campaign to denounce the unequal proportion of women and men artists in museums in 1985. In England, the group WHAM (Women, Heritage and Museums) was formed in 1984.²¹ During the 1980s, ‘women’s museums’ dedicated exclusively to women artists started developing around the world, creating spaces to promote their art and integrate them into historical narrative. The National Museum of Women, which opened in Washington, D.C. in 1981, was amongst the first of these. These new structures came together within the International Association of Women’s Museums.²²

Gender and museology perspectives were brought together during the 1990s through a reassessment of women’s place and representations within the museum. Jane Glaser and Artemis Zenetou’s book *Gender Perspectives. Essays on Women in Museums* (1994) was a first attempt to analyse women’s important contribution to the history of museums and their concomitant marginalisation.²³ Since then, gendered readings of collections and exhibitions, have been developed, for instance with Gaby Porter’s class and gender analysis of representations of work and domesticity in British history museums;²⁴ Irit Rogoff’s analysis of the political construction of cultural and sexual identity through the study of exhibits at the City Museum of Osnabrück;²⁵ or Rebecca Machin’s study of gender representations at the Natural History Museum of Manchester, which revealed an androcentric bias in the displays.²⁶

¹⁸ Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 58.

¹⁹ Deepwell, ‘Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s’, 73.

²⁰ Deepwell, 73.

²¹ Charlotte Foucher-Zarmanian and Arnaud Bertinet, ‘Introduction’, *Culture & Musées*, no. 30 (1 December 2017): 17, <https://doi.org/10.4000/culturemusees.1166>.

²² Julie Botte, ‘Les musées de femmes : De nouvelles propositions autour du genre et du rôle social du musée’, *Culture & Musées. Muséologie et recherches sur la culture*, no. 30 (1 December 2017): 51–71, <https://doi.org/10.4000/culturemusees.1181>; Julie Botte, ‘The National Museum of Women in the Arts and the Museum of Women: Preserving Women’s Heritage and Empowering Women’, *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2 January 2020): 18–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2020.1743017>.

²³ Foucher-Zarmanian and Bertinet, ‘Introduction’.

²⁴ Gaby Porter, ‘How Are Women Represented in British History Museums?’, *Museum International* 43, no. 3 (September 1991): 159–62, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0033.1991.tb00982.x>.

²⁵ Irit Rogoff, ‘From Ruins to Debris : The Feminization of Fascism in German-History Museums’, in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. Daniel J Sherman and Irit Rogoff (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1994), 223–49.

²⁶ Rebecca Machin, ‘Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at the Manchester Museum’, *Museum and Society* 6, no. 1 (2008): 54–67.

Since 2008, a historiographical and methodological shift has occurred in the way gender and museums are articulated. *Queer* perspectives, which are increasingly included seek to move beyond heteronormative readings of museums and collections.²⁷ This is exemplified, for instance, in the anthology *Gender, Sexuality and Museums* (2010).²⁸

For historiographical surveys on the development of feminist curatorial practice and feminist art history, one can refer to Katy Deepwell's essay 'Feminist curatorial strategies and practices since the 1970s' (2005),²⁹ Charlotte Foucher-Zarmanian and Arnaud Bertinet's introduction to the issue of *Culture et Musées*, 'Musées au prisme du genre' (2017),³⁰ and Charlotte Foucher-Zarmanian's article 'Musées et genre: état des lieux d'une recherche' (2016).³¹ Anna Conlan and Amy Levin offer an extensive bibliographical essay with 'Museum Studies Texts and Museum Subtexts', giving an overview of academic readers and textbooks including a gender perspective.³²

Introducing gender as a tool of analysis in museum practice and academia in France

French art museum practice and art history stayed relatively indifferent to the issue of gender for a long time.³³ It is rather telling that Linda Nochlin's essays remained untranslated into French until 1993.³⁴ But feminist initiatives, although marginal, did emerge in the 1970s. For instance, Catherine Gonnard and Elisabeth Lebovici mention in *Femmes artistes/Artistes Femmes. Paris de 1880 à nos jours* (2007) Aline Dallier, who was the first to produce feminist art criticism in the 1970s. She went on to create with Madeleine Reberieux the first course on art history and women at the University Paris VIII-Vincennes.³⁵ In *Des sorcières comme les autres. Artistes et féministes dans la France des années 1970* (2014), Fabienne Dumont identifies certain groups of women artists active at the time, such as *La Spirale*, *Féminie-Dialogue*, *Femmes en lutte*, or *Collectif Femmes/Art*, but the scale of activity of these groups is incomparable with similar groups in the United States.³⁶ Despite these considerations, feminist literature on visual arts from those decades is scant.³⁷

Foucher-Zarmanian and Bertinet point towards a certain interest in gender from art museums in the 1990s. They mention exhibitions presenting gendered readings of art such as *Féminin-masculin, le sexe de l'art* at the Centre Pompidou in 1995, or *Vraiment : féminisme et art* at the Magasin de Grenoble in 1997. The watershed moment, however, did not come until the 2009 rehang of the Centre Pompidou *elles@centrepompidou*. Finally, an exhibition in

²⁷ Foucher-Zarmanian and Bertinet, 'Introduction'.

²⁸ Amy K. Levin, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums: A Routledge Reader* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010).

²⁹ Deepwell, 'Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s'.

³⁰ Foucher-Zarmanian and Bertinet, 'Introduction'.

³¹ Charlotte Foucher Zarmanian, 'Musées et Genre : État Des Lieux d'une Recherche', *Muséologies* 8, no. 2 (2016): 107–19, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050763ar>.

³² Amy K. Levin and Anna Conlan, 'Museum Studies Texts and Museum Subtexts', in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums : A Routledge Reader*, by Amy K. Levin (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 299–309.

³³ The difficulties of thinking gender within French art museums will be further discussed in part 1.

³⁴ Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes*, 326.

³⁵ Gonnard and Lebovici, 326.

³⁶ Fabienne Dumont, *Des Sorcières Comme Les Autres: Artistes et Féministes Dans La France Des Années 1970*, Archives Du Féminisme (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 81–142.

³⁷ Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes*, 326.

France, unparalleled in size and scope, explicitly introduced the topic of women artists within art museums. Subsequent curatorial activity in French art museums testifies to an increased interest in women artists.

The experience of curating *elles@centrepompidou* also spurred Camille Morineau to co-found the association ‘Archives of Women Artists, Research & Exhibitions’ (AWARE) in 2014. This association has come to play a structural role in the French cultural field, contributing to raising awareness around women artists, organising talks and round tables, awarding a yearly prize to a woman artist, and offering their expertise to institutions such as the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen.

More broadly, the French cultural field has been confronted with the necessity of tackling gender inequality since Reine Prat’s report of 2006, which had the effect of a “bombshell”³⁸ within the field. It revealed the extent of gender inequalities within many cultural fields, and especially in the field of the performing arts. Since then, gender equality in the cultural field has been institutionally monitored by the Ministry of Culture and the High Council for Gender Equality. The report also spurred the creation of the association HF, which contributes to raising awareness about women artists.

There thus appears to be a progressive structuring of actors involved in the promotion of women artists in the fine arts, and over the past few years, the question of women artists in art museums has slowly started to gain some traction. The place of women artists in fine arts collections remains, however, little explored by academic research. The work of Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes artistes/Artistes Femmes* (2007), and Fabienne Dumont, *Des Sorcières comme des autres* (2014), as well as Charlotte Fouger-Zarmanian’s historiographical articles are notably remedy this state of affairs. This research readily acknowledges their influence.

Practical experiences in gendering collections

In 2020, in the wake of the #MeToo movement and the resurgence of what can be described as a fourth wave of feminism,³⁹ *Museum International* published an issue entitled ‘Museums and Gender’. The issue gives an overview of diverse topics and projects put in place all over the world in four sections: Gender Equality, Museum advocacy and Activism, Museum Theory and Tools, and Gender Representation. Without aiming for exhaustivity, I shall highlight five projects or actions involving gendered readings of collections. They do not necessarily focus primarily on women artists, but their methods or outcomes echo my findings based on the case study of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen.

First of all, Darlene Clover and Kathy Sanford present the *Feminist Museum Hack*, a workshop conducted in any art museum which offers a re-reading of the exhibition from a feminist perspective. The authors propose a method to “make museums critical spaces of feminist teaching and learning where [one] can challenge epistemic gender injustice and

³⁸ Reine Prat, *Exploser Le Plafond: Précis de Féminisme à l’usage Du Monde de La Culture*, Les Incisives (Paris: Rue de l’Échiquier, 2021), 8.

³⁹ Ashley E. Remer, ‘Editorial’, *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2 January 2020): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2020.1806586>.

practise capacities of resistant imagination.”⁴⁰ Within the framework of feminist adult education, the workshop aims at deconstructing “the ‘seen’ in order to unearth the power of the ‘unseen’”.⁴¹ This is achieved through scrutinising the language used in the museum, the discourse presented in the labels and information notices, counting the women and women artists represented in the exhibition, etc., and intervening directly in the museum space using Post-it notes to bring to the fore the ‘unseen’ stereotypes and discrimination the museums present.

Secondly, Liliane Inés Cuesta Davignon presents two projects conducted at the National Museum of Ceramics and Decorative Arts González Martí in Valencia (Spain), namely the thematic tour ‘A Question of Gender’ and the virtual tour ‘Rereadings. Museum Itineraries from a Gender Perspective’. These initiatives aim at educating school and adult audiences on gender-related issues, and highlight the subversive potential of a gender perspective, transforming audiences’ understanding of the collections.⁴²

Thirdly, Mona Holm and Thea Aarbakke describe the project ‘There She Goes Again’, developed by the Women’s Museum of Norway. It aims at developing a methodology to achieve greater gender equality within collections and exhibitions, and developing projects on women’s history. This involved an initial survey in Norwegian museums, and the development, testing, and implementation of methods to ensure gender equality in museum practices. The project highlighted the necessity of staff awareness around gender equality to effectively implement change, the importance of active support from museum management for the process, and the importance of strategic work at national and regional levels.⁴³ This illustrates the usefulness of structured policy and methodology, and the findings echo the case study at the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen.

Fourthly, authors present the project of gendering objects (in this case, hats) at the V&A and Vasa Museum. The aim of the project was threefold: making visible the gendered aspects of the object; recovering its gendered impact and significance; and providing means of diversifying gendered representations within the museum. The materiality, production, use, design and interpretation of these objects were all taken into consideration. This project illustrates all the potential of a gendered reading of collections, even on the basis of seemingly innocuous objects.⁴⁴

Fifthly, Elke Krasny and Lara Perry write about Sonia Boyce’s intervention at the Manchester Art Gallery in 2018. The *Manchester Museum Takeover* involved the temporary removal of the 1896 painting *Hylas and the Nymphs* by John William Waterhouse, which

⁴⁰ Darlene E. Clover and Kathy Sanford, ‘Educating Epistemic Justice and Resistance Through the *Feminist Museum Hack*: Looking and Acting with Another Eye’, *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2 January 2020): 59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2020.1743057>.

⁴¹ Clover and Sanford, 60.

⁴² Liliane Inés Cuesta Davignon, ‘Gender Perspective and Museums: Gender as a Tool in the Interpretation of Collections’, *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2 January 2020): 80–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2020.1743059>.

⁴³ Mona Holm and Thea Aarbakke, ‘There She Goes Again: A Project on Gender Representation in Norwegian Museums’ Collections and Exhibition Practices’, *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2 January 2020): 92–103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2020.1743060>.

⁴⁴ James Daybell et al., ‘Gendering Objects at the V&A and Vasa Museums’, *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2 January 2020): 106–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2020.1779465>.

facilitated a discussion around museum space, and representations of gender and sexuality.⁴⁵ I would argue that the absence that this removal created can create in its turn a thought-provoking parallel with the (permanent) absence of women artists from museum walls.

Seeking new equilibria: feminist curatorial strategies

Feminist art history, feminist curatorial activity, and feminist groups and programs have all contributed to asserting the existence and importance of women artists throughout history. Parker and Pollock wrote in 1981 that, “It is no longer necessary to assert that there have been women artists. The evidence is overwhelming.”⁴⁶ Yet artists, art historians and museum practitioners have adopted varying strategies in introducing and including these women artists in museums, negotiating the tensions between particularism and inclusion inherent to such a process.

Deepwell identifies three categories of feminist curatorial practice:⁴⁷

- **Historical survey shows**, which enable women artists to gain visibility and become established within the canon. This approach was adopted for instance by Nochlin and Sutherland Harris with *Women Artists 1550-1950*, or by the curators of *Künstlerinnen International 1877- 1977*, with a strong focus on the biographies of the women artists;
- **Social and historical analysis**, which, through the contextualisation of women’s cultural production, challenges the canon and critiques the institutional spaces that endorse it. This is the discourse that Parker and Pollock present in *Old Mistresses* (1981).
- **Critique of the essentialist concept of femininity**, the inherent tensions of which Catherine de Zegher negotiated, for instance, in *Inside the Visible*.

Maura Reilly offers another classification in *Curatorial Activism* (2018) based on the theoretical underpinnings of each “strategy of resistance”:⁴⁸

- **Revisionism**: this strategy seeks out women artists of the past, those that “the canon conceals and suppresses”,⁴⁹ and adds them to the said canon. This was, for instance, the strategy of *Elles font l’abstraction*, presented at the Centre Pompidou in 2021. Although this strategy has achieved the inclusion of women artists, it does not explicitly challenge the “white, masculinist, Western canon as its center and accepts its hierarchy as a natural given”.⁵⁰
- **Area studies**: this strategy seeks to overcome the limits of revisionism by “produc[ing] new canons and supplement[ing] the traditional discourse by focusing on work that is

⁴⁵ Elke Krasny and Lara Perry, ‘Unsettling Gender, Sexuality, and Race: “Crossing” the Collecting, Classifying, and Spectacularising Mechanisms of the Museum’, *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2 January 2020): 130–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2020.1806595>.

⁴⁶ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology*, 1st American ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xvii.

⁴⁷ Deepwell, ‘Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s’, 64.

⁴⁸ Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 23–33.

⁴⁹ Reilly, 23.

⁵⁰ Reilly, 24.

based on either racial, geographical, gendered, or sexual orientation.”⁵¹ This approach encourages exhibitions spotlighting certain types of artists. Reilly argues that they act as “curatorial correctives” and are a necessary step for marginalised artists to gain visibility. But specialist exhibitions are not always looked upon favourably in the art world itself, since they run the risk of “ghettoising” the artists.

- **Relational studies:** this strategy creates “exhibitions-as-polylogue”.⁵² The goal is to move away from canons and to understand history as multivocal, creating thematic, ahistorical, transnational exhibitions such as Jean-Hubert Martin’s *Magiciens de la terre* (1989), which offered an international platform to many non-Western contemporary artists.

On a practical level, Wera Grahn proposes a method to evaluate the degree of integration of gender in exhibitions, based on recommendations established by the Swedish Research Council. This model establishes seven categories, which determine if and how gender is integrated in exhibitions, from a first category where gender permeates the whole exhibition and theories and methods of gender studies are clearly articulated by museum professionals, to a last category defined as ‘gender blindness’ where the dominant group is clearly privileged and there is no sign of gender awareness. The author suggests this model can be used as a checklist during the planning of an exhibition, as a tool of evaluation at the end of a production of an exhibition, and as a tool to assess and amend finalised exhibitions.⁵³

Deepwell and Reilly’s frameworks highlight the tension between seeking to include women artists in the canon and challenging the canon itself, seeking a balance between emphasising the particularities of women artists while conveying a sense of their contribution to culture as a whole.⁵⁴ Grahn’s model offers practical guidelines to include gender, not as a ‘topic’ to be addressed, but as integral to the whole project.

⁵¹ Reilly, 25.

⁵² Reilly, 29.

⁵³ Wera Grahn, ‘The Politics of Heritage: How to Achieve Change’, in *Gender and Heritage: Performance, Place and Politics*, ed. Wera Grahn and Ross J. Wilson, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2018), 260, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315460093>.

⁵⁴ Deepwell, ‘Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s’, 64.

Methodology

Quantitative analysis such as counting the number of women within art museums either as professionals, artists, or subjects of paintings or sculptures, has revealed many inequalities and has spurred action. For example, it was the glaring lack of women artists in the 1984 MoMA exhibition *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*⁵⁵ that spurred the formation of the activist group Guerrilla Girls,⁵⁶ and their subsequent actions focused on tallies of women artists in museums and exhibitions. Statistics highlighted by other groups such as Gallery Tally or Pussy Galore further demonstrate gender inequality within the art world.⁵⁷

In recent years, this quantitative approach has been institutionalised in France. The Reine Prat reports of 2006 and 2009⁵⁸ revealed with force the extent of gender inequality within the cultural field. They acted as a “bombshell”⁵⁹ and led to the creation of the HF Movement, a network of associations striving for gender equality in culture and raising awareness about women artists.

Since then, regular reports assess progress or lack thereof, with detailed statistics on gender inequality by sector and professional body, and offer policy recommendations for the cultural field. The High Council for Gender Equality, created in 2013, published a report on gender inequality in the arts and culture in 2018,⁶⁰ and since 2013, the Ministry of Culture has published yearly reports on gender equality in culture and communication.

The statistical approach is a gateway to understanding gender inequality within museums: it can help raise awareness and spur action (as the aforementioned reports demonstrate), but it also raises the question of what to do with these statistics. If figures speak for themselves, they do not *act* by themselves. As the title of the High Council’s report reads: “Act II: after 10 years of observations, time for action”. It is for this reason that I decided to adopt a qualitative approach in my research, moving beyond the initial quantitative data and focusing specifically on the *Musée des Beaux-arts de Rouen* (subsequently referred to as the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen), to investigate *how* their policy for gender equality was created, and is perceived and implemented.

Why the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen?

The Fine Arts Museum of Rouen was created in 1801 following the Chaptal Decree which established provincial art museums in France after the French Revolution. Since the 19th century, the collection has grown from an initial catalogue of 244 paintings to a rich collection of 3,443 paintings, sculptures, drawings, and objects ranging from the 15th century to the present

⁵⁵ Only 13 of the 169 featured artists were women.

⁵⁶Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 217.

⁵⁷Reilly, 19.

⁵⁸Reine Prat, ‘Pour l’égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux postes de responsabilité, aux lieux de décision, à la maîtrise de la représentation’ (Mission EgalitéS, 2006); Reine Prat, ‘De l’interdit à l’empêchement’ (Mission pour l’égalité h/f, May 2009).

⁵⁹ Prat, *Exploser Le Plafond*, 8.

⁶⁰Danielle Bousquet, ‘Inégalités Entre Les Femmes et Les Hommes Dans Les Arts et La Culture. Acte II : Après 10 Ans de Constats, Le Temps de l’action’ (Haut Conseil à l’Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes, 2018).

day.⁶¹ Most notably, François Depeaux's 1909 donation made the museum the home to France's biggest Impressionist collection outside Paris.⁶² In 2019, it was the fourth most visited museum in Normandy with 282,918 visitors.⁶³

In 2016, eight museums in the Rouen metropolitan area, including the Fine Arts Museum, came together in a single umbrella institution, the *Réunion des musées métropolitains Rouen-Normandie* (subsequently referred to as the RMM), bringing together diverse collections ranging from fine arts, natural history, ceramics, and science and technology. In 2021 three more museums linked to the literary history of the region, joined, bringing the total number of museums of the RMM to eleven.

The founding of the RMM was a transformative process for the museums concerned: it was an opportunity for them to rethink their internal organisation and their relationship to their public and the community in general. In a spirit of public service the RMM introduced free entrance to its museums, wanting to open them to the whole community, and attract new audiences.⁶⁴

As part of this process, the RMM also launched a proactive policy regarding gender equality. It was kickstarted in 2018 with the commissioning of an audit conducted by an external consultant specialised in gender equality in three museums of the RMM, namely the industrial museum of the Corderie Vallois, the science museum La Fabrique des Savoirs, and the Fine Arts Museum. It then set up cross-sectional working groups, bringing together on a voluntary basis museum staff from all departments and all three museums to write the Charter for Gender Equality in Museum Practices.⁶⁵ This charter was adopted by all museums of the RMM the same year. It consists of twenty clauses in four categories:

- promoting the values of gender equality;
- ensuring equal treatment of women and men and their access to the RMM's cultural programming;
- presenting a mixed history and tackling gender stereotypes;
- adapting work methods and practices.

The clauses address internal museum practices, from curating to HR issues, as well as external relations with institutional or private partners. This policy was publicly launched in October 2018 during the third 'Argument de Rouen'⁶⁶ entitled 'Gender equality: where do museums stand?'.⁶⁷ The implementation of this charter in the Fine Arts Museum will be discussed further below.

The Fine Arts Museum of Rouen thus distinguishes itself amongst public art museums by its structured, cross-sectional policy on gender equality, and it is not only the first but also the only art museum to have done so with a charter. I chose to study this museum for two

⁶¹Joconde database.

Permalink available here : <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/gallery/6249b61c11946a0e43b6ed60>

⁶² See the museum website : <https://mbarouen.fr/en/the-museum-4>

⁶³Data available at <https://data.culture.gouv.fr/explore/dataset/frequentation-des-musees-de-france/information/>

⁶⁴Dossier de Presse - Lancement de La Réunion Des Musées Métropolitains', 2016. ; interviews.

⁶⁵ Charte pour l'égalité femmes-hommes dans les pratiques muséales ; see appendix 2.

⁶⁶ The 'Argument de Rouen' is an annual conference organised by the RMM which tackles current social topics relevant to museums and museum practice.

⁶⁷Available on YouTube. RMM Rouen, *L'Argument de Rouen #3: Égalité Femmes-Hommes: Où En Sont Les Musées? | Ouverture*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaDmDE6hv8o>.

reasons: firstly, because it is notable among public art museums in having a structured, cross-sectional policy on gender equality, and secondly, because this policy is, as I shall show, easily replicable and can be used as a model for other art museums. Furthermore, since the launch of the policy in 2018 sufficient time has passed to review the implementation of the policy, while still being short enough for events to be fresh in the minds of museum staff. However, one should bear in mind the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic during this period, as repeated changes in health measures between March 2020 and March 2022 disrupted the normal functioning of cultural institutions. Nonetheless, we can still reasonably ask, four years on, how far the museum has gone and what work is left to be done.

Gender equality in Rouen and Normandy

There is a network of actors involved in promoting gender equality in the region. Institutionally, the RMM had the support of the *Direction régionale aux droits des femmes et à l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes* (the regional state body in charge of gender equality) in the creation of the policy. The RMM's policy is also supported by the Rouen metropole's action plan for gender equality, covering the period 2021-2026, since a clause of the section "arts and culture" makes reference to the RMM's charter.⁶⁸ The RMM's policy is thus seemingly in line with the region's and the metropole's institutional approaches towards gender equality.

The association HF Normandie (part of the HF Movement) is also particularly active, raising awareness around gender inequality in the cultural field, through meetings, trainings, and the organisation of the 'Journées du Matrimoine' in Normandy.⁶⁹ It published its first report on gender equality in the arts and culture in the Rouen metropole in April 2022, focusing both on inequalities in the workplace within cultural institutions and inequalities in cultural programmes, in the fields of theatre, music and the visual arts.⁷⁰ In France, the HF Movement has become a structuring association, working closely with public institutions while maintaining a militant approach in tackling gender inequality in culture.

Data collection

The approach of this research is resolutely qualitative. Indeed, quantitative data regarding the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen already exists, produced in the audit of the collections conducted by the consultant in 2018. Further quantitative data, especially regarding the number of women artists in the collection, does not need collecting. Such statistical analysis, although helpful to reveal inequalities and monitor progress or lack thereof, is not an end in itself. That is not to say, however, that quantitative data in other areas, such as studies of museum visitors, or of the impact of actions on visitors and on museum staff through surveys, would be without interest for the museum or academic study.

⁶⁸ Métropole Rouen Normandie, 'Plan d'actions de La Métropole Rouen Normandie Pour l'égalité Entre Les Femmes et Les Hommes 2021-2026', 2021.

⁶⁹ Modelled on the European Heritage Days, the 'Journées du Matrimoine' aim at promoting the cultural heritage of and about women. 'Matrimoine' is the feminine form of the term 'patrimoine', which translates as 'heritage'.

⁷⁰ 'L'égalité Femmes-Hommes Dans Les Arts et La Culture Sur Le Territoire de La Métropole Rouennaise' (HF Normandie, 2022).

The research was based on reference to several types of documents, on the one hand, and a series of semi-structured interviews, on the other. The documents included the audit of the collections, the roadmap (an internal document which explains the concrete implementation of the charter within their museum practice),⁷¹ and the documents readily available to the public, namely the charter itself, the teaching material for schools entitled ‘Détricoter les stéréotypes femmes-hommes dans les collections des musées Normands’ (Unknitting Gender Stereotypes with the collections of Norman museums), the recordings of the conference of the ‘Argument de Rouen’ on gender equality, and information notices in the museum, in particular the biographical notices on the women artists in the permanent exhibition.

I conducted semi-structured interviews between February and April 2022. Three interviews were conducted with museum staff, namely the director, the administrator, and the head of cultural mediation. They aimed at understanding the creation and implementation of the museum’s policy on gender equality, as well as understanding the key players and stakeholders in this process.

Two interviews were conducted with teachers: one teacher on secondment to the museum, in charge of museums and heritage at the *Délégation académique à l’action Culturelle* (DAAC) of Normandy (linked to the education board), coordinator of teachers on secondment to museums in the Academy of Normandy, and instigator of the project ‘Unknitting Gender Stereotypes’; and one teacher who implemented with her colleagues a yearlong project on gender equality with a class of 5^{ème}⁷² in a middle school in Normandy. This project was partly implemented in tandem with the Fine Arts Museum, but the visit to the museum with the pupils was cancelled due to Covid health restrictions.

Two interviews were conducted with curators outside of Rouen, to compare the Fine Arts Museum’s approach with other institutions. These interviews gave insight into the broader understanding of this topic in current French museum practice.

One interview was conducted face-to-face during a visit to the museum in February 2022. The other interviews were conducted virtually, either over the phone or via teleconferencing software, for reasons of facility and convenience for both interviewees and myself. The interviews lasted in between 45 mins and 1h 30mins. They were recorded, transcribed, and analysed. They were conducted in French, and I shall keep the quotes in French to avoid the risk of any ambiguity in translation.

Although the questions were tailored to each interviewee and their position, several questions were common to all interviews with museum staff from Rouen, namely explaining the process of creating the policy on gender equality, how it affected their teams specifically, what changed after the charter was implemented and how it has been applied to their work, what impact it has on the audiences, and what they believe the role of the museum to be in society.

The interviews with the staff at Rouen covered the key stakeholders involved in the creation and the implementation of the policy and covered the breadth of museum practice relative to the exhibition of women artists in the permanent collections. However, this data also

⁷¹ The findings of the audit and roadmap were shared with museum staff but not made public, and although I was allowed access for this research and do exploit elements of both these documents, there are no direct references to them for reasons of confidentiality.

⁷²In the class of 5^{ème}, pupils are generally 12 or 13 years old.

has several limitations and biases inherent to such interviews. They were mainly conducted with heads of staff (except for the teacher who set up a project with her pupils) so an understanding of the grassroots level of the process cannot help but be partial. Indeed, interviewees were selected not only because of their position within the museum but also because of their personal involvement and dedication to the policy. In this regard, the advantage of the interviews is that I was able to identify the key players of the policy, the individuals who led teams and spurred interest for this topic within this institution. However, whereas all interviewees, while acknowledging certain obstacles in getting all staff on board, insisted that all teams were now fully on board and trained on gender discrimination and gender equality, this is not something that I have been in a position to verify. This would deserve further investigation, through more field work and interviews with other staff members not directly or less actively involved in the museum's policy.

Furthermore, the question of how this policy is perceived by the public and the impact of the actions put in place by the museum was only explored through the interviews and not through direct observation. This is an important limitation of this research, and would warrant further academic institutional investigation.

Finally, although the museum's policy for gender equality is cross-sectional, covering many aspects of museum practice from conservation to human resources, I shall focus on the aspects of this policy directly relevant to the exhibiting of the women artists of the collection. A broader evaluation of their policy, across fields but also across all museums of the RMM, would also be worthy of further investigation.

Terminology

A few words must be said on terminology. Firstly, the term "woman artist" will be used for lack of a feminine form of the noun "artist" in English. Its gender neutral nature obviously precludes the possibility of gender analysis; the term "woman artist" is, however, also undeniably flawed, since it contradicts what I seek to demonstrate, namely the necessary mainstreaming of "women artists" to guarantee their equal and lasting recognition in art history.

Secondly, I shall use the term "curator" to refer to the French profession of "*conservateur*". The professional practices of curators and *conservateurs* do not always overlap. *Conservateurs* are civil servants recruited through a competitive exam and trained at the *Institut national du patrimoine* (National Heritage Institute). They are responsible for the collections of public art museums. However, "curator" is the closest term in English. It also allows for comparison between countries.

Thirdly, for the sake of brevity, I use the term "gender equality" to refer to what the French call "*égalité femmes-hommes*", literally translated as "equality between women and men". (See 1. for a discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of the French framework of gender equality.)

Analysis and findings

1. How to think about it? On the challenges of thinking gender within French art museums

In October 2021, I accompanied twenty high school students from the French department of the Hérault on a three-day trip to Paris.⁷³ I took them to the *Musée d'Orsay*, and I left them to explore the permanent exhibition. One of the instructions I gave them was to look for a painting by a woman artist. Only two or three succeeded, but nearly all of them expressed surprise at the unexpected difficulty of this exercise. This anecdote strikingly demonstrates the *invisibility* of women artists' quasi-absence from museum collections. Thinking about the presence of women artists in collections involves thinking about their absence. Before wondering where the women artists are, we must realise they are absent; before asking how to exhibit them, one must ask what conditions are necessary for them to be exhibited. This challenges the conception of a universalist museum representing a common heritage that all can identify with. What theoretical framework and what conception of the museum and of museum practice will enable the inclusion of women artists in art museums?

Feminist theory challenges the museum construct, and museums are faced with the need to integrate new social issues into their practice. Within a French universalist framework, inherited from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, which presents art as a universal concept common to all humanity, thinking gender is particularly challenging. However, the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen is an example of a museum in the process of reappraising its role within society and within the community. Its policy on gender equality shows the challenges of thinking the marginalisation of women artists in a systemic way within the framework of gender equality rather than feminist curating. It also demonstrates the necessity of overcoming institutional inertia to introduce a policy favouring gender equality: the inclusion of women artists is never self-evident – women's artwork does not enter the museum through osmosis.

a. Museums in society: integrating social issues into museum practice

In the opening pages of Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel's *L'Amour de l'Art*, one reads,

« S'il est bon qu'une certaine agitation vienne battre la porte du musée, le visiteur, aussitôt franchie celle-ci, doit trouver l'élément sans lequel il ne peut y avoir de rencontre profonde avec l'œuvre plastique : le silence. »⁷⁴

⁷³ This was a trip organised with the association De l'Hérault aux Grandes Ecoles. The goal of this association is to encourage high school students from rural areas to pursue ambitious higher education.

⁷⁴ *Avant-projet de programme pour le musée du XXe siècle*, p.5 in Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Darbel, and Dominique Schnapper, *L'amour de l'art: les musées d'art européens et leur public*, 2e édition revue et augmentée, Le sens commun 35 (Paris: Ed. de Minuit, 1992), 14.

This quote can be roughly translated as: "If it is good that a certain agitation knocks on the door of the museum, the visitor, as soon as they enter, must find the element without which there can be no deep encounter with the work of art: silence."

This evokes the special place museums have so long held within society. Etymologically, “museum” refers to the home of the Greek Muses: it is a sacred place, dedicated to the conservation of knowledge, detached from society.⁷⁵ This has been the traditional conception of museums by museum professionals, as interviewee 5 testified,

« Pendant très longtemps, le musée avait justement ce statut à part parce qu'il était hors de la société et hors des préoccupations de la société, ce qui lui conférait une aura particulière, un statut particulier. »

Drawing on this framework, Carol Duncan describes the ritualistic structure of museums, translated by the neo-classical architecture many fine arts museums adopt, reminiscent of Greco-Roman temples, and through the prescribed behaviours visitors adopt: silence, reverence, etc.⁷⁶ The museum, and in particular the fine arts museum, is a place of secular ritual, presenting the story of a Nation – or rather: presenting a story we are told or tell ourselves is the story of a Nation.⁷⁷ In France, the history of museums is indeed intimately linked with the process of Nation-building. Art museums were established during the French Revolution, and the collections consisted of the artwork confiscated from the clergy and emigrants, the nationalisation of royal collections, and artwork ‘collected’ during military expeditions. The Louvre was founded in 1793 in a spirit of emancipation and of education for artists.⁷⁸ Art museums were presented as a place of learning and of aesthetic delectation, detached from social context,⁷⁹ effectively masking their ideological underpinnings.

Indeed, much as Bourdieu and Darbel showed museums to be places of social reproduction, deconstructing the concept of a supposed universal or innate appreciation of art,⁸⁰ feminist critique has shown museums to be places which reproduce sexist representations and ideas. Far from being neutral places dedicated to Art, they are “prestigious and powerful engines of ideology,”⁸¹ where the male is presented as “neutral” and the female necessarily “other”, and where this power relation is presented as the natural order of things.⁸² Parker and Pollock described the construction of this ideology in *Old Mistresses* (1981), pointing towards several historical milestones,

“[...] the current ideology of male dominance has a history. It was adumbrated in the Renaissance, expanded in the eighteenth century, fully articulated in the nineteenth century and finally totally naturalized with the result that in the twentieth-century art history it is so taken for granted as part of the natural order it

⁷⁵ Dominique Poulot, *Musée et muséologie*, Repères (Paris: La Découverte, 2009), 6.

⁷⁶ Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*.

⁷⁷ In his lectures at the Louvre in November 2021, Neil MacGregor talked about museums as places of storytelling, and highlighted the importance of narratives in society.

⁷⁸ Poulot, 7.

⁷⁹ Dominique Poulot, *Une histoire des musées de France. XVIIIe - XXe siècle*, Poche / Sciences humaines et sociales (Paris: La Découverte, 2008), 5.

⁸⁰ Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper, *L'amour de l'art*.

⁸¹ Carol Duncan, *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 191.

⁸² Linda Nochlin, ‘Women, Art, and Power’, in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, Icon Editions (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Pr, 1989), 2.

need not be mentioned. This ideology is reproduced not only in the way art is discussed, the discipline of art history, but in works of art themselves. It operated through images and styles in art, the ways of seeing the world and representing our position in the world that art presents. It is inscribed into the very language of art.”⁸³

This “ideology of male dominance” also has repercussions in terms of museum practice. Firstly, feminist authors have described them as distortions, whereby a truncated vision of art history is presented. They are excluded from the collective memory.⁸⁴ Linda Nochlin describes the “unstated domination of white male subjectivity as one in a series of intellectual distortions which must be corrected in order to achieve a more adequate and accurate view of historical situations.”⁸⁵ So including women artists into collections is certainly not a question of *re-writing* history, it is a question of writing it correctly. As interviewee 3 said,

« Il s'agit pas de refaire l'histoire, il s'agit juste de rendre visible ce que l'histoire, qui a été rédigé par des hommes, a invisibilisé. »

Secondly, if museums are places of ritual, the ritual is gendered. As Marion Coville puts it, museum practice implicitly harnesses “gendered scripts”. They are assumptions made about visitors which inform museum work, especially when designing exhibitions (the author studied the creation of an exhibition on video games).⁸⁶ These “gendered scripts” also exist in art museums. The painting *Vue intérieure du musée de Rouen en 1880* illustrates the gendered nature of museum space at the end of the 19th century. In the foreground is a white bourgeois man seated at an easel: a painter, an artist. For him, the museum is a place of education and training. In the background are women, visiting for pleasure, with their children. For them, the museum is a place of leisure. On the walls, one notices a preponderance of female nudes – the Guerrilla Girls would have had something to say about that. Although the social context has changed since 1880, it is still men’s art and naked women that are on museum walls, men still dominate the art world and there are still persistent stereotypes surrounding women visitors, as Coville demonstrates.

⁸³ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 80.

⁸⁴ Geneviève Sellier, ‘Introduction’, in *Culture d’élite, Culture de Masse et Différence Des Sexes*, ed. Geneviève Sellier and Éliane Viennot, Bibliothèque Du Féminisme (Paris, France: L’Harmattan, 2004), 8.

⁸⁵ Linda Nochlin, ‘Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?’, in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, Icon Editions (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Pr, 1989), 146.

⁸⁶ Marion Coville, ‘Imaginer les visiteuses : Scripts de genre et conception d’une exposition’, *Culture & Musées. Muséologie et recherches sur la culture*, no. 30 (1 December 2017): 73–90, <https://doi.org/10.4000/culturemusees.1192>.



Figure 1 : Charles Angrand, *Vue intérieure du musée de Rouen en 1880*, 1880, oil on canvas, Fine Arts Museum of Rouen, 1880.

Feminist critique of museums has thus forced museums to take societal issues into account. The premise of a social critique of museums could be traced back to the feminist Mary Richardson slashing Diego Velazquez's *Rokeby Venus* at the National Gallery in 1914, in protest against the imprisonment of her fellow feminist, Emmeline Pankhurst. Today, in the wake of social movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, museums are more than ever confronted with the necessity of addressing the social issues which agitate society. In *À monde nouveau, nouveaux musées* (2021), Neil MacGregor addresses the answers some museums have found, balancing the need for historical accuracy and social relevance, especially regarding their colonial past.⁸⁷

The question of the role of the museum in society has been the topic of institutional interest in recent years, as the current debate on the new definition of museums within the International Council of Museums (ICOM) illustrates.⁸⁸ In France, certain institutions have tackled these issues in exhibitions such as *Imaginaires et représentations de l'Orient* (Real and Imaginary depictions of the Orient) at the Musée Delacroix, or *Le modèle noir de Géricault à Matisse* (The Black Model from Gericault to Matisse) at the Musée d'Orsay, which addressed the topics of race within art history. Regarding gender, the MuCEM presented the exhibition *Au Bazar du genre: Féminin/Masculin en Méditerranée* (The Gender Bazaar: Feminin/Masculin in the Mediterranean) in 2013. The integration of these issues is often controversial, raising sometimes heated debate within the field.⁸⁹

⁸⁷MacGregor, *À monde nouveau, nouveaux musées*.

⁸⁸ This new definition initially presented in 2019 and which will be submitted to a vote in 2022 has been a controversial topic amongst museum professionals. It defines museums as “inclusive and polyphonic spaces of critical dialogue” and calls on them to “contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing.”

‘ICOM Announces the Alternative Museum Definition That Will Be Subject to a Vote’, International Council of Museums, accessed 16 April 2022, <https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote/>.

⁸⁹ Foucher Zarmanian, ‘Musées et Genre : État Des Lieux d’une Recherche’, 26.

The case of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen illustrates the difficulties and ambiguity of the process of opening the museum space to societal questions. The interviews showed that museum staff are seeking new balances within their professional practice, sometimes destabilised by the new expectations they have to meet. The following quotes illustrate the search for new equilibria, somewhere between a will to maintain the traditional role of museums and a need to integrate new social questions,

« Maintenant, on demande au musée d'être un acteur de la société, d'aller chercher des nouveaux publics, de mettre en place des programmes pédagogiques pour faire venir des gens qui normalement ne viennent pas au musée. Et tout ça, ça bouleverse énormément les pratiques. En fait, c'est récent, tout ça donc, à l'échelle de la vie des musées, il faut du temps. [...] C'est pour ça qu'il y a forcément des mouvements de va-et-vient et des mouvements de réticence, on avance sur des sujets, moins sur d'autres. Il y a des moments où on est content parce qu'on a l'impression qu'on a enfin bousculé un peu les choses. Mais en fait, pas du tout. »

(interview 5)

« On n'est pas des lieux de propagande, des lieux de politique, mais n'empêche qu'on est des lieux où on se doit de pouvoir interagir avec nos visiteurs et donc faire attention et avoir un regard attentif sur toutes les questions de société et surtout les évolutions de la société qui se posent. »

(interview 5)

« Notre position, c'est pas que le musée soit la chambre d'écho des débats, des conflits, au contraire. Notre position, c'est de dire que, à travers les musées et en affirmant une forme de responsabilité, on explicite en fait les conditions dans lesquelles des inégalités se sont produites. »

(interview 1)

« Moi, je pense que le musée est un lieu politique. Il y a des gens qui disent : « Ah, le musée est un lieu neutre ! ». Non, la neutralité, elle dit tout en fait du positionnement politique. On pense qu'on est neutre, et on ne l'est pas. En croyant qu'on est neutre, on affirme au contraire une position. »

(interview 1)

The pre-requisite to integrating women artists in fine arts collections is thinking of museums as social places, places where ideology and power relations within society are produced and reproduced.⁹⁰ Thus, the current reappraisal of the role of museums within society and the manner in which they integrate societal issues in their practice is an opportunity to increase the visibility of women artists. However, in France, the integration of these questions is very much a work in progress as the case of Rouen illustrates. Several museum staff

⁹⁰ Projects such as the *Feminist Museum Hack* or the *Manchester Museum Takeover* seek to explicit this.

highlighted the fact that this process was often met with reticence, outright resistance, or misunderstanding. In the words of interviewee 1,

« [En France] on est encore dans le stade de l'émotion et on n'est pas dans le stade de l'analyse, on n'a pas passé ce cap de l'analyse. Donc on est encore dans les invectives : « on détruit la culture ! ». Non, non, c'est juste qu'on regarde les choses et on est un peu moins naïfs sur ce que l'on voit. Il y a beaucoup à faire. »

b. The F-word: thinking feminist curating within the French framework of equality

France was late to include a gender perspective in academia,⁹¹ and even more so in history of art.⁹² Gender has only become a category of academic analysis in recent years,⁹³ but there lacks a theoretical framework regarding gender in the visual arts,⁹⁴ and it has yet to fully enter the training and the practice of museum professionals. One is hard-pressed to find a museum practitioner who defines themselves or their work as “feminist”. Indeed, although *elles@centrepompidou* appeared as an ambitious feminist curatorial gesture, bringing into the spotlight 350 works of art by 150 modern women artists, the wall texts of the exhibition made no mention of “feminism”.⁹⁵ It was neither a feminine nor a feminist exhibition.⁹⁶

The legal and institutional framework in France does not promote gender equality from a feminist perspective, but rather as an expression of the Republican value of equality.⁹⁷ Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a proliferation of activity to promote gender equality within different fields of public policy. The legal framework the charter references is an expression of this (see Appendix 2). However, political scientist Réjane Sénac takes issue with the assimilation of the discourse around gender equality to French republican values. She argues that it is quite the opposite, since it is the same universalist Republican values which have excluded “non-brothers”⁹⁸ of the Republic since its founding in 1789. Indeed, it was during the Revolution that women were excluded from the academic training and places of exhibition to which they previously had some limited access.⁹⁹

⁹¹ Foucher-Zarmanian and Bertinet, ‘Introduction’.

⁹² Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes*, 326.

⁹³ Brigitte Rollet, ‘Ce Que Peut Le Genre En Études Culturelles : Retours Sur Pratiques’, *Diogène* n° 258-259-260, no. 2 (19 March 2019): 52–59, <https://doi.org/10.3917/dio.258.0052>.

⁹⁴ Dumont, *Des Sorcières Comme Les Autres*, 10.

⁹⁵ Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 90.

⁹⁶ Giovanna Zapperi, ‘Angela Dimitrakaki & Lara Perry (Sous La Dir. de), Politics in a Glass Case. Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgression: Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2013’, *Culture & Musées*, no. 30 (1 December 2017): 221–24, <https://doi.org/10.4000/culturemusees.1299>.

⁹⁷ Réjane Sénac, ‘La mythologie de l'égalité : entre valeur républicaine et féminisme de l'altérité’, *Pouvoirs* N°173, no. 2 (2020): 89, <https://doi.org/10.3917/pouv.173.0089>.

⁹⁸ The term coined by Réjane Sénac is in reference to the Republican notion of ‘fraternity’. Although it is now presented as meaning ‘solidarity’, it literally means ‘brotherhood’ and it semantically excludes women. In practice, French women were also legally excluded also, until they became fully enfranchised citizens in 1944. It still took several decades for them to have access to economic, professional, and bodily autonomy.

⁹⁹ Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes*, 15.

The authors further explain that in 1791, the National Assembly opened the Salon to everyone. Twenty-two women entered. But the decree of 30th October 1793 abolished all political clubs of women and excluded them from the public sphere.

In this context, this egalitarian approach presented as Republican can be nothing but a “myth”.¹⁰⁰ Feminist analysis further challenges the legacy of the Enlightenment, namely the hierarchies and dichotomies,¹⁰¹ which although they may not exclude women in theory (although it can be argued that they do), definitely exclude them in practice. Such dichotomies are translated into the art historical canon, separating the artist and the artisan, fine arts and crafts, along a similar dichotomy separating women and men.¹⁰² Thus, within the discourse around equality, it is challenging to think about the marginalisation of women artists in a systemic way, showing their exclusion to arise *from* the system in place, rather than simply being an anomaly that must be corrected.

Feminist theory also enables one to rethink museums along new lines, rejecting a universalist approach, reshaping the contours of “normal” thinking, along new hierarchies.¹⁰³ It has the potential to challenge the hierarchies and dichotomies which have excluded women artists from art museums. French art historian Fabienne Dumont calls for a rethinking of the canon, integrating a diversity which will challenge the French universalist framework.¹⁰⁴ This echoes Parker and Pollock who argued in the 1980s that the integration of women artists into museums can and should be subversive: they questioned the legitimacy of hierarchies between genres in painting and of artistic fields which contributed to the marginalisation of women artists and the artistic fields they had been prolific in.¹⁰⁵

Despite the paradoxical framework of “equality-as-a-Republican-value”, which seems to preclude the possibility of subversive museum practice, the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen’s policy on gender equality has challenged certain practices and questioned existing hierarchies. For instance, the educational programme ‘Unknitting Gender Stereotypes’ (see Appendix 3) introduces certain elements encouraging teachers to address the systemic reasons for women artists’ marginalisation, encouraging a critical view of the museum, of their acquisition policy, of their HR practices, and acknowledging the contribution of militant associations. Below are examples of ways to approach the topics for the “Cycle 4”:¹⁰⁶

« Identifier des œuvres au musée où femmes-hommes se respectent et ne se respectent pas. Réaliser une carte mentale sur l’identité personnelle d’un et d’une artiste du musée ainsi que leur identité légale (et numérique). Comparer leurs parcours, leur célébrité et leur représentation au sein du musée.

[...]

Réfléchir sur le nombre d’artistes femmes et hommes présents dans le musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen RMM. Ex : Sur 713 œuvres exposés, 2% d’œuvres sont celles de femmes. Lors de ces dix dernières années, sur 780 acquisitions d’œuvres par le musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, RMM, neuf sont des œuvres de femmes dont six sont des dons. Alors : inégalité ou exclusion ?

¹⁰⁰ Sénac, ‘La mythologie de l’égalité’.

¹⁰¹ Hilde Hein, ‘Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective’, in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, by Amy K. Levin, 53–64 (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 54.

¹⁰² Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 50–81.

¹⁰³ Hein, ‘Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective’.

¹⁰⁴ Dumont, *Des Sorcières Comme Les Autres*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*.

¹⁰⁶ Pupils in this cycle are between the ages of 12 and 15.

Présenter la Charte égalité F/H des musées de la RMM et un organigramme de l'institution. Repérer les nombreux métiers et vérifier s'il y a parité des femmes et des hommes dans les services techniques, administratifs, des médiateurs...

[...]

Proposer un débat sur le choix du conservateur devant préparer une nouvelle exposition : doit-il prendre autant d'artiste femme et homme ou faire selon son goût et ce que lui propose le marché de l'art.

[...]

Construire une chronologie des droits des femmes et des artistes femmes en France. Montrer que ces avancées sont le résultat d'engagement politique et associatif. »

The interviews also suggested that traditional hierarchies were, if not totally overturned, at least challenged. As interviewee 2 put it,

« Cette démarche, c'est aussi interroger la pratique du pouvoir dans l'institution muséale. »

This was particularly the case during the creation of the RMM, when different types of museums worked together on the same footing. The working groups which wrote the charter for gender equality also got all types of practitioners who were not used to working together around the same table. This was not always an easy process, but it enabled interesting discussions between professionals, as interviewee 5 explained,

« Alors c'est intéressant, parce que ça bouscule pas mal quand même les pratiques et ça rebat les cartes, parce que [...] l'organisation des musées est très hiérarchisée, très structurée, et là tout d'un coup de travailler en transversalité, ça a heurté. Il y a eu quelques frictions, forcément, puisqu'entre communication, conservation, médiation, on n'a pas forcément le même regard sur les collections, parce qu'on n'a pas forcément la même façon de se les approprier et de les restituer au public, donc forcément c'est pas si simple que ça. [...] Ce qui a été intéressant, je pense, c'est effectivement que tous les services soient associés. Ça a permis d'avoir des échanges pour le coup très intéressants, parce que tout d'un coup, en tant que médiateur, on avait un regard sur la politique d'acquisition, parce que nos collègues conservateurs entendaient comment nous, on voyait les choses et comment on s'approprie les collections, parce que les collègues de l'administration, quand on parlait des contrats, enfin ça aussi, ça interroge. Puisqu'il n'a pas été seulement question des femmes qu'on accroche sur les cimaises, mais bien aussi des artistes femmes, de la place qu'on fait aux artistes femmes contemporaines et quel que soit leur champ disciplinaire. »

The case of Rouen is interesting because it illustrates how a French public art museum can challenge usual hierarchies (in a limited way) within the parameters of a discourse around equality. However, it does not enable a disentanglement of the paradoxical discourse around “equality-as-a-Republican-value”. It presents gender equality as the natural continuation of an

emancipatory discourse carried during the French Revolution, although it can be argued that it was at this time that women's deliberate exclusion from the public sphere was systematised. The legacy of the French Revolution appears as a delicate topic in the historiography presented in the museum which will be discussed below when addressing the textual mediation of the museum. In France, "egalitarian curating" seems a more appropriate term than "feminist curating".

c. Women artists do not "happen" to be exhibited: overcoming inertia and forcing the entrance into art museums

Museums are ideological places which present hegemonic discourses, but current museum practice is seeking to question the inequalities they produce and reproduce through the gradual and often problematic integration of societal issues into their work. In Rouen, their collections and the place of women artists within them is reassessed within the framework of a universalist conception of gender equality, within which it is paradoxical to think the systemic exclusion of women artists from the canon, from collections, and from museum walls.

Considering these challenges, women artists do not "happen" to be exhibited. In Rouen in 2018, a mere 1,8% of the paintings exhibited were by women artists. These artists represented 2,6% of all artists in the collections. This reflects the legacy of centuries of discrimination and marginalisation of women in the artistic field, which has not fully come to an end.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, if women artists now have access to the same training as their male counterparts, and are even overrepresented in art schools, they remain underrepresented in the professional field.¹⁰⁸ Certain barriers which historically hindered women from being exhibited in art museums are lifted, but the proportion of women artists in the *Fonds régionaux d'art contemporain* (Regional Contemporary Art Funds; FRAC), although higher than in fine arts museums, stagnates around 30% to 40% and fluctuates greatly from year to year in terms of acquisitions.¹⁰⁹

Evidently, women artists have to force their entry if they want to be exhibited in fine arts museums. In France in the late 19th century, women artists had realised the need to organise to lobby for their interests. The first organisation to bring together and promote women artists was the *Union des femmes artistes et peintres* (Union of Women Painters and Sculptors; UFPS), founded in 1881 by sculptor Hélène Bertaux. Her primary goal was to lobby for access of women artists to the Academy of Fine Arts (she succeeded in 1897), but the UFPS was also instrumental in promoting artists and contributing to their credibility, through its group exhibitions and publications.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ See Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes* for a history of women artists from 1880 to the present day; and Dumont, *Des Sorcières Comme Les Autres* for a history of artists in the 1970s and contemporary challenges.

¹⁰⁸ Danielle Bousquet, 'Inégalités Entre Les Femmes et Les Hommes Dans Les Arts et La Culture. Acte II : Après 10 Ans de Constats, Le Temps de l'action' (Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes, 2018).

¹⁰⁹ 'Observatoire de l'égalité Entre Femmes et Hommes Dans La Culture et La Communication' (Ministère de la Culture - DEPS, 2021); 'Observatoire de l'égalité Entre Femmes et Hommes Dans La Culture et La Communication' (Ministère de la Culture - DEPS, 2022).

¹¹⁰ Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes*, 14, 49.

Since the 1970s, curatorial activism has led to raised awareness around often forgotten women artists, but the process was challenging. Linda Nochlin mentions the difficulties she faced while working on *Women artists 1550-1950*, which involved conducting research on the artists, tracking down their work, and convincing curators of the interest of her work.¹¹¹ It took Camille Morineau six years to convince then-director Alfred Pacquement that her project of an all-woman exhibition was a sound proposal.¹¹² And Reine Part describes in her latest publication the necessity for radical action, after realising that progressive change in line with developments in society will not occur automatically,

« Il faut se défaire de l'idée qu'on peut laisser du temps au temps, que les changements viendront progressivement, que la société évolue, lentement mais sûrement...vers le mieux, forcément. Nous avons chaque jour, sur bien d'autres sujets, la preuve du contraire. »¹¹³

In Rouen, the creation and implementation of their policy on gender equality happened at a time when the institution was undergoing profound organisational change, with the creation of the RMM. At this point, a consultant was brought in to conduct an audit on gender in the museum. This audit, the findings of which came as a shock to everyone, was a spur to action. Through the quantitative analysis that the consultant presented, staff members, especially those who initially were sceptical, were faced with facts they could no longer ignore. The audit made it possible to overcome a certain amount of reluctance amongst staff members to engage in this process. The responses of interviewed staff members highlighted its strong intellectual and emotional impact. It was brought up on several occasions during every interview. The following quotes convey a sense of how this pivotal moment was experienced by staff. Their number reflects the frequency with which this topic was brought up by interviewees.

« [...] un audit qui forcément a été - comment dire – cruel, parce que quand bien même vous pensez que vous faites plein de choses, vous vous rendez compte qu'en fait, non, on fait peu. »

(interview 1)

« C'était quand même un choc pour tout le monde, la critique était sévère, mais c'est comme ça, c'est très bien, il faut commencer comme ça. »

(interview 1)

« Alors pourquoi on a fait le choix d'un prestataire extérieur ? Simplement parce qu'en interne, c'était compliqué, en réalité. Les gens s'opposaient très vite sur le sujet. [Cela a permis] qu'il soit possible d'en débattre de façon parfaitement fluide et sereine. [...] Il est apparu qu'au Musée des Beaux-arts [...] 2% d'œuvres de femmes étaient représentées au moment où l'étude a été faite. Ce qui nous a

¹¹¹ Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 44.

¹¹² Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 88.

¹¹³ Prat, *Exploser Le Plafond*, 11–12.

consterné, honnêtement, c'est-à-dire qu'on savait qu'il n'y en aurait pas beaucoup, mais 2%, c'est presque rien. »

(interview 2)

« Vraiment, le fait d'avoir eu recours à un prestataire extérieur, à dire : « bon allez, on va arrêter de s'engueuler parce qu'on y arrivera jamais. On met une espèce de médiateur et puis on objective les choses », ça c'était fondamental, sinon on y serait pas arrivé, très honnêtement. »

(interview 2)

« Trois musées ont subi cet audit. Je dis « subit » parce que ça a été très violent. Pour moi, ça a été très violent. En fait, le constat, il était tellement accablant que je l'ai pris avec beaucoup de violence. Je l'ai très mal pris, personnellement. Là je parle en tant que femme et prof et tout ça. »

(interview 3)

« Et après, là où ça a presque été le plus saisissant pour nous, en tant que médiateur, c'est que l'intervenante a transformé nos parcours et nos médiations [...] en tableau Excel. [...] Et elle s'est rendu compte que, notamment en termes de médiation écrite, on n'était pas exempte de véhiculer également des stéréotypes. Et ça - je vais pas mentir – c'est pas agréable de s'en rendre compte. »

(interview 5)

The audit acted as a wake-up call for many practitioners within the museums of the RMM. This reflects the experience of Norwegian museums involved in the project 'There She Goes Again', which revealed that the museum staffs' "feeling of gender parity [was] not reflected in the actual exhibitions and museums collections."¹¹⁴ Inequalities are often underestimated, just as my high school students had not realised that women artists were virtually absent from the museum. For the Norwegian museums, this analysis was the first step in developing a methodology to introduce a gender perspective in their collections and exhibitions. In Rouen, the audit enabled the RMM to overcome institutional inertia and museum practitioners' ignorance, lack of interest or 'laziness'¹¹⁵ regarding this topic.

Given art museums often present themselves as neutral spaces, revealing their ideological content opens the possibility to challenge a narrative presenting the marginalisation of women artists as natural. In France, challenging this discourse is paradoxical, since it is presented in the continuity of a Republican framework which has historically always tended to exclude, framing them as "other". Within this framework of marginalisation, or at best partial inclusion, the inertia of the institution and of teams is an obstacle which must be overcome. The

¹¹⁴ Holm and Aarbakke, 'There She Goes Again', 100.

¹¹⁵ Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 216.

case of Rouen exemplifies how an institution navigates these theoretical and practical challenges. Through the audit, the RMM has achieved some success in overcoming inertia to challenge traditional hierarchies within the institution and integrate social questions into its practice. However, this is not to say there was not or is no longer internal debate and disagreement. The current transformations museums are undergoing are not painless for the museum practitioner faced with the necessity to change.

2. How to get there? On the path to exhibiting women artists in permanent collections

The fine arts museum appears as a place closed to women artists, ideologically and physically. They need to force the entrance into art museums, but once the door is open, how does one get to a point where they can and will be hung on the walls? What practical steps are necessary to get to this point? Interviewee 1 identified a number of the difficulties,

« [...] dès qu'on parle musée tout de suite c'est : « Ah, la présence des femmes dans les collections. Il faut rééquilibrer. » Alors oui, bien sûr, il faut en faire votre constat de départ, mais en fait, premièrement, il y a des artistes femmes dans les collections, sont-elles montrées ? Les tableaux ou les œuvres sont-elles restaurées, en état d'être montrées ? Déjà c'est une première donne. Et deuxième chose, c'est que quand bien même vous n'avez pas de crédit pour acheter des œuvres d'artistes femmes ou vous ne pouvez pas en avoir, vous devez mettre en place dans votre fonctionnement des garde-fous, de façon à ce qu'on ne reproduise pas les stéréotypes. »

(interview 1)

Their difficulties outline the practical curatorial work necessary to exhibiting women artists. Based on the case study of Rouen, I suggest three steps, applicable in any art museum. First of all, the central preliminary issue is one of knowledge: do museum staff know about the women artists in their collections? This step requires learning about the women artists in the collections and questions the training of curators. It is a one-off task but an essential one. Secondly, gaining knowledge on these women artists can guide acquisition policy and orientate restoration plans. This is a long-term and ongoing process. Thirdly, the works of art exhibited (or not) are mediated to the public textually through information notices, wall texts, etc., and orally through guided tours. The discourse presented is flexible and can be adapted to include and highlight women artists. This step is concomitant to the second one and likewise is ongoing.

a. Learning: (re)discovering women artists in the collections

The audit revealed the lack of women artists on the museum walls. The extent of their absence came as a surprise to museum staff. However, curators were quick to retort that this was because there were few women artists in the collections: so few paintings were exhibited because there were no paintings *to* exhibit. This was actually revealed to be incorrect. Following the audit, the RMM commissioned the association AWARE to conduct research into the collections.¹¹⁶ It was reported in interviews that external experts were called upon because the museums did not have the human resources or the expertise to conduct this research themselves. The findings of AWARE showed that there were 117 works of art in storage, some of which were of interest. They were, however, all badly conserved.¹¹⁷ This process enabled staff to gain

¹¹⁶ This research involved investigating the women artists but also any other women linked to the collections who could be of interest.

¹¹⁷ I did not have access to the findings of AWARE but this was reported in interviews, namely in interview 2.

a clearer understanding of the women artists in the collections thus breaking the cycle of ignoring women artists, and highlighted the necessity of gendering the collection (this was introduced in the charter in clause 14, see Appendix 1), as interviewee 5 explained,

« Parce que naïvement, au début, on pensait qu'on avait peu d'artistes femmes dans nos collections. En fait, on en a plus qu'on pensait, c'est juste que, comme dans beaucoup de structures, dans notre base de données, nos collections ne sont pas genrées. Quand on fait des requêtes, en fait, elles ne ressortent pas. Et puis comme ce sont des artistes qui sont moins connues, les œuvres sont moins étudiées donc si elles sont moins étudiées, elles sont moins présentées, donc moins connues du grand public, donc moins demandées, donc moins restaurées. Enfin, voilà, c'est tout un système qui joue de cette invisibilité des artistes femmes dans les collections. »

Indeed, exhibiting women artists implies learning about (and often *rediscovering*) women artists, much as Nochlin and Sutherland did while preparing *Women Artists 1550-1950*. More recently and closer to home, the Musée Thomas Henry in Cherbourg (Normandy) conducted extensive research on the women artists in its collections. The process was initiated by an outreach programme with a hospital and led museum teams to conduct research on eight women artists of the collections, restore their works, and in 2022 present the temporary exhibition *Ni Muses Ni Soumises*.

The fact that an investigation into the women artists of a collection invariably reveals interesting content (lesser-known artists of local interest in Cherbourg for instance) shows that there is still much to learn. Interviewee 1 wished there could be more research conducted on women artists and artists from minority groups. It is a field which undeniably deserves greater academic attention. However, it is not only a question of conducting research on collections, but also of museum professionals integrating this new knowledge. The RMM has tackled this through training, on the one hand, all the staff on gender equality, and on the other, local teachers on this topic through a visit to the museum at the beginning of the school year. The teachers in turn have the tools to set up projects with their pupils, mainly on gender stereotypes.

Furthermore, the fact that, according to certain interviewees, the findings of AWARE came as a surprise to many curators questions the notion of expertise. They, after all, are supposed to be the experts on their collections. Indeed, looking outside of the traditional canon implies effort on their part, and investment on the part of the museum. Since the founding of the National Heritage Institute in 1990 and its subsequent reform in 2001, all French curators, or '*conservateurs*', follow an 18-month training to acquire management and technical skills.¹¹⁸ They are all civil servants. It was pointed out in interviews that the question of gender was not a topic in curator's training, whether at the National Heritage Institute or in undergraduate training at the Ecole du Louvre. The question of training seems a crucial topic to understand the lack of awareness surrounding gender within what is, interestingly, a predominantly female

¹¹⁸ Françoise Benhamou and Nathalie Moureau, 'From Ivory Towers to Museums Open to the Community: Changes and Developments in France's Cultural Policy', *Museum International* 58-4, no. 232 (2006): 23.

professional body (which remains otherwise relatively homogenous socially).¹¹⁹ It has a privileged position within museums, but one which is currently challenged (or feels challenged) by the rise of new professions such as cultural mediators.¹²⁰ Although an in-depth discussion around the profession is beyond the scope of this research, the findings of AWARE and perhaps a certain amount of ill-will on the part of curators (as suggested in between the lines in interviews) bring to light the fragilities of a profession seeking stability within a changing museum ecosystem.

The first step towards exhibiting women artists implies challenging traditional conceptions of the canon and moving off its beaten track. In Rouen, this process was led by an association, offering an expert and external perspective on the collections. It is perhaps telling that, much like the audit, this process had to be led by actors outside of the museum, to alleviate internal tensions around this topic. This step involves not only learning about collections, but also raising awareness around women artists through training museum professionals and teachers.

b. Buying and restoring: towards a higher proportion of women artist in the collections and on the walls

« Ce n'est pas parce que là on a décidé qu'il fallait faire plus de place aux artistes femmes qu'on va pouvoir renverser la tendance de plus de 200 ans d'histoire. »

(interview 5)

Considering the staggeringly low percentage of works by women artists in fine arts collections, and considering also that there was not an equal artistic production in fine arts between men and women in the past, parity within the collections does not seem like a reasonable or attainable goal for fine art museums, at least in the short or medium term (in modern or contemporary art collections it is perhaps a different matter). In the US there is debate around de-accessioning as a mechanism to transform collections and several museums are choosing that path,¹²¹ but in France this is not legally allowed in public art collections. Working towards parity would therefore imply making an unimaginable number of acquisitions for which museums under increasingly tight budgetary constraints do not have the necessary funds,¹²² without resulting in a more accurate depiction of historical art production.

However, the findings from investigation into the current collections can inform future museum practice to amend past wrongs. The case of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen illustrates this. AWARE's research led to increased awareness amongst curators regarding certain artists

¹¹⁹ Françoise Benhamou and Nathalie Moureau, 'Les "Nouveaux Conservateurs". Enquête Auprès Des Conservateurs Formés Par l'Institut National Du Patrimoine (Promotions 1991 à 2003)', Les Notes de l'Observatoire de l'Emploi Culturel (Ministère de la Culture - DEPS, 2006).

¹²⁰ Frédéric Poulard and Jean-Michel Tobelem, eds., *Les Conservateurs de Musées: Atouts et Faiblesses d'une Profession*, Musées-Mondes (Paris: Documentation Française, 2015).

¹²¹ Andrew Russeth, 'As Museums Push to Sell Art, Competing Ideas About Deaccessioning Are Playing Out in Public', *ARTnews.Com* (blog), 8 February 2021, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/market/museum-deaccessioning-coronavirus-pandemic-1234583143/>.

¹²² Benhamou and Moureau, 'From Ivory Towers to Museums Open to the Community: Changes and Developments in France's Cultural Policy'.

on the art market. They have integrated the gender perspective into their acquisition policy, and curators have been alert on the art market,

« On est passé d'un statut où on avait une vague notion d'artistes qui nous intéressent parce qu'on a des trucs personnels ou des recherches personnelles, à une notion où on a l'ensemble des artistes femmes du musée documentées, des pistes d'enrichissement qui ont été proposées et donc des alertes qui nous permettent d'être actifs sur le marché. »

(interview 1)

An example of this pro-active acquisition policy was the purchase in December 2021 of a sculpture by Brazilian sculptor Maria Martins, a friend of Marcel Duchamp, who worked in Normandy.

But it also involves a pro-active restoration policy. Following AWARE's research, a portrait of the 19th century Rouen-born feminist writer Amélie Bosquet by the (male) painter Jean-Baptiste Parelle was restored, leaving storage to be hung in the museum. This contributed to the visibility of women's contribution to the arts (in this case, literature). Representing a local feminist talent in the arts, that painting ticked all the boxes. Restoring works was also necessary in preparing the exhibition *Ni Muses Ni Soumises*. The works kept in storage were in a bad state of conservation.

Thus, in Rouen, learning about collections informed subsequent acquisition policy and restoration plans. The practical terms can still be discussed:¹²³ besides thinking in terms of numbers of paintings or sculptures acquired or restored, one can also think in terms of relevance, importance of the works of art for the collection, and budgets attributed to acquiring and restoring these works of art. These questions remain open for museum practitioners.

c. Showing: increasing visibility and understanding of women artists' work through cultural mediation

« On voit bien en termes de médiation, on a quand même une marge de progression beaucoup plus rapide que nos collègues de la conservation, parce qu'effectivement, nous, on est sur de l'ajustement humain. C'est moins compliqué pour nous d'ajuster notre discours, que d'aller acquérir des œuvres. »

(interview 5)

Concomitant to the work of curators (learning and buying), cultural mediators and teaching staff are also involved in the museum's policy on gender equality. From a practical perspective, this is perhaps the approach which is the least costly and the easiest to implement in the short-term, because even though it requires an overhaul in the way works of art are talked or written about, it does not require costly restoration or acquisitions.

¹²³ Some goals are set in the roadmap but there is still room for discussion.

Once again, in Rouen, the audit came as a shock to the cultural mediation team, as they believed their practices in terms of gender representation to be, if not exemplary, at least adequate, namely through a special tour of the museum called “*Femmes peintres*” (Women Painters), which highlighted the small number of women artists in the permanent exhibition.¹²⁴ The consultant highlighted not only the underrepresentation of women artists but also the gender stereotypes in textual and oral mediation tools. These findings spurred action: all staff were trained on gender equality, texts were re-written, and discourses around works of art were modified.¹²⁵

The information notices on artists included in the tour ‘Woman Painters’ are indicative of the balances to be struck between presenting a painter, a painting, and an artistic, social and historical context. On a general level, this involves introducing gender as a tool of analysis when talking about objects of the collection. For instance, the V&A and Vasa Museum selected two hats in their collections and produced a gendered discourse around their design, production, use and interpretation.¹²⁶ The National Ceramics Museum in Valencia also introduced a gender perspective in their mediation, offering a new and challenging perspective on collections.¹²⁷

The Fine Arts Museum of Rouen gendered the permanent exhibition in several ways. Firstly, through considering the gender perspective when describing artistic genres. For instance, in the wall text on still lives, the last paragraph mentions the important contribution of women artists to the genre of still lives,

« Nature morte

[...] De nombreuses femmes peintres, qui n’avaient que difficilement accès aux genres plus nobles investis par leur confrères masculins (histoire, portrait, paysage...) ont excellé dans l’art de la nature morte. Filles d’un botaniste éminent, Rachel et Anna Ruysch sont devenues dans l’atelier du peintre Willem van Aelst des virtuoses des compositions florales. Si Anna arrête la peinture après son mariage, Rachel poursuit elle sa carrière jusqu’à devenir en 1699 la première femme admise à la confrérie des peintres de La Haye. »

However, although their contribution is recognised, the hierarchy of genres in between still lives and other supposedly “more noble” genres (history paintings, portraits, landscapes,...) is not directly challenged. The biographical notice of still life painter Elise Bruyère further demonstrates this uneasiness with unsettling established hierarchies in the canon, evoking the notion that still life painting and portrait painting are “imitative” rather than “inventive” genres,

¹²⁴ In the museum, there were biographical information notices for the following painters: Lavinia Fontana (1552 – 1614), Anna Ruysch (1666 – 1754), Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun (1769 – 1842), Adèle Romany (1769 – 1846), Elise Bruyère (1776 – 1842), Victorine Turcas (1795 – 1875), Marie Bracquemond (1840 – 1916), Louise Breslau (1856 – 1927), Mary Fairchild MacMonnies (1858 – 1946), and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908 – 1992). Paintings by Hortense Haudebourg-Lescot (1785 – 1845), Rosa Bonheur (1822 – 1899), Blanche Hoschedé-Monet (1865 – 1947), and Suzanne Duchamp (1889 – 1963) are highlighted on the website but did not have biographical information notice in the exhibition. Paintings by Aurélie Nemours (1910 – 2005) and Vera Molnar (1924 –) are mentioned on the website but I did not see them in the museum.

¹²⁵ I refer to written mediation (information notice, wall texts) and the information I gathered in interviews. I did not have the opportunity to attend a guided tour and directly observe the discourse presented in oral mediation.

¹²⁶ Daybell et al., ‘Gendering Objects at the V&A and Vasa Museums’.

¹²⁷ Cuesta Davignon, ‘Gender Perspective and Museums’.

« D’abord formée par son père, Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, l’artiste bénéficie ensuite des leçons du peintre de fleurs Jean-François van Dael. Depuis le 17^{ème} siècle, de nombreuses femmes artistes se spécialisent dans la nature morte et le portrait. Ces deux genres, qui paraissent relever de l’imitation plus que de l’invention, ne requièrent pas la formation académique fondée sur l’étude du nu masculin qu’on ne conçoit pas alors d’enseigner à des femmes. [...] »

Secondly, the exhibition was gendered through the biographical notices of women artists, which emphasised their training (often by male relatives), and their success. Whereas the notices highlight the challenges they faced and the recognition they gained in their time, they do not highlight their subsequent marginalisation from art history and their recent reappraisal. This suggests uneasiness in mentioning historiographical elements which would not only challenge the canon, but the discipline of art history itself. For instance, the notice for Italian Renaissance painter Lavinia Fontana, who was rediscovered through the exhibition *Women Artists 1550-1950*,¹²⁸ reads,

« A la fin de la Renaissance, Lavinia Fontana est l’une des premières femmes peintres à exercer son métier sur un pied d’égalité avec ses homologues masculins, en pratiquant notamment le répertoire prestigieux de la peinture d’histoire. L’enseignement dispensé dans les académies réserve une place centrale à l’étude du nu masculin, ce qui vaut aux femmes d’en être alors exclues. Elles n’ont ainsi pas la formation adéquate pour traiter des sujets narratifs inspirés de l’histoire antique, de la fable ou de l’histoire sainte. En tant que fille du peintre Prospero Fontana, l’autrice de *Vénus et l’Amour* a bénéficié d’un apprentissage complet. [...] »

The notices of French painters Adèle Romany and Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun mention similar elements. Adèle Romany’s notice reads,

« Adèle Romany [...] étudie dans l’atelier de Jean-Baptiste Regnault, où l’épouse du peintre¹²⁹ dispense un enseignement destiné aux élèves féminines. Entre 1793 et 1833, elle expose quelque quatre-vingts portraits au Salon du Louvre, dont plusieurs autoportraits. Après la Révolution de 1789, ces expositions accueilleront un nombre croissant de femmes. [...] »

This notice describes the relative recognition women artists could gain at the time in France, and presents a history of constant progress, with an increase in the inclusion of women artists after the French Revolution. But if their number increases in the 19th century, Parker and Pollock argue that so did their marginalisation and exclusion.¹³⁰ As previously mentioned, it

¹²⁸ Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 28.

¹²⁹ Does she have a name?

¹³⁰ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 44.

can be argued that the Revolution marked a period of setbacks for women artists.¹³¹ Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun said herself that “[Before the Revolution], women reigned then; the Revolution dethroned them.”¹³² Her notice reads,

« Marie-Louise-Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun n’a bénéficié d’un enseignement artistique de haut niveau que parce qu’elle est la fille d’un peintre, le portraitiste Louis Vigée. En 1783, elle est reçue à l’Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture ; précisons que durant toute la période de l’Ancien Régime, quinze femmes seulement y ont siégé. Portraitiste attirée de la reine Marie-Antoinette, l’artiste émigre en 1789. Elle entame à travers l’Europe un exil couronné de succès qui la conduit jusqu’en Russie. [...] »

The first retrospective exhibition of her work was held in 2015 at the Grand Palais.¹³³ Although the notices convey a sense of the place women artists could make for themselves at times when they were marginalised, they do not help the visitor understand why they have (probably) never heard of them before. If Vigée-Le Brun was such a recognised painter in her time, how come her first retrospective was in 2015?

Thirdly, gendering the exhibition implies talking about an absence. The question of showing an absence is a practical and theoretical difficulty that Naïs Paoli problematised in her recent memoir on the Fine Arts Museum of Arras. She highlights the fact that in fine arts collections, the works of art which are not in the collection seem as important as those which are.¹³⁴ Sonia Boyce’s *Manchester Museum Takeover* eloquently questioned the space that was given or not to certain representations of gender and sexuality.¹³⁵ This difficulty was also raised during interviews,

« Vous n’avez pas d’œuvre d’artistes femmes dans la collection, dites-le, mettez un panneau en disant : « Dans cette visite, vous allez voir beaucoup plus d’hommes que de femmes...Pourquoi ? » [...] On s’était dit qu’on le ferait, qu’il y aurait un texte introductif au parcours et on l’a pas fait. Et typiquement, c’est le genre d’action qui ne coûte rien et que vous pouvez déjà faire. »

(interview 1)

« Qu’est-ce qui manque au musée aujourd’hui ? Il manque des œuvres de femmes. Donc il faut expliquer aux élèves qu’il y avait des femmes [artistes], et à tous les publics de toute façon, mais que pour des raisons machistes, elles n’apparaissent pas, on les a gommées. »

¹³¹ Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes*, 15.

¹³² In Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 33.

However, from a class perspective, Vigée-Le Brun might rather be expressing nostalgia for a political system which favoured her. She became the official portraitist of Marie-Antoinette, and had to flee France during the Revolution, spending the rest of her life in exile.

¹³³ ‘Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun’, accessed 23 April 2022, <https://www.grandpalais.fr/fr/evenement/elisabeth-louise-vigee-le-brun>.

¹³⁴ Naïs Paoli, ‘Quel genre pour l’art ? Valoriser des collections d’artistes femmes dans un musée des Beaux-arts’, *Culture & Musées. Muséologie et recherches sur la culture*, no. 30 (1 December 2017): 200–202.

¹³⁵ Krasny and Perry, ‘Unsettling Gender, Sexuality, and Race’.

(interview 3)

The Fine Arts Museum of Rouen has integrated a gender perspective in the discourse presented to the public, striking an ambiguous balance between biographical and historiographical elements and contextualisation.

Learning, buying, and showing cover the areas museum staff in Rouen considered in order to give more time, space and money to women artists. However, women's history is one of steps forwards and setbacks. Many women artists have been *rediscovered* in the past years, meaning that they were, at some point, forgotten. Having answered how to get women artists onto museum walls, the next question is: how to get them to stay there?

3. How to stay there? On implementing effective and sustainable change within museum practice

In the history of the fluctuating recognition of women artists in society, some limited progress was seen during the interwar period. Women artists gained institutional recognition, most notably in 1937 with the exhibition *Femmes artistes d'Europe* (Women artists of Europe) at the Jeu de Paume. It was one of the first international exhibitions entirely dedicated to women, bringing together contemporary women artists from fifteen European countries.¹³⁶ One would have hoped that this historical moment would have been the opportunity for the lasting promotion of the women artists involved. However, as noted by Gonnard and Lebovici, most artists exhibited were forgotten after the Second World War, and even more surprisingly, “the exhibition itself [wasn’t] mentioned in the biographies of those who participated or organised it, such as Laure Albin-Guillot”.¹³⁷ Indeed, the authors conclude that: “[t]his erasure may suggest the limits of the strategy adopted. While giving high visibility to the professionalization of these women, it placed them in a particularism that closed on them like a trap. Individualities and personalities disappeared, globalised into the group of “women artists”. ”¹³⁸

In light of the recurrent erasure of women artists from art history which the legacy of *Femmes artistes d'Europe* illustrates, the future legacy of contemporary temporary exhibitions on women artists can be put in doubt. So the question of “how to exhibit them” must also include questioning “how to keep exhibiting them”. How does one keep women artists on the walls of permanent exhibitions?

Three (possible) answers suggest themselves and they should be considered simultaneously. Firstly, an approach focused on gender mainstreaming and transforming museum practice across teams and levels of management can produce a change in mentality that will ensure that gender is taken into account in all steps of museum work. Secondly, a shift from individual initiative towards a structured institutional policy (such as the charter) can promote sustainable change and safeguard against change being left to the vagaries of the personal interests of key stakeholders. Thirdly, creating a dialogue with audiences through outreach and educational programmes can anchor institutional transformation within the community.

a. From particularism to inclusion: gender mainstreaming

When discussing the strategies of women artists to gain recognition, Pollock and Parker question whether their energy,

“should [...] be directed towards gaining access to the art establishment, demanding full and equal participation in its evident benefits, exhibition, critical recognition, status – a living ? Or, instead, should their efforts be channelled into their independent and alternative systems of galleries, exhibitions, educational programmes? There are not in fact oppositions, but differing strategies. Tactically

¹³⁶Gonnard and Lebovici, *Femmes Artistes/Artistes Femmes*, 223.

¹³⁷Gonnard and Lebovici, 215.

¹³⁸Gonnard and Lebovici, 215.

women's collective efforts to provide their own supportive networks are immensely important and they have effectively opened up new spaces and extended the possibilities of work for many women. However there is a real danger of remaining on the margins, occupying the separate sphere established for women's practice in the nineteenth century, at the best annexed to mainstream cultural production."¹³⁹

Within such well-established cultural institutions as art museums, it appears that women artists run the risk of simply being "annexed" to collections. There is however a balance to strike between, as Deepwell puts it, "the need for specialism [...] and the attempt to dissolve distinctions altogether with the aim of "normalizing" the situation."¹⁴⁰ This means, on the one hand, giving the context of the historical and contemporary marginalisation of women artists, and on the other, showing their art on the same footing as men's. In other words: *contextualising*, so as not to forget where we have come from and to explain their quasi-absence, and *including*, so we may not only stay where we are, but also move forward.

Gender mainstreaming appears as a useful solution to this historical dilemma, which has been echoed in various manners in many other fields. Described by Dauphin and Sénac as a "method-concept"¹⁴¹ because of the theoretical underpinnings as well as the practical applications it implies, it is defined as the integration of a gender equality perspective at all levels of policies and projects. The concept was first introduced at the 1985 Nairobi World Conference on Women and was officially established as an international strategy in 1995 at the Beijing World Conference on Women. It has since been promoted in the European Union as an approach to policy-making, and has generally been promoted by institutions rather than by academia or civil society.¹⁴² This approach has a transformative potential, moving from the goal of equality towards one of changed conceptions of gender relations, where issues around gender, both for women and for men, are a cross-sectional concern integrated in all processes of institutions. However, its actual effectiveness is a subject of debate,¹⁴³ and Dauphin argues that its implementation has lacked the transformative effect that it envisioned.¹⁴⁴

Nonetheless, on the scale of an art museum, gender mainstreaming appears as a useful strategy to implement lasting change. In many regards, the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen's policy for gender equality is in line with gender mainstreaming. The charter explicitly references this strategy in clause 1, calling to "include gender equality in the strategic guidelines and scientific and cultural projects of each museum", and clause 15, calling to "integrate gender equality issues into the design and evaluation of projects" (see Appendix 2).

Comments in the interviews clearly suggested that the implementation of the policy has fuelled real cross-sectional transformation of museum practices. For instance, interviewee 2 said,

¹³⁹ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 135.

¹⁴⁰ Deepwell, 'Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s', 80.

¹⁴¹ Sandrine Dauphin and Réjane Sénac, 'Gender Mainstreaming : Analyse Des Enjeux d'un "Concept-Méthode": Introduction', *Cahiers Du Genre* n° 44, no. 1 (1 April 2008): 5–16, <https://doi.org/10.3917/cdge.044.0005>.

¹⁴² Dauphin and Sénac.

¹⁴³ See for instance Sandrine Dauphin and Réjane Sénac, eds., *Gender mainstreaming: de l'égalité des sexes à la diversité*, Les cahiers du Genre, 44 2008 (Paris: Harmattan, 2008).

¹⁴⁴ Sandrine Dauphin, 'Promotion de l'égalité des sexes en France : continuité et rupture', *Cahiers du Genre* 44, no. 1 (2008): 139, <https://doi.org/10.3917/cdge.044.0139>.

« Pour chaque projet, dans nos fiches projet, on a inscrit en point sur la question du traitement de l'égalité femmes-hommes, c'est-à-dire que pour chaque projet on va se poser la question : cette question-là est-elle abordée ? et si oui, comment ? avant de valider complètement le projet. »

admitting, however, that,

«C'est pas toujours évident, honnêtement. »

The interviews also suggested that the inclusion of a gender perspective in all projects is not always self-evident and that the process has been met with resistance from certain staff members. However, since 2018, teams have generally come around and have integrated this new way of working. Interviewee 2 went on that,

« Ce qui arrive parfois, c'est que quelqu'un dise : « Ah, moi je sais pas comment je peux parler des femmes à partir de sujet-là ». Et en fait, souvent, c'est pas très compliqué. Il faut un peu mettre sur la voie et puis pouf la pelote se déroule. »

A telling example of the gender mainstreaming approach is the tour “Women Painters”, which existed since before the implementation of the policy but has since been reassessed and modified. The cultural mediator mentioned in their interview that this tour was given less and less frequently, since they preferred a “more inclusive approach”. They explained that,

« En fait, ce qu'on essaye de faire dans la mesure du possible, c'est quel que soit le parcours, dès que c'est possible - il n'est pas question de réinventer l'histoire - mais c'est d'introduire au moins une œuvre d'artiste femme dans le parcours qu'on va faire, pour qu'on ait la possibilité justement de montrer un exemple, ce qui permet effectivement d'être très honnête sur le peu de place qui a été fait aux femmes tout au long de l'histoire, sur le fait que dans les collections, on a souvent l'exception qui confirme la règle.[...] »

This mainstreaming approach is also applied to educational projects, as interviewee 5 further explained,

« Les projets pédagogiques maintenant sont quasiment tous orientés sous l'angle de l'égalité et quel que soit le sujet, c'est-à-dire qu'on ne monte pas forcément des projets « détricoter les stéréotypes », mais il y a un axe « détricoter les stéréotypes » dans chaque projet qu'on monte. »

From the formal policy for gender equality to its practical implementation across teams, gender mainstreaming seems to have effectively transformed museum practices and created an environment in which women artists are fully integrated whilst still being highlighted. However, seeking this balance between specialism and inclusion is by no means fully resolved. Indeed, clause 12 illustrates the concomitance of these approaches,

“In addition to this integrated and cross-cutting approach to equality issues, develop specific courses and workshops on gender throughout history, women's rights and gender inequalities.”

Interviewee 3 reflected on the question of temporary exhibitions dedicated to women artists, aware of their necessity whilst hoping for change,

« Je pense qu'on est obligé de passer par toutes ces expositions temporaires qui mettent en lumière les femmes, mais c'est vrai que se pose la question aux États-Unis, il y a un musée, c'est un musée exclusivement d'œuvres de femmes. Est-ce qu'on doit passer par ce type de projet, pour pouvoir faire bouger les mentalités ? C'est compliqué parce que si on se dit : « voilà ce qu'on va faire, c'est qu'on va faire que des expos de femmes », c'est d'une certaine manière cloisonnant aussi. Le jour où on fait par exemple une expo thématique, par exemple l'art abstrait, le modernisme, et qu'on met autant de femmes que d'hommes, là on aura gagné je pense. »

This is unfortunately not yet the case, but gender mainstreaming remains a first step towards implementing lasting change within museum practice, creating an environment where women artists are not only rediscovered, but also not *re-forgotten*.

b. From individual stakeholders to an institutional policy: implementing institutional change

The *Office de Coopération et d'Information Muséographiques* (Office for Museographical Cooperation and Information; OCIM) has observed that projects aimed at promoting gender equality are generally carried by individuals. Personal awareness or interest for gender equality leads them to raise this issue within the institution, and they are often met with indifference, scepticism or reticence from their colleagues.¹⁴⁵

In Rouen, the policy on gender equality was established during the creation of the RMM, at a time when the institution itself was going through deep structural change and rethinking its strategic orientations. The process of organisational change was taken as an opportunity for the museum to address societal issues and question its role within the community. However, the specific topic of gender equality appears to have been carried at the beginning by key stakeholders in upper management who had a particular personal interest in the topic, and who progressively, through dedication and lobbying, got more team members on board. Interviewee 2, who was instrumental in the process, explained their approach,

« Parfois, la conduite de projet est douloureuse, [...] mais quand ça peut ne pas être douloureux, moi mon propos, c'est de dire : « on choisit d'abord la facilité, on

¹⁴⁵ Candice Chaillou and Ewa Maczek, 'Le genre dans l'exposition et les pratiques professionnelles', *Culture & Musées. Muséologie et recherches sur la culture*, no. 30 (1 December 2017): 209–12, <https://doi.org/10.4000/culturemusees.1294>.

commence d'abord à travailler avec les gens qui ont envie de travailler sur les sujets et on donne envie aux autres de venir ensuite s'y coller, on suscite de l'intérêt. » [...] S'agissant de la conservation, [qui] [...] avait eu du mal à être présente au groupe de travail, c'est pas grave, on a continué avec les autres et à un moment donné, de toute façon le roulement, il va entraîner un petit peu tout le monde. À partir du moment où la direction est partante... Parce qu'évidemment, s'il y a des bâtons dans les roues, ça marche pas. Mais à partir du moment où on était dans l'impulsion de ce mouvement, qui a pris de l'ampleur... À la médiation il y avait aussi des personnes ressources. Il faut aussi s'appuyer sur des personnes ressources, sinon on a un peu seul. Et puis c'est comme ça que les choses se font et se mettent en mouvement. »

The importance of support from upper management that the interviewee highlights reflects Wera Grahn's observation that "it will not be enough to silently give the blessing to integrate these perspectives in the daily work, but an explicitly active and outspoken support is needed [from upper management]."¹⁴⁶ The charter reflects this support, but it is also translated through ongoing dedication to its implementation.

The charter acted as the link between individual initiative and institutional policy, ensuring the policy's sustainability. Interviewee 5 described the importance of this process,

« Cette charte, elle est importante. C'est un peu comme une alerte. Souvent, on est sur des sujets où on fonctionne du gré à gré. Enfin, je sais très bien [Mme. X] m'a demandé de travailler sur le sujet, elle est venue me chercher parce qu'elle savait que c'était un sujet qui m'intéressait. Sauf que si ça ne repose que sur des personnes qui à un moment donné au sein de l'institution sont intéressées par le sujet en question, c'est-à-dire que le jour où on part, qu'est-ce qui se passe ? En fait, c'était important pour nous que ce ne soit plus un sujet d'intérêt personnel, mais que ce soit un sujet d'intérêt structurel. Et en écrivant cette charte, c'est un vrai engagement que les musées ont pris. Et si demain, les personnes qui ont participé à la rédaction de cette charte s'en vont, il en restera quelque chose. »

In practice, the charter is implemented through a roadmap detailing the actions each department put in place, and through constant awareness of the topic, a general "background noise" (interview 1) of gender equality in all projects. It seems to have had a transformative effect on museum practice. In interviews, it was mentioned on several occasions that it forced many practitioners to reconsider their work methods. However, the actual sustainability of the policy has yet to be proven, since the process is still recent and there has not been a significant staff turnover since its implementation.

From the individual initiative of a few members of upper management, the RMM has created a cross-sectional policy on gender equality, which will (it is hoped) sustainably transform museum practice in the long term. However, I would encourage increased monitoring of progress, as such tools have not yet been put in place. If it was the stark figures of the audit

¹⁴⁶ Grahn, 'The Politics of Heritage: How to Achieve Change', 257.

which spurred teams into action, ongoing monitoring should surely safeguard against complacency.

c. From the curator to the visitor: outreach and education

« On constate le fossé grandissant entre la population et son patrimoine, »

sighed interviewee 1 near the end of our interview. Visiting museums is in fact an increasingly elitist cultural practice: although for several decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of people going to cinemas, theatres, museums, exhibitions and monuments,¹⁴⁷ visits of museums, exhibitions, historical monuments and other heritage sites has seen a widening of social differences. It is increasingly an activity of the middle classes and the most highly educated.¹⁴⁸

Such trends are all the more surprising or disappointing considering the increasing interest museum professionals and policy-makers take in visitors and the community (or perhaps it is precisely because of these trends that this interest appears necessary). Visitors have appeared as a key component – or, at least, target – of museum practice since Bourdieu and Darbel's seminal survey of museum visitors in 1969.¹⁴⁹ In the 1980s, 'new museology' proposed a new approach to museum practice based on greater awareness of the social role of the museums and reflecting on visitors' and communities involvement in curatorial practices.¹⁵⁰ The report *Musées XXIe siècle* (Museums of the 21st century) clearly highlights the shift in France towards museums which are more inclusive and collaborative, and closer to visitors and the community.¹⁵¹

In Rouen, this was in fact one of the principles which guided the creation of the RMM,¹⁵² and it has been put in practice most notably through the lifting of all entrance fees to the museums and the project *La Chambre des visiteurs* (The Visitors' Room), which allows visitors to vote online for their favourite works of art currently in storage. The most popular works of art are then exhibited temporarily. In 2016, over 17,000 visitors participated in this project.¹⁵³ More than simply involving the visitors in the life of the museum, this project challenges traditional approaches to curating and understandings of expertise, and is a vector in reducing the aforementioned distance between museums and their community. The findings of a visitor survey conducted in 2012 described the average visitor as a woman over the age of 60 (interview 2), and although such a survey has not been reconducted since, interviewee 2 stated that, since this survey, the visitors are noticeably younger. They attributed this to the policies mentioned previously, but this would need further investigation.

¹⁴⁷Philippe Lombardo and Loup Wolff, 'Cinquante ans de pratiques culturelles en France', *Culture études* n°2, no. 2 (2020): 46, <https://doi.org/10.3917/cule.202.0001>.

¹⁴⁸Lombardo and Wolff, 62.

¹⁴⁹Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Darbel, and Dominique Schnapper, *L'amour de l'art: les musées d'art européens et leur public*, 2e édition revue et augmentée, Le sens commun 35 (Paris: Ed. de Minuit, 1992).

¹⁵⁰André Gob and Noémie Drouguet, 'Chapitre 3 - Des musées pour qui ? Le public des musées', in *La muséologie*, vol. 4e éd., U (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014), 100–121, <https://doi.org/10.3917/arco.droug.2014.01.0100>.

¹⁵¹Jacqueline Eidelman, 'Inventer des musées pour demain: rapport de la Mission Musées XXIe siècle' (Paris: Impr. de la Direction de l'information légale et administrative, 2017).

¹⁵²Interview 1 ; 'Dossier de Presse - Lancement de La Réunion Des Musées Métropolitains'.

¹⁵³Eidelman, 'Inventer des musées pour demain', 38, 96.

Regarding gender equality, and teaching about women artists, educational and outreach programs have been put in place. They are organised by the cultural mediation team and the teaching staff working at the museum. Their approach is two-fold: training teachers on this topic and putting in place projects with schools. These projects mainly focus on deconstructing gender stereotypes, and women artists are one aspect of this. Introducing a gender perspective has a transformative potential, as the experiences at the National Museum of Ceramics in Valencia suggests, giving visitors a new view on collections.¹⁵⁴

Training for teachers is coordinated by the art teacher on secondment to the museum. Teachers' reactions to this training vary depending on their role. Interviewee 3 described the enthusiasm with which their work was met, when they started developing projects linked to gender stereotypes in the museums of the RMM, but acknowledged that there was also a certain amount of reticence,

« Il y a eu une adhésion, une adhésion quasi-générale au projet. Alors parfois, il y a des résistances ou des incompréhensions. Notre rôle, c'est justement d'en parler, de verbaliser, pour pouvoir comprendre d'où viennent les crispations qui sont parfois très inconscientes. On est presque dans la psychologie, c'est-à-dire que là, clairement, certaines personnes véhiculent inconsciemment des stéréotypes ou une idée préconçue sur l'art ou sur les artistes. »

But when the education board in Normandy made this training mandatory for all middle school teachers responsible for equality within their respective school establishment, there were mixed reactions. The mandatory nature of this training had an ambivalent effect: whilst it ensured that all teachers involved were trained on the topic, the training itself was met with a certain amount of initial resistance, despite the fact that the teachers were more or less supposed to be interested in the topic. But interviewee 5 went on,

« Mais passées les premières et réticences, je pense que très rapidement les enseignants ont bien vu l'intérêt qu'il y avait à se saisir de ce sujet et d'avoir un et d'avoir un support solide pour en discuter avec leurs élèves. »

Indeed, the museum focuses on training teachers in order ultimately to reach pupils. This is the goal of the educational project 'Unknitting Gender Stereotypes at the Museum' (see Appendix 3), set up by the art teacher on secondment to the museum. They were inspired by the pedagogical material 'Art through the prism of gender inequality' created by the Fine Arts Museum of Bordeaux.¹⁵⁵ Both pedagogical kits focus largely on gender representations and the deconstruction of gender norms and stereotypes through the paintings of the collections. A few pages highlight women artists in their respective collections, focusing on biographical aspects to explain their careers, their recognition, and the challenges they faced.

In the document from Bordeaux, these women artists are described as exceptional, challenging the norms of their time – a typical depiction of women artists, Parker and Pollock

¹⁵⁴ Cuesta Davignon, 'Gender Perspective and Museums'.

¹⁵⁵ Jean-Luc Destruhaut, 'L'art Au Prisme Des Inégalités Femmes-Hommes. Un Parcours Sur l'égalité Des Filles et Des Garçons à Travers Des Œuvres Du Musée Des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux', 2016.

argue.¹⁵⁶ For instance, in the document from Bordeaux ‘Art through the prism of gender inequality’, Lavinia Fontana is described as “not conforming to the norms of her time”, Rosa Bonheur as “transcending the norms linked to women and men”, and Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot are “atypical”. It can be further noted that for all these women artists, reference is made to their relationship to a male figure, whether it be Lavinia Fontana’s husband (although he is her “assistant”), Rosa Bonheur’s father, Mary Cassatt friendship with Edgar Degas, or Berthe Morisot’s brother-in-law, Edouard Manet. These women artists appear as exceptional and necessarily integrated in the art world through family ties, and no mention is made of historiographical elements to account for their subsequent omission from the canon.

By contrast, the document ‘Unknitting gender stereotypes at the museum’ from the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen *does* mention these elements in the two pages dedicated to women artists, referencing not only Linda Nochlin but also describing the historical reasons for the marginalisation of women artists. There is a balance between purely biographical elements and contextualisation. For instance, Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun’s difficulties in accessing training is balanced with her subsequent success, and Elise Bruyère’s still life painting is put in perspective with the traditional association of this genre with “women’s art”.¹⁵⁷

More broadly, the project ‘Unknitting gender stereotypes at the museum’ focuses on educating pupils to look critically at the images that surround them (interview3). Within its framework, projects are put in place with schools. For instance, one teacher in a middle school in Normandy set up a multidisciplinary project involving Art, French, Civic Education, History and P.E. teachers, for classes of 3^{ème}.¹⁵⁸ It addressed the topics of gender equality and self-acceptance throughout the year, and involved working with an artist who accompanied the pupils in their own artistic practice. The pupils were supposed to visit the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen, but this was prevented by health restrictions. This project had an undeniably profound impact on the pupils involved. During the year, several pupils came out as transgender or homosexual, confronting the teachers with an unexpected experience:

« Ça fait émerger des confidences d’élèves, tout un tas de choses auxquelles on n’est pas préparé, pour lesquelles on a peur de commettre des impairs. Émotionnellement, on se retrouve à accompagner les souffrances de certains élèves. C’est plus facile de combattre une idée reçue que d’accompagner une souffrance... Ou alors c’est personnel... C’est ce qui a été le plus délicat. Dans la réception des publics, il y a eu des grands-parents, il y a aussi eu des grands-parents qui ont dû se dire : « mais qu’est-ce que c’est que cette prof qui incite à la débauche ». Je ne me leurre pas. Ça n’a pas été formulé, mais je me doute que ça n’a pas fait l’unanimité. »

(interview 4)

In conclusion, with its policy for gender equality, the Fine Arts Museum is not engaged in a self-indulgent soliloquy but is talking *to* its visitors and the community through these

¹⁵⁶ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 26.

¹⁵⁷ Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, ‘Déticoter Les Stéréotypes Femmes - Hommes Dans Les Collections Des Musées Normands : “Les Enfants Du Matrimoine”’, 2020.

¹⁵⁸ In the class of 3^{ème}, pupils are generally 14 or 15 years old.

educational programs, relying on the teachers' role as primary educators within the school system. Increased awareness, from the museum professional to the museum visitor, can safeguard against a repeated decrease in women artists' hard-earned space on museum walls. But more generally, by addressing a topic of social relevance, this policy works towards closing the gap between the public and museums still perceived as elitist and out of touch.

However, these programs would benefit from evaluation of their impact in quantitative and qualitative terms. The museum appears to be talking *to* the visitors, but it is not yet understood what the visitors are actually hearing. This common blind spot warrants further investigation. Such analysis of the reception of museum discourse was conducted for instance at the MuCEM on the exhibition *Le Bazar du genre. Féminin/masculine en Méditerranée* (The Gender Bazaar: Feminin/Masculin in the Mediterranean).¹⁵⁹ It documented the virulent responses to this exhibition, offering a snapshot of visitors' reactions. Including impact evaluation would enable museum staff to close the circle from curator to visitor.

¹⁵⁹ Sylvia Girel, 'Le Bazar Du Genre. Féminin/Masculin En Méditerranée : (En)Quête de Réception', *Culture & Musées*, no. 30 (1 December 2017): 177–84, <https://doi.org/10.4000/culturemusees.1274>.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

Lucy Lippard wrote in her foreword to *Curatorial Activism* (2018) that,

“For all the importance of statistics that make us angry, and make us act, for the artists themselves [...] the real issue is not to be invited to more “special” or thematic exhibitions (though they have been historically effective). More appealing is to be simply included in the pool of respected artists when shows are being selected. [...] We were confident that once the work of women and artists of colour was seen, and considered, they would be included. Turns out that it wasn’t that easy.”¹⁶⁰

I believe it is time to move beyond “special” exhibitions for women artists, since they do not guarantee their lasting inclusion in permanent exhibitions. The RMM’s policy on gender equality offers an effective way of moving forward. The case study of the Fine Arts Museum demonstrates, I believe, not only the theoretical and practical challenges in ensuring the permanent integration of women artists in France, but also the possible pathways to implementing lasting change. Their cross-sectional approach offers interesting perspectives for art museums. One can only but encourage emulation between institutions and an uptake of Rouen’s approach in other institutions. Indeed, the RMM is involved since 2022 in an Erasmus+ project with institutions in Norway and Germany, and its recent inclusion of new museums enables broad implementation of the policy in Rouen. However, the ultimate success of their policy will depend on the continuing dedication of museum teams, and on effective monitoring of progress and evaluation of impact.

Taking into account both the achievements of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen and its shortcomings, I would venture six operational recommendations to bolster the lasting integration of women artists in permanent exhibitions of art museums. They are in line with Grahn’s methodology and echo those formulated by the High Council on Gender Equality¹⁶¹ and the UNESCO,¹⁶² though specific to art museums and with an emphasis on women artists.

Recommendation 1: Conduct an audit of and research on collections from a gender perspective

The goal for the museum is to gain a clear vision of the women artists in the collections and their works. This means:

- knowing the number of women artists in the collections, the number of their works, and the relative proportion of works on show and works in storage;
- conducting research on these women (in line with recommendation 15 of the High Council on Gender Equality’s 2018 report),¹⁶³ since they may be lesser-known artists;

¹⁶⁰ Lucy Lippard in Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 9.

¹⁶¹ Bousquet, ‘Acte II : Après 10 Ans de Constats, Le Temps de l’action’.

¹⁶² Bridget Conor, ‘Gender and Creativity : Progress on the Precipice’ (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2021).

¹⁶³ Bousquet, ‘Acte II : Après 10 Ans de Constats, Le Temps de l’action’, 10.

- reviewing from a gender perspective discourses presented in the museum around women artists.

The case study showed the usefulness of an external perspective, whether it be the consultant or the expertise of AWARE. Within the Swedish context, Grahn also highlights that a strong focus on research within an institution seems to guarantee an easier integration of gender perspectives.¹⁶⁴

In a context where museum professionals appear to have little training on gender issues, an until this situation changes, an external expert perspective can be useful.

Recommendation 2: Introduce a cross-sectional institutional policy on gender equality

The goal is to shift from projects carried by individuals to policies carried by institutions, where what matters is the process and not the people. This echoes UNESCO's recommendation to "move faster from research and data-gathering to policy design, implementation and assessment."¹⁶⁵

This means:

- setting feasible goals in terms of acquisitions and restoration, informed by the audit and research conducted on the collections, and tailored to the institution and its budget. There should be consideration not only for the *number* of works by women artists in the collections, but the number of works exhibited, the number of artists represented, the number of works per artist, the physical space the works occupy, and the budgets allocated to buy and restore works;
- reassessing the discourse presented to the public through textual and oral mediation. Achieving lasting integration this involves introducing historiographical discourse which contextualises women artists' historical and contemporary marginalisation, as well as challenging the structures which have contributed to this marginalisation.

Recommendation 3: Train staff and teachers on gender issues

This ensures the staff's commitment to the aforementioned policy.

The case study showed how instrumental staff and teacher training was to the effective implementation of institutional change. Grahn also highlights how important it is that museum staff, and especially upper management, have at least basic knowledge of gender perspectives.¹⁶⁶

This involves not only training on gender equality, as was done in the case study, but also constantly raising awareness about women artists.

Recommendation 4: Implement outreach and educational programmes on women artists in the collections

This ensures that the museum policy stays in constant dialogue with its visitors and with the community. Exhibiting women artists is not a goal in itself. It is not just a question of them being shown, but also of them being *seen*.

¹⁶⁴ Grahn, 'The Politics of Heritage: How to Achieve Change', 258.

¹⁶⁵ Conor, 'Gender and Creativity: Progress on the Precipice', 55.

¹⁶⁶ Grahn, 'The Politics of Heritage: How to Achieve Change', 257.

This works towards a more global understanding the contribution of women artists to the history of art. Introducing a historiographical discourse on the marginalisation of women artists also contributes to a global understanding of their historical and continuing struggle for recognition.

Recommendation 5: Monitor progress in light of the policy put in place

Constant monitoring of the implementation of the policy and of progress made against the goals which were set ensures the lasting impact of the policy and safeguards against potential setbacks.

Recommendation 6: Evaluate impact of actions

This means evaluating the effectiveness of staff training, and the effectiveness of educational actions. One can investigate whether the educational programs and actions effectively raise awareness about women artists and what impact they have on pupils and the general public.

These recommendations are resolutely turned towards the future, and can, it is hoped, safeguard against future setbacks. Although their focal point is women artists, they can be adapted and applied to promote other marginalised groups of artists.

Although, as Lucy Lippard wrote, the integration of women artists is not easy, the example of the RMM as well as other projects referred to in this research show that progress is achievable. There is a way, it is time to find the will.

Appendix 1: Interviews

Interviews conducted for the case study of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen

Interview 1 with the museum director

Interview 2 with the museum administrator

Interview 3 with the art teacher in secondment at the museum

Interview 4 art teacher who implemented a project in the framework of ‘Unknitting Gender Stereotypes with the Collections of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen’

Interview 5 with the head of cultural mediation at the museum

Comparative interviews

Interview 6 with a museum administrator at the Louvre

Interview 7 with the director of the Musée Thomas Henry (Cherbourg)

Appendix 2: Charter for Gender Equality in Museum Practices



Charte pour l'égalité Femmes – Hommes dans les pratiques muséales

Réunion des Musées Métropolitains (RMM) – Métropole Rouen Normandie

Avec le soutien de la Direction régionale aux droits des femmes et à l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes
Avec la collaboration du Cabinet TREZEGO – cabinet de conseil & formation sur les questions d'égalité femmes-hommes



12 Octobre 2018



Considérant,

- la loi du 4 août 2014 pour l'égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes qui prévoit dans son article 1er, que les collectivités territoriales, ainsi que leurs établissements publics, mettent en œuvre une politique pour l'égalité avec notamment « des actions visant à garantir l'égalité de traitement entre les femmes et les hommes et leur égal accès à la création et à la production culturelle et artistique, ainsi qu'à la diffusion des œuvres »,

- la loi du 7 juillet 2016 relative à la liberté de création, à l'architecture et au patrimoine qui impose que la politique en faveur de la création artistique favorise « l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans tous les domaines de la création artistique »,

- la loi du 27 janvier 2017 relative à l'égalité et à la citoyenneté qui précise qu'à compter "à compter du 1er janvier 2018, une proportion minimale de 40 % de personnes de chaque sexe s'applique à la désignation des membres des commissions ou instances qui, au sein des établissements publics placés sous la tutelle du ministre chargé de la culture ou placés auprès de ses services déconcentrés, sont consultées sur l'attribution de subventions ou d'aides financières, sur la sélection, l'acquisition ou la commande d'œuvres, sur l'attribution d'agrément, ou lors de sélections en vue de compétitions internationales",

- la circulaire du 8 juin 2016 relative au soutien d'artistes et d'équipes artistiques dans le cadre de résidences qui rappelle que les résidences doivent répondre à 5 objectifs dont "favoriser, la parité, la diversité et le renouvellement des générations",

- les recommandations du Haut Conseil à l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans son rapport « Inégalités entre les femmes et les hommes dans les arts et la culture. Acte II : après 10 ans de constats, le temps de l'action »,

- la feuille de route Egalité 2018-2022 du ministère de la Culture et son volet patrimonial,

- l'implication de la Métropole Rouen Normandie, signataire de la Charte européenne pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans la vie locale et engagée dans son 2ème Plan triennal en faveur de l'égalité, plan structuré autour de 3 axes que sont l'égalité professionnelle, le développement d'une culture de l'égalité et l'intégration de l'égalité femmes-hommes dans ses politiques publiques.

La Réunion des Musées Métropolitains Rouen Normandie s'engage à :

Porter les valeurs d'égalité femmes-hommes soit

- 1- Inscrire l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans ses orientations stratégiques et les projets scientifiques et culturels de chaque musée ;
- 2- Sensibiliser et former l'ensemble de ses professionnel-le.s aux problématiques de genre et d'égalité femmes-hommes ;
- 3- Déployer une communication interne et externe exemptes de stéréotypes et valorisant les femmes et les hommes dans toute leur diversité ;
- 4- Développer et animer des partenariats autour de cette thématique.

Garantir l'égalité de traitement entre les femmes et les hommes et leur égal accès à la programmation culturelle de la RMM soit

- 5- Tendre progressivement vers la parité concernant les artistes, les spectacles et les intervenant-e-s en fixant des objectifs de progression lorsqu'un fort déséquilibre est constaté ;
- 6- Faire évoluer la composition des jurys de sélection et des comités de programmation de façon à y compter une proportion minimale de 40 % de personnes de chaque sexe ;
- 7- Développer une politique d'acquisition et d'emprunts volontariste pour favoriser l'entrée d'œuvres et de travaux de femmes au sein des collections.

Restituer une histoire mixte et lutter contre les stéréotypes de genre soit

- 8- Rétablir la contribution des femmes à l'histoire et à la société, à travers les collections et les actions portées ;
- 9- Rechercher à traduire dans les expositions, par un meilleur équilibre entre les représentations de femmes et d'hommes, la réalité historique dans son ensemble et sa diversité, à travers des œuvres, documents, objets... ;
- 10- Restituer le rôle historique des inégalités femmes-hommes dans la fabrication de déséquilibres sociétaux, des représentations essentialistes et des stéréotypes ;
- 11- Favoriser une rédaction qui donne une visibilité aux femmes dans les productions éditées par la RMM (catalogues et textes d'accompagnement) ;
- 12- En complément de cette approche intégrée et transversale des questions d'égalité, développer des parcours et ateliers spécifiques sur le genre à travers l'histoire, les droits des femmes et les inégalités femmes-hommes.

Adapter ses outils et ses méthodes de travail soit

13- Nommer des référent·e.s égalité femmes-hommes en charge de réaliser une veille et un suivi annuel des objectifs chiffrés à l'échelle de la RMM et de chaque musée ;

14- Renseigner le genre des artistes et personnalités dans les bases de gestion des collections et outils statistiques à la disposition des équipes pour permettre le suivi des objectifs chiffrés ;

15- Intégrer la problématique de l'égalité femmes-hommes parmi les éléments de conception et d'évaluation des projets ;

16- Faire mention de cette charte dans les dossiers de candidatures, les conventions de partenariats, les contrats. En accord avec ces valeurs, écarter les propositions véhiculant des positions sexistes ;

17- Lors des expositions monographiques, ne pas occulter dans la biographie des artistes et des personnalités, d'éventuels faits avérés de violences sexistes ou sexuelles. Partager cette charte avec les artistes, les personnalités ou leurs ayants-droits ;

18- Lors d'appels à projets, veiller à l'équilibre entre les candidatures d'hommes et celles de femmes, en élargissant la diffusion des offres, relativisant les critères de sélection biaisés par les inégalités femmes-hommes et, sur une base de dossiers de qualité, développer l'usage de listes restreintes paritaires avant le choix final ;

19- Garantir pour les interventions au sein des musées les conditions d'une équité femmes-hommes dans l'expression, les pratiques, les représentations.

20- Organiser le pilotage stratégique de la mise en œuvre de cette charte et étendre la démarche à toute forme de discriminations

Appendix 3: Unknitting Gender Stereotypes with the collections of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen



Détricotter les stéréotypes femmes – hommes

Dans les collections des musées normands

« Les enfants du Matrimoine »

Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen



« Dialogue entre les arts » avec les élèves du collège Barbey d'Aurevilly – Rouen devant *Le Martyre de Saint-Agnès* de Joseph-Désiré Court, Huile sur toile, 496 x 812 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen RMM © Photographie Isabelle Lebon

Dossier pédagogique rédigé par
Le service des publics et le service éducatif du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen



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Présentation du projet

La Réunion des Musées Métropolitains - R.M.M. - s'est engagée dans une démarche réflexive sur l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes, avec le soutien de la Direction Régionale aux Droits des Femmes – D.R.D.F.E. -. En publiant une charte dès octobre 2018, elle est devenue la première institution muséale de France à promouvoir l'égalité en se dotant d'un outil de référence.

La Délégation académique à l'action culturelle - D.A.A.C.- et la Mission égalité filles / garçons - M.E.F.G.- de l'académie Normandie s'associent à cette dynamique, en partenariat avec une vingtaine de musées normands, et proposent un projet pédagogique intitulé « Détricoter les stéréotypes femmes/hommes dans les collections des musées normands ».

Dans ce dossier pédagogique, le service éducatif et le service des publics du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen RMM s'adossent à des œuvres des collections pour aborder différents angles de cette thématique. Cette approche invite les enseignant.e.s et leurs élèves à entrer d'une manière transversale au cœur de cette réflexion d'actualité et à s'inscrire dans le projet intitulé "**Les Enfants du matrimoine**", afin de mettre en place un projet d'éducation artistique et culturelle – EAC – et d'éducation à la citoyenneté en interrogeant la question de l'égalité filles/garçons.

En effet, les élèves pourront ainsi découvrir des œuvres dans leur contexte muséal, s'approprier des connaissances historiques abordant des notions essentielles, et produire des réalisations artistiques (littéraires, musicales, plastiques, chorégraphiques, etc.). Ils prendront conscience que les images et les objets des collections contribuent à véhiculer des stéréotypes – ces opinions toutes faites, acceptées comme une évidence et sans esprit critique - qu'il s'agira d'analyser et de remettre en cause. Notre mission est de les amener à aiguiser leur regard sur le monde afin qu'ils deviennent des citoyen.nes. éclairé.e.s du 21^e siècle.

Femmes peintres

En 1971, l'historienne de l'art Linda Nochlin, dans un article publié dans *Artnews*, lance un défi aux historiens de l'art, en lâchant la question : « Pourquoi n'y a-t-il pas de grandes femmes artistes ? » Nochlin rejette tout d'abord le présupposé d'une absence des femmes dans l'histoire de l'art à cause d'un défaut de « génie artistique », mais n'est pas non plus partisane de la position féministe d'une invisibilité des femmes dans les ouvrages provoqués par un biais sexiste de la discipline. En effet, bien qu'en Europe, les arts visuels étaient jusqu'à l'époque contemporaine en très large majorité le fait des hommes, les femmes ont bel et bien joué un rôle dans la production artistique. Cependant pour Nochlin, la présence moindre des femmes dans l'histoire de l'art s'explique par le fait que celles-ci se sont simplement vues écartées de l'apprentissage et de la pratique de l'art pour des raisons historiques et culturelles.

En effet, leur formation était limitée par rapport à celle des hommes. Elles n'avaient notamment pas accès aux cours de nu, exercice essentiel pour accéder à celle de la peinture d'histoire donc au genre supérieur dans la hiérarchie picturale. Les femmes artistes étaient donc cantonnées à des genres considérés comme mineurs tels que le portrait ou les natures mortes. Leurs affaires étaient, de plus, gérées par leur père, ou leur mari. Et si le dessin et la peinture font partie de l'éducation des jeunes filles, elles n'en font pas pour autant leur métier.



Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun (1755-842), *Portrait de Guiseppina Grassino dans le rôle de Zaira*, Huile sur toile, 132 x 100 cm

Elisabeth Vigée est un exemple de cet accès difficile à la formation. Son premier enseignement lui est donné par son père, Louis Vigée, pastelliste et membre de l'Académie de Saint-Luc. Elle est ensuite l'élève de Briard, membre de l'Académie royale de peinture.

Puis par le biais de Joseph Vernet et de Jean-Baptiste Greuze, elle accède aux collections privées de grands seigneurs ou des princes à Paris. Elisabeth Vigée peut ainsi étudier à loisir les grands maîtres, copier des têtes de Rembrandt, Van Dick ou Greuze. Elle écrit : « On pourrait exactement me comparer à l'abeille tant j'y récoltais de connaissances... » Très vite on lui commande des portraits et elle fait vivre sa famille, son père étant décédé. Elle épouse Le Brun, un marchand de tableaux qui exploite la célébrité de son épouse.

Membre de l'Académie de Saint-Luc à partir de 1774, l'artiste devient quatre ans plus tard la peintre officielle de la reine Marie-Antoinette. En 1783, grâce à l'intervention de la souveraine, Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun est reçue à l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture avec, pour morceau de réception, un tableau à sujet allégorique : *La Paix ramenant l'Abondance*, une peinture d'histoire. Elle est cependant reçue en tant que portraitiste.

Avec Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, reçue la même année, elle fait partie des quatre artistes femmes à pouvoir entrer à l'Académie Royale de peinture et de sculpture à Paris. Supprimée en 1793 lors de la Révolution française, l'Académie royale est remplacée en 1795 de l'Académie des Beaux-arts. Cette dernière refuse de recevoir les femmes. Cependant elle ne leur interdit pas l'exposition au Salon qu'elle contrôle jusqu'à la fin du 19^e siècle.



Lavinia Fontana (1552 – 1614), *Vénus et l'Amour*, 1592, Huile sur toile, 72,5 x 60 cm

Lavinia Fontana est la fille de Prospero Fontana, célèbre peintre de Bologne dans la seconde moitié du 16^e siècle. C'est donc avec lui qu'elle étudie la peinture. D'abord proche de son art, Lavinia Fontana se fait rapidement une réputation comme portraitiste à la cour de Bologne dans un style particulier qui combine une grâce tout italienne qui rappelle Le Corrège et la précision descriptive des peintres nordiques.

Représentation de Vénus, déesse de l'amour, cette œuvre est certainement un portrait dont la dimension mythologique légitime le dénuement. Le voile transparent cousu de fil d'or révèle ici plus qu'il ne cache le corps d'une Vénus à la gorge menue et aux traits délicats mis en valeur par une parure de bijoux d'une grande richesse.

Il s'agit ici sans doute d'une dame de la famille Ruini comme le montre un dessin au visage similaire de Cristoforo dell'Altissimo et conservé au palais Pitti de Florence ; peut-être s'agit-il d'un portrait de fiançailles



Elise Bruyère, née Le Barbier, (1776-1842), *Fleurs dans une corbeille*, 1833, Huile sur toile

L'enseignement artistique étant limité pour les jeunes femmes, Élise Bruyère se forme auprès de son père Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier (1738-1836), peintre d'histoire néoclassique, écrivain et illustrateur. Elle termine sa formation auprès du peintre de fleurs Jan van Daël. Elle excelle dans ce genre pictural auquel, avec le portrait, on cantonne généralement la carrière d'une artiste depuis le 17^e siècle. Ces genres sont considérés comme adaptés aux femmes car ne relevant que de l'imitation et non de l'invention. Ils sont donc à l'époque jugés « comme particulièrement adéquats au tempérament féminin car ne relevant que d'un aimable sens décoratif. »

À partir de la Révolution et pour seulement quelques années, le Salon est ouvert sans jury de sélection. Elise Bruyère commence à exposer avec succès au Salon dès 1798. Elle reçoit, cas rare pour une femme de cette époque, une médaille de seconde classe en 1827.

Notions

- Autoportrait
- Femmes artistes
- Accession au savoir et aux études dans les écoles d'art
- Hiérarchie des genres : peinture d'histoire, portrait, paysage, nature-morte

Points de programme

Programme d'enseignement moral et civique de l'école et du collège (cycles 2, 3 et 4)

L'enseignement moral et civique poursuit trois finalités qui sont intimement liées entre elles.

- Respecter autrui : c'est respecter sa liberté, le considérer comme égal à soi en dignité, développer avec lui des relations de fraternité.
- Acquérir et partager les quatre valeurs de la République : liberté, fraternité, laïcité et égalité notamment entre les femmes et les hommes.
- Construire une culture civique qui s'articule autour de quatre domaines : la sensibilité, la règle et le droit, le jugement, l'engagement. Cette culture civique irrigue l'ensemble des enseignements, elle est au cœur de la vie de l'école et de l'établissement, elle est portée par certaines des actions qui mettent les élèves au contact de la société.

L'enseignement moral et civique articule des valeurs, des savoirs (littéraires, scientifiques, historiques, juridiques, etc.) et des pratiques. Il requiert l'acquisition de connaissances et de compétences dans les quatre domaines de la culture civique et donne lieu à des traces écrites et à une évaluation.

L'enseignement moral et civique s'effectue, chaque fois que possible, à partir de l'analyse de situations concrètes. L'enseignement moral et civique se prête particulièrement aux travaux qui placent les élèves en situation de coopération et de mutualisation favorisant les échanges d'arguments et la confrontation des idées.

Compétences travaillées du cycle 2 au cycle 4

Cycle 2 Respecter autrui

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève Amener les élèves à :
Respecter autrui, accepter et respecter les différences.	Observer dans les œuvres du musée, la diversité des individus représentés. Verbaliser afin de qualifier ses différences sans introduire de stéréotype.
Adapter sa tenue, son langage et son attitude au contexte scolaire ; se situer et s'exprimer en respectant les codes de la communication orale, les règles de l'échange et le statut de l'interlocuteur.	Observer dans les œuvres du musée, la représentation des corps et les tenues vestimentaires pour en parler sans préjugés. Lors de cette initiation, reprendre les insultes sexistes, les expliquer pour qu'elles ne soient plus employées.
S'estimer et être capable d'écoute et d'empathie. Accepter le point de vue des autres.	Parler d'une œuvre au musée en alternant la parole d'une fille et d'un garçon

Construire une culture civique

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève Amener les élèves à :
Favoriser l'engagement dans la classe et dans l'école. Coopérer en vue d'un objectif commun. S'impliquer dans la vie scolaire (actions, projets, instances).	Réaliser un projet collectif sur l'égalité fille garçon à la suite de la visite au musée. Veiller à faire respecter la parité fille- garçon.
Construire l'esprit critique. Apprendre à s'informer. Prendre part à une discussion, un débat ou un dialogue : prendre la parole devant les autres,	Observer, identifier des éléments d'informations dans les musées.

<p>écouter autrui et accepter le point de vue des autres, formuler un point de vue au sujet d'une œuvre d'art.</p> <p>Développer les aptitudes au discernement et à la réflexion critique.</p>	<p>À propos d'une œuvre, prendre la parole en respectant les règles de la discussion en groupe (écoute, respect du point de vue de l'autre, recherche d'un accord).</p> <p>Trouver et comprendre des différences de représentation entre une femme et un homme dans une œuvre, s'en étonner et proposer une autre approche.</p>
<p>S'estimer et être capable d'écoute et d'empathie.</p> <p>Accepter le point de vue des autres.</p>	<p>Construire un point de vue sur une œuvre vue au musée et être capable de reconnaître celui de l'autre dans le cadre de chaque discussion réglée.</p>

Cycle 3 Respecter autrui

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
<p>Respecter autrui et accepter les différences.</p> <p>Comprendre les préjugés et les stéréotypes.</p> <p>Prendre conscience des enjeux civiques de l'usage du numérique et des réseaux sociaux</p> <p>Savoir identifier les points d'accord et les points de désaccord.</p> <p>Respecter le droit des autres à exprimer leur opinion.</p> <p>Aborder la notion de tolérance.</p>	<p>Respecter les autres dans leur diversité en montrant l'évolution des codes vestimentaires selon les époques dans les œuvres.</p> <p>Montrer comment des tableaux, photos, publicités transmettent des idées sexistes : rendre visibles les sous-entendus.</p> <p>Comprendre que dans un musée aussi, il faut faire un usage responsable du numérique.</p> <p>Identifier les points d'accord et de désaccord dans le cadre d'une discussion réglée autour d'une œuvre d'art pouvant faire polémique sur les stéréotypes fille-garçon.</p>
<p>Identifier et exprimer les émotions et les sentiments.</p> <p>Partager et réguler des émotions, des sentiments dans des situations d'enseignement.</p> <p>Mobiliser le vocabulaire adapté à leur expression.</p>	<p>Exprimer et partager des sentiments et des émotions à partir de différentes œuvres picturales vues au musée qui peuvent être croisées avec des textes, des œuvres musicales, plastiques, des documents d'actualités portant sur l'égalité ou les inégalités femme-homme</p>

Acquérir et partager les valeurs de la République

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
<p>Comprendre que la vie collective implique le respect de règles.</p> <p>Comprendre les notions de droits, de devoirs, et de règles, pour les appliquer et les accepter dans la classe, l'établissement et la Cité.</p> <p>Aborder les droits et les devoirs : de la personne, de l'enfant, de l'élève, du citoyen...</p> <p>Aborder le vocabulaire de la règle et du droit (droit, devoir, règle, règlement, loi)</p>	<p>Comprendre que l'obéissance aux règles, au règlement intérieur, à la charte numérique, s'appliquent aussi dans un musée.</p> <p>Etudier la Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant qui stipule l'égalité entre les filles et les garçons et leur droit de pratiquer des activités artistiques (art.31) ce qui n'a pas toujours été le cas en France et en Europe. Rappeler quel était le cadre de l'enseignement des arts en France pour les filles.</p> <p>Découvrir des points de la charte de l'égalité des femmes et des hommes des musées de la RMM de 2018 pour mettre en évidence l'écart entre les principes et la réalité. (Art. 5, 6,7)</p>
<p>Identifier et connaître les cadres d'une société démocratique.</p> <p>Connaître le fondement de la loi et les grandes déclarations des droits.</p> <p>Avoir une première approche des institutions.</p>	<p>Réfléchir à la Convention sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes.</p> <p>Découvrir une institution muséale avec son organigramme, sa multitude de métiers et observer si la parité dans les métiers est respectée.</p>

Construire une culture civique

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
<p>Comprendre et expérimenter l'engagement dans la classe, dans l'école et dans l'établissement.</p> <p>S'engager dans la réalisation d'un projet collectif (projet de classe, d'école, communal, national, etc.)</p> <p>Pouvoir expliquer ses choix et ses actes.</p> <p>Savoir participer et prendre sa place dans un groupe.</p> <p>Coopérer dans le cadre des projets et des travaux de groupes.</p>	<p>À la suite de la visite au musée, et après avoir étudié la place des femmes et des hommes dans l'espace public :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prendre des initiatives et proposer dans les instances de l'école ou du collège des initiatives concernant l'égalité fille-garçon : ex dans le partage de la cour de récréation. - Travailler en respectant les règles de la coopération entre fille et garçon à partir d'une œuvre étudiée au musée dont la thématique pourrait être héros-héroïne aujourd'hui.

<p>Exercer son jugement, construire l'esprit critique.</p> <p>S'informer de manière rigoureuse Réfléchir à la confiance à accorder à une source, un émetteur d'informations.</p> <p>Collecter l'information.</p> <p>Prendre part à une discussion, un débat ou un dialogue : prendre la parole devant les autres, écouter autrui, formuler et apprendre à justifier un point de vue.</p> <p>Développer le discernement éthique.</p>	<p>- Observer des œuvres et lire leurs cartels, - Avoir un jugement critique sur ces textes, -En faire part à ses camarades dans une discussion de groupe et proposer une autre description sans stéréotype.</p> <p>Justifier son choix personnel dans le cadre d'une argumentation.</p> <p>Cette approche de l'argumentation permet de faire la distinction entre savoirs vérifiés et opinions personnelles.</p> <p>Réfléchir à partir de situations fictionnelles proposées dans une œuvre peut permettre d'identifier des valeurs en tension et d'en discuter.</p>
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Acquérir et partager les valeurs de la République

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève Amener les élèves à :
<p>Comprendre que la vie collective implique le respect de règles.</p> <p>Comprendre les notions de droits, de devoirs, et de règles, pour les appliquer et les accepter dans la classe, l'établissement et la Cité.</p> <p>Aborder les droits et les devoirs : de la personne, de l'enfant, de l'élève, du citoyen.</p> <p>Aborder le vocabulaire de la règle et du droit (droit, devoir, règle, règlement, loi).</p>	<p>Comprendre que l'obéissance aux règles, au règlement intérieur, à la charte numérique, s'appliquent aussi dans un musée.</p> <p>Expliquer que la Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant de 1989, stipule l'égalité entre les filles et les garçons et leur droit de pratiquer des activités artistiques (art.31) ce qui n'a pas toujours été le cas ni en France ni en Europe.</p> <p>Découvrir des points de la charte de l'égalité des femmes et des hommes des musées de la RMM de 2018 et mettre ainsi en évidence l'écart entre les principes et la réalité.</p> <p>Le point 20 de la Charte a notamment pour objectif « d'étendre la démarche à toute forme de discrimination ».</p>
<p>Identifier et connaître les cadres d'une société démocratique.</p> <p>Connaître le fondement de la loi et les grandes déclarations des droits.</p> <p>Avoir une première approche des institutions.</p>	<p>La Convention sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes.</p> <p>La Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant.</p> <p>Découvrir une institution muséale avec son organigramme et vérifier s'il y a parité dans les métiers.</p>

Construire une culture civique

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
<p>Comprendre et expérimenter l'engagement dans la classe, dans l'école et dans l'établissement.</p> <p>S'engager dans la réalisation d'un projet collectif (projet de classe, d'école, communal, national, etc.).</p> <p>Pouvoir expliquer ses choix et ses actes</p> <p>Savoir participer et prendre sa place dans un groupe.</p> <p>Coopérer dans le cadre des projets et des travaux de groupes.</p>	<p>Observer dans les œuvres du musée le partage de l'espace public entre les femmes et les hommes puis observer de quelle façon se fait ce partage dans leur établissement scolaire (cour de récréation, cantine, couloir) et dans leur commune.</p> <p>Proposer un nouveau partage de ces lieux en respectant les règles de la coopération entre fille et garçon.</p>
<p>Exercer son jugement, construire l'esprit critique.</p> <p>S'informer de manière rigoureuse.</p> <p>Réfléchir à la confiance à accorder à une source, un émetteur d'informations.</p> <p>Collecter l'information.</p> <p>Prendre part à une discussion, un débat ou un dialogue : prendre la parole devant les autres, écouter autrui, formuler et apprendre à justifier un point de vue.</p> <p>Développer le discernement éthique.</p>	<p>Observer au musée les œuvres, lire les cartels, et faire remarquer la fréquence et la façon dont on parle des femmes et des hommes.</p> <p>Avoir un jugement critique sur les textes des cartels. En faire part à ses camarades dans une discussion de groupe et proposer un autre cartel descriptif sans stéréotype.</p> <p>À justifier d'un choix personnel dans le cadre d'une argumentation.</p> <p>Distinguer savoirs vérifiés et opinions personnelles à propos d'une œuvre.</p> <p>Réfléchir à partir de situations fictionnelles : identifier des valeurs en tension et discussion réglée sur les choix.</p>

Cycle 4

Respecter autrui

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
<p>Construire le respect de soi.</p> <p>Définir ce qu'est le respect.</p> <p>Identifier les composantes d'une identité.</p>	<p>Identifier des œuvres au musée où femme-homme se respectent et ne se respectent pas.</p> <p>Réaliser une carte mentale sur l'identité personnelle d'un et d'une artiste du musée ainsi que leur identité légale (et numérique).</p> <p>Comparer leurs parcours, leur célébrité et leur représentation au sein du musée.</p>
<p>Respect d'autrui.</p> <p>Comprendre le rapport à l'autre, le respect de l'autre, par le respect des différences.</p>	<p>Comprendre de quelle façon des idées sexistes se transmettent par la représentation des femmes et des hommes dans leur posture, leur corps, leurs vêtements.</p> <p>Réfléchir sur le nombre d'artistes femmes et hommes présents dans le musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen RMM</p>

<p>Distinguer une inégalité d'une discrimination et comprendre les mécanismes de l'exclusion.</p> <p>Appréhender en situation que des valeurs de la République peuvent entrer en tension.</p>	<p>Ex : Sur 713 œuvres exposés, 2% d'œuvres sont celles de femmes. Lors de ces dix dernières années, sur 780 acquisitions d'œuvres par le musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, RMM, neuf sont des œuvres de femmes dont six sont des dons. Alors : inégalité ou exclusion ?</p> <p>Présenter la Charte égalité F/H des musées de la RMM et un organigramme de l'institution. Repérer les nombreux métiers et vérifier s'il y a parité des femmes et des hommes dans les services techniques, administratifs, des médiateurs...</p>
<p>La morale et l'éthique</p> <p>Savoir expliquer ses choix et ses actes, prendre conscience de sa responsabilité</p> <p>Savoir identifier une éthique personnelle et une déontologie professionnelle</p>	<p>Contextualiser les œuvres et montrer comment elles participent à la banalisation d'une certaine violence et à l'acceptation d'attitude sexiste.</p> <p>Puis s'interroger sur l'attitude du spectateur.</p> <p>Proposer un débat sur le choix du conservateur devant préparer une nouvelle exposition : doit-il prendre autant d'artiste femme et homme ou faire selon son goût et ce que lui propose le marché de l'art.</p>

Acquérir et partager les valeurs de la République

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève
	Amener les élèves à :
<p>Connaître les principes, valeurs et symboles de la citoyenneté française et de la citoyenneté européenne</p> <p>Expliquer les différentes dimensions de l'égalité</p>	<p>Proposer ce que devrait être le musée du XXI siècle qui respecterait l'égalité femme-homme sans discrimination. Débattre sur la discrimination positive.</p>

Construire une culture civique

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève
	Amener les élèves à :
<p>L'engagement ou les engagements</p> <p>Expliquer le sens et l'importance de l'engagement individuel ou collectif des citoyens dans une démocratie</p>	<p>Construire une chronologie des droits des femmes et des artistes femmes en France.</p> <p>Montrer que ces avancées sont le résultat d'engagement politique et associatif.</p>

Programme d'enseignement moral et civique de seconde générale et technologique

Bulletin officiel spécial n°1 du 22 janvier 2019

https://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=138115

Le programme associe à chacun des trois niveaux du lycée une thématique principale : la classe de seconde étudie la liberté, la classe de première la société, la classe terminale la démocratie. Ces trois thématiques s'éclairent et se répondent. Elles permettent d'aborder le sens et la portée des valeurs de la devise républicaine : la liberté, thème central de l'année de seconde, mais aussi l'égalité et la fraternité, en tant qu'elles fondent une société démocratique. (...)

Dans sa contribution à la construction du jugement, l'enseignement moral et civique permet la réflexion sur les sources utilisées (textes écrits, cartes, images, œuvres picturales, mises en scène théâtrales et chorégraphiques, productions cinématographiques, musiques et chansons, etc.), sur leur constitution comme document, sur leurs usages culturels, médiatiques et sociaux. L'enseignement moral et civique initie les élèves à la recherche documentaire et à ses méthodes, leur fait découvrir la richesse et la variété des supports et des expressions, les éduque à la complexité, à l'autonomie, à l'engagement, à la prise de décision et à la responsabilité dans le cadre de la République. (...)

Questionnement et Notions à acquérir/à mobiliser	Objets d'enseignement possibles Amener les élèves à :
<p>Axe 1 : Des libertés pour la liberté Parmi les domaines proposés : Les libertés collectives : l'égalité femmes/hommes. Notions à acquérir/à mobiliser Le rapport entre liberté et droits, le respect, la tolérance et l'égalité devant la loi. L'intériorisation de la liberté de l'autre ou le rapport à soi et aux autres : altérité, différence, discrimination.</p>	<p>Découvrir un corpus de lois parmi lesquels, les lois favorisant l'émancipation féminine et l'égalité femmes/hommes, contextualiser l'élaboration des lois choisies et débattre.</p>
<p>Axe 2 : Garantir les libertés, étendre les libertés : les libertés en débat Comment évoluent la conception et l'exercice des libertés ? La reconnaissance des différences, la lutte contre les discriminations et la promotion du respect d'autrui dont la lutte contre le sexisme, l'homophobie, la transphobie ; lutte contre les discriminations faites aux personnes porteuses d'un handicap. Parmi les notions à acquérir/à mobiliser : Laïcité, tolérance. Respect de la personne humaine.</p>	<p>L'évolution des droits des personnes homosexuelles et transsexuelles</p>
<p>Capacités attendues Savoir exercer son jugement et l'inscrire dans une recherche de vérité ; être capable de mettre à distance ses propres opinions et représentations, comprendre le sens de la complexité des choses, être capable de considérer les autres dans leur diversité et leurs différences. Identifier différents types de documents (récits de vie, textes littéraires, œuvres d'art, documents juridiques, textes administratifs, etc.), les contextualiser, en saisir les statuts, repérer et apprécier les intentions des auteurs. Rechercher, collecter, analyser et savoir publier des textes ou témoignages ; être rigoureux dans ses recherches et ses traitements de l'information. S'exprimer en public de manière claire, argumentée, nuancée et posée ; savoir écouter et apprendre à débattre ; respecter la diversité des points de vue. Développer des capacités à contribuer à un travail coopératif/collaboratif en groupe, s'impliquer dans un travail en équipe et les projets de classe.</p>	

Programme d'enseignement moral et civique de première des voies générale et technologique

Questionnement et Notions à acquérir/à mobiliser	Objets d'enseignement possibles : Amener les élèves à :
<p>Axe 2 : Les recompositions du lien social Parmi les domaines proposés : La promotion de l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes : orientation, formation, travail, emploi, salaire, représentation, reconnaissance Notions à acquérir/à mobiliser : Respect Justice, égalité et équité Rapport social - solidarité Responsabilité individuelle et collective</p>	<p>La défense des droits des femmes : renouveau du féminisme ou évolution sociétale.</p>
<p>Capacités attendues Savoir exercer son jugement et l'inscrire dans une recherche de vérité ; être capable de mettre à distance ses propres opinions et représentations, comprendre le sens de la complexité des choses, être capable de considérer les autres dans leur diversité et leurs différences. Identifier différents types de documents (récits de vie, textes littéraires, œuvres d'art, documents juridiques, textes administratifs, etc.), les contextualiser, en saisir les statuts, repérer et apprécier les intentions des auteurs. Rechercher, collecter, analyser et savoir publier des textes ou témoignages ; être rigoureux dans ses recherches et ses traitements de l'information. S'exprimer en public de manière claire, argumentée, nuancée et posée ; savoir écouter et apprendre à débattre ; respecter la diversité des points de vue. Développer des capacités à contribuer à un travail coopératif/collaboratif en groupe, s'impliquer dans un travail en équipe et les projets de classe.</p>	

Enseignement moral et civique Classe de seconde professionnelle

Bulletin officiel spécial n°5 du 11 avril 2019

Questionnement et Notions à acquérir/à mobiliser	Objets d'enseignement possibles : Amener les élèves à :
<p>La Liberté, nos libertés, ma liberté Parmi les connaissances à acquérir : l'exercice des libertés est garanti par la reconnaissance des différences, la lutte contre les discriminations et la promotion du respect d'autrui : lutte contre le sexisme, l'homophobie, la transphobie ; lutte contre les discriminations faites aux personnes porteuses d'un handicap. Notions à acquérir/à mobiliser : Droits fondamentaux, droits et devoirs du citoyen, État de droit, intérêt général, justice, loi, libertés individuelles et collectives.</p>	<p>Loi n° 2014-873 du 4 août 2014 pour l'égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes.</p>

Cycle 3 Histoire et géographie

Classe de 6ème histoire

Repères annuels de programmation	Démarches et contenus d'enseignement <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
Thème 2 - Récits fondateurs, croyances et citoyenneté dans la Méditerranée antique au I ^{er} millénaire avant J.-C.	Découvrir comment des œuvres du musée réalisées à l'époque moderne et contemporaine mettent en scène les civilisations Antique d'Athènes, Rome, Jérusalem... : montrer que les corps et les postures représentés véhiculent des stéréotypes femmes-hommes

Cycle 4 Histoire

Classe de 4ème

Repères annuels de programmation	Démarches et contenus d'enseignement <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
Thème 3 - Société, culture et politique dans la France du 19 ^{ème} siècle Conditions féminines dans une société en mutation.	Découvrir les inégalités dans la formation artistique et comprendre pourquoi les femmes ne pouvaient accéder qu'au « petit genre » en peinture (portrait, nature morte) Raconter le parcours d'artistes femmes du 19 ^{ème} siècle

Classe de 3ème

Repères annuels de programmation	Démarches et contenus d'enseignement <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
Thème 3 : Françaises et Français dans une République repensée Femmes et hommes dans la société des années 1950 aux années 1980 : nouveaux enjeux sociaux et culturels, réponses politiques.	Découvrir la charte pour l'égalité femme-homme de Rouen comme exemple d'adaptation de la législation aux évolutions de la société. Comprendre le décalage entre la loi et la mise en pratique.

Cycle 3 Histoire des Arts

Connaissances et compétences associées	Exemples de situations, d'activités et de ressources pour l'élève <i>Amener les élèves à :</i>
Utiliser un lexique simple mais adapté au domaine artistique concerné, à sa forme et à son matériau, pour aboutir à la description d'une œuvre dans sa globalité. Associer une œuvre à une époque et une civilisation en fonction d'éléments de langage artistique. Amorcer, à l'aide de ces éléments, un discours critique. Construire un exposé de quelques minutes sur un petit corpus d'œuvres ou une problématique artistique. Rendre compte, en termes personnels et en utilisant des supports divers, de la visite d'un lieu	1. Démarches comparatives : Mettre en parallèle des œuvres de même période ou de périodes voisines, de domaines artistiques différents ou identiques, autour de binômes (linéaire/pictural ; plan/profondeur ; forme fermée/forme ouverte ; unité/multiplicité ; clarté/obscurité ; statisme/mouvement, production/réception, forme/fonction, science/création, héritage/ innovation, corps/machine Relier, en argumentant, des œuvres étudiées en classe à d'autres vues ou entendues en-dehors, lors de sorties, de projets ou de voyages ; Comparer, sur écoute, des écritures littéraires ou musicales anciennes, manuscrites ou non, avec leurs retranscriptions modernes.

<p>de conservation ou de diffusion artistique, ou de la rencontre avec un métier lié à la conservation, la restauration ou la valorisation du patrimoine.</p>	<p>2. Description, représentation, transposition : Utiliser différentes grilles d'analyse, de lecture ou d'interprétation d'un tableau et présenter la description obtenue aux autres (possible dans le cadre d'un travail collectif par groupes).</p>
<p>Thématiques, objets d'étude possibles</p> <p>1. Arts et société à l'époque antique et au haut Moyen Âge La représentation de la personne humaine.</p> <p>4. État, société et modes de vie (13^{ème} -18^{ème} s.) Définition et hiérarchie des genres artistiques.</p> <p>5. L'art au temps des Lumières et des révolutions (1750-1850) L'art, expression de la pensée politique.</p> <p>7. Les arts entre liberté et propagande (1910-1945) L'émancipation de la femme artiste.</p> <p>8. Les arts à l'ère de la consommation de masse (de 1945 à nos jours) Un monde ouvert ? les métissages artistiques à l'époque de la globalisation.</p>	<p>3. L'élève médiateur et passeur de connaissances : Prendre part à un débat sur des œuvres d'art et objets patrimoniaux ; Réaliser en équipe du matériel d'exposition : affiche ou flyer, idées de scénographie, notice de catalogue ou cartel pour une œuvre ; Lors d'une sortie, présenter brièvement une œuvre, un monument, un bâtiment, un objet... à la classe ou à une autre classe ; Préparer en petits groupes la visite d'une exposition ou d'une manifestation à l'intérieur du collège pour d'autres groupes, des parents ou des groupes d'élèves des cycles précédents ; Créer, individuellement ou collectivement, des formes numériques courtes rendant compte de manière imaginative d'un événement, d'une expérience artistique, de la rencontre d'une œuvre d'art ou d'un espace patrimonial : micro-fictions, mises en scène graphiques de documents numérisés, notices appelables par QR-codes, etc.</p>

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A “disaster beyond remedy”: on the intrusion of women artists in public art museums. A case study of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen

Cora Hopkins

Abstract

Art museums are currently undergoing transformation, expected to respond to calls for more diversity and inclusiveness within institutions. Over the past years in France there has been an increase in temporary solo and group exhibitions of women artists, raising awareness around artists either forgotten or ignored by the art historical canon. However, the lasting integration of women artists into art collections and permanent exhibitions has yet to be demonstrated. Indeed, French museum practice is only starting to include a gender perspective on collections. The case study of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen, which introduced a structured policy on gender equality within the institution in 2018, illustrates the theoretical and practical challenges, as well as possible pathways to incorporating a gender analysis of museum collections. This research discusses the way French museum practice integrates a gender perspective to its traditional universalist approach to culture; the practical steps that can be taken to include and promote women artists in collections; and the institutional approaches which might guarantee the sustainability of this process. Based on a qualitative analysis of the Fine Arts Museum of Rouen's policy and its implementation, six recommendations are proposed for adoption by French fine arts museums. They involve auditing and conducting research on the collections, introducing a structured policy on gender equality, training staff, creating educational programmes, monitoring progress, and evaluating impact.

Key words

Feminism, history of art, cultural policy