

ART HER STORY

FEMALE PERSPECTIVES IN THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT'S CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION

EXHIBITION

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Parlamentarium – Brussels



European Parliament

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**FEMALE PERSPECTIVES IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S
CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION**

Temporary Visibility and History

For centuries, women have been systematically left out of the world of art: from its history, documentation and study. Indeed, the best-selling art history survey of all time, Ernst Gombrich's *A Story of Art*, features only one female artist, Käthe Kollwitz (and this is only in the German version; the English version features none). Unfortunately, this is not an isolated event. Giorgio Vasari's seminal book *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* includes only one woman in its first 1550 edition, and just four in the 1558 revision. More recently, H.W. Janson's survey *Basic History of Western Art* featured no women in its first edition of 1980, while the later 2013 edition features only 27 women out of 318 artists. Thankfully, historical exceptions exist, such as Antonio Palomino's *Museo pictórico y escala óptica* from 1715 where 44 of 251 artists are women, a remarkable number for the time. Nevertheless, this general narrative of female exclusion has consistently shaped the way art history is written and recorded, regardless of historical or contemporary reality.

The story continues into the present day, where this representative disparity is as divorced from the truth as ever. According to a 2021 European Parliament survey, women make up 60% of present-day art 'amateur' practitioners and/or students in Europe; however, women's works account for only 3 to 5% of permanent art collections across Europe and the US. Female perspectives need to be brought into collections, exhibition spaces and wider art history through systemic change. This is the thinking behind the European Parliament's Art *Herstory* exhibition and the decision to shine a light on female artists, cementing them in art history through lasting curatorial decisions.

But surely the situation today is different? It is true that in recent years, female artists have repeatedly been in the spotlight, whether it's through discourse, publications or more overarching cultural trends. With every female-centred exhibition, boundaries are pushed and mentalities challenged. From historic and foundational exhibitions such as *Les femmes artistes d'Europe exposent au Jeu de Paume* held in Paris in 1937 to numerous other recent examples of female-centred exhibitions across the world, art made by female artists has today gained unprecedented visibility. Unfortunately, this visibility has not evolved into lasting historic and curatorial integration. At least, not yet.

Still on the outside looking in

It is clear there is today a strong societal effort to reintegrate female artists in art histories and museum collections. Nevertheless, curatorial policies and institutional investments – which have been on the decline since 2008 – indicate a slowing of this long-term trend. Although EU-specific data is still scarce, it is clear that temporary exhibitions do not necessarily translate into permanent acquisitions. Of the Prado's 1700-piece currently exhibited, only 10 are attributed to women; the Louvre displays only roughly 30 artworks created by women; and the Musée d'Orsay's collection contains less than 7% of female artists (296 out of 4,463 total artworks) according to 2019 surveys. Obviously exhibitions, as important and encouraging as they are, create only a temporary effect of hyper-visibility - lulling the general public into thinking systemic change is underway, when reality reveals otherwise. Despite dedicated exhibitions, female artists are still on the outskirts of art history.

The fringe status of female artists is best embodied by the collective Guerrilla Girls, active since 1985, which uses strategies outside of traditional systems and channels to comment on this situation. The collective's members express their frustration towards cultural institutions and their

poorly justified passivity through public interventions and interpretation of famous artworks using stencil or spray paint, all the time remaining anonymous thanks to plastic gorilla masks. The group's best-known image challenges the art world's view of 'women as muses', a narrative contemporary female artists are still fighting against.



Guerrilla Girls, *Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into The Met. Museum?*, 1989 © Guerrilla Girls

For female perspectives to have an active role in shaping art history, they need to be brought into the discipline's communal spaces, including collections, exhibition spaces and books. Tokens do little for systemic change; permanent collections, on the other hand, shape the public's opinion and appreciation of art. This means that in order for female artists to get visibility and claim their rightful space in art history, female agency and presence is needed.

Institutional Change

Recent years have proven to the art world that the accumulation of ephemeral gestures, although necessary and useful in educating the public, are simply a veneer applied on deeply rooted unbalanced policies. To fix this issue, it is clear more radical change is required. Yet another problem is that this transitory focus only serves to highlight women in isolation, rather than integrating them as self-sufficient artists in larger bodies of work. This runs the long-term risk of equating 'women' or 'female' qualifiers of art with a harmful and discriminatory distinction: Georgia O'Keeffe, for example, stipulated that her works are never to be involved in gender-based initiatives, as she is not a 'female artist' but simply an 'artist'. Striking the balance between temporary visibility and perennial relevance, between undoing historical erasure and reaching historical integration and (re)assimilation is an arduous task, but one worth undertaking. There is no real consensus on how best to proceed, no convenient blueprint, but, thankfully, a few institutions are paving a more transparent way forward.

One such example is the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, which has sold some of its best-known work by white male artists (which constitute the overwhelming majority of their collection) to fund more diverse acquisitions and reshape their corpus. In 2013, the institution used funds from marquee sales to purchase works by female artists and introduce them to their permanent collection. Another trailblazer is the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, which in 2018 demonstrated a tangible illustration of why representation matters through the

exhibition of under-appreciated female Swedish artist Hilma af Klint, a mystic and abstract. The event, seen as huge gamble by the art world at the time, has gone on to be the one of the most successful in the institution's history, breaking the museum's records for highest attendance, youngest demographic and catalogue sales and resulting in a 34% membership increase. Meanwhile, both the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and New York's Dia Art Foundation are shaping their purchases around the ambition to grow increasingly gender balanced. For the latter, purchases of female artists' creations have risen from only 11 between 2008 to 2015 to 177 between 2015 to 2019 under the new direction of Jessica Morgan.

The European Parliament and the contemporary art world

The European Parliament's Contemporary Art Collection is dedicated to ongoing development in addition to temporary highlights such as this exhibition. Founded in 1980 by the institution's first democratically elected president, Simone Veil, the collection strives to embody the values and aspirations of the European Union. This means that it is not restrained by the hurdles of market comparisons or ticket sales, reasons often invoked by cultural institutions to justify their limited support for female artists. The Contemporary Art Collection endeavours to represent and inspire European citizens. To that end, it has profoundly adapted its acquisition strategy in order to reach a gender-balanced contemporary art collection in the near future - indeed, it is one of the few collections with an explicit pledge towards parity. Because the pledge goes beyond mere visibility, these acquisitions are complemented by gathering documentation, research and texts about these artists in order to ensure that their perspectives are recorded, their histories written and their voices heard.

Art produced by women is not a genre, a niche nor a style: it is simply art made by artists. Unfortunately, this message is not yet mainstream across the art world, and means that a focus on gender – in response to decades of erasure – is currently necessary to transcend the distinction altogether.

The artists featured in this exhibition, which combines the collection's recent acquisitions with a selection of older contributions, highlight the clear importance and relevance of female perspectives in every aspect of society. Unique and subjective in their creation, the multiple voices behind these artworks echo stories, moments, and emotions; elements the Contemporary Art Collection will continue to build on in the future. Addition by addition, acquisition by acquisition, the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection is witnessing female artists writing chapters of their history, and, in doing so, writing a part of art history itself.

FEATURED ARTISTS

Irma ÁLVAREZ-LAVIADA (1978)

Alicja BIELAWSKA (1980)

Viktoría BINSCHTOK (1972)

Jasmina CIBIC (1979)

Marta DELL'ANGELO (1970)

Aneta GRZESZYKOWSKA (1974)

Sabine GROSS (1961)

Anna HULAČOVÁ (1984)

Sanja IVEKOVIĆ (1949)

Åsa JUNGNELIUS (1975)

Diana LELONEK (1988)

Martina MERLINI (1986)

Gizela MICKIEWICZ (1984)

Clara MONTOYA (1974)

Emmanuelle RAPIN (1974)

Julia SPÍNOLA (1979)

Ritty TACSUM (1990)

Irma ÁLVAREZ-LAVIADA (1978)

Sala Capitular Series, 2017

Calvario

La flagelación

La coronación de la Virgen

Irma Álvarez-Laviada seeks to uncover the invisible, expose the hidden. It's in the studio of her deceased father (he passed when she was five) that her artistic vocation came about. She studied painting (1996-2001) and later sculpture (2001-2003), at the University of Vigo. Since then, she's honed her skill through various residencies: In 2012 she obtained the scholarship from the Royal Academy of Spain in Rome; in 2014 the scholarship from Casa Velázquez; in 2017 she received the scholarships for the development of artistic projects of Marcelino Botín Foundation; this same year, the French Ministry of Culture, granted her a scholarship of Residence in the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

Creating within the field of so called "expanded painting", her corpus explores the structural underbelly of illusionary artforms such as painting, exposing the materiality of various mediums, de-romanticizing the intangible creative process. In this particular series, *Sala Capitular*, each photograph focuses on aspects of a painting that usually go unnoticed or are intently hidden. The frame, the back of the canvas, even the tools used to move the paintings are here front and centre. The invisible is rendered visible, the hidden made subject, the illusion destroyed in favour of another one.



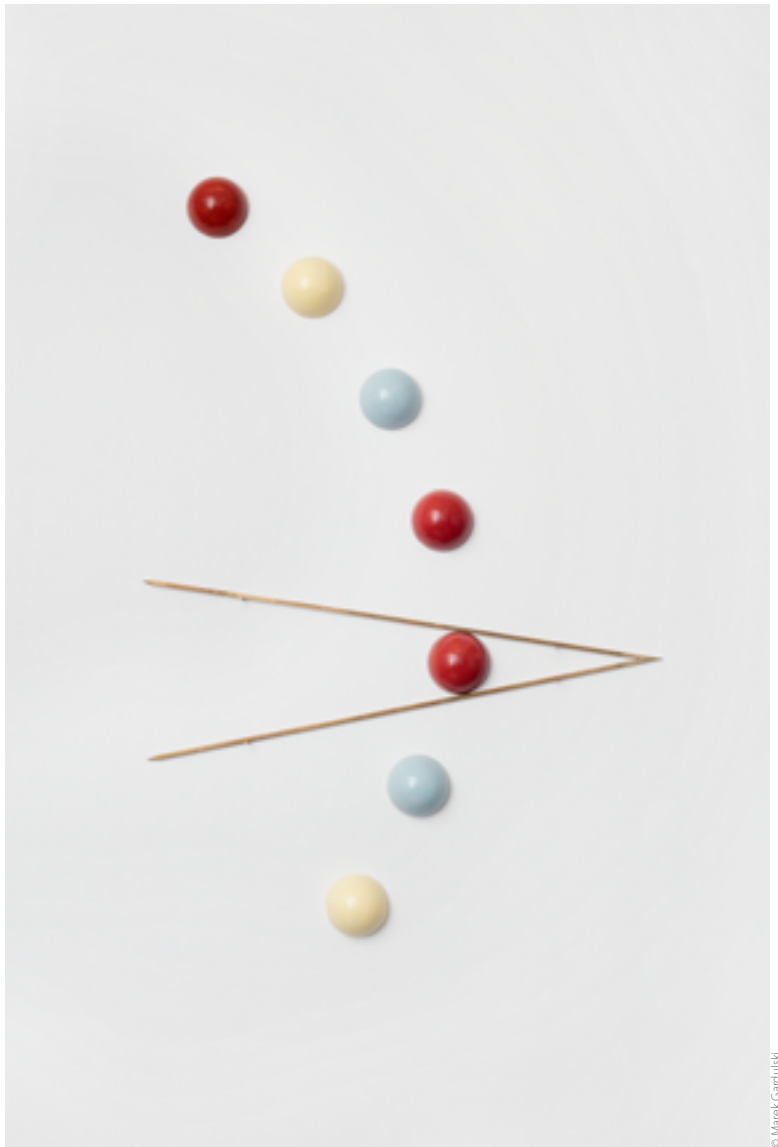
Inkjet print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Pearl paper framed with mansonia wood
120 x 170 cm each

Alicja BIELAWSKA (1980)

Czy jest bezruch pomiędzy poruszeniami? / Is there stillness between the movements?, 2017

Alicja Bielawska seeks interaction and engagement through subtlety and restraint. This ambitious project is supported by a rigorous academic background. Between 1999–2005, she studied art history at the University of Warsaw. Directly after completing her theoretical studies, she moved to Amsterdam to embark on a practical cursus at the Fine Arts department at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy (2005-2009), with a semester abroad at the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London during 2008. Continuously curious, she undertook a practical PhD thesis at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk in 2018, under prof. Katarzyna Józefowicz.

Bielawska strives for daily occurrences to be reactivated through an artistic lens, creating a relationship to the object where, consciously or not, the spectator becomes aware of their interaction with what is being perceived. *Czy jest bezruch pomiędzy poruszeniami?* is representative of the hybrid space in which Bielawska's works effortlessly settle. Halfway between illusory and real space, the mural piece challenges passive perception through softness and playfulness. Indeed, the glossy ceramic spheres are hung in a way reminiscent of numbers on a clock. Yet, the brass hands indicate nothing. To the contrary, they seem to “eat” one of the numerical stand-ins – hence the light-hearted nature of the piece. Bielawska is known for seeking to engender feelings of remembrance and nostalgia using unexpected compositions. In this work, the effect is achieved rather literally by playing around with the concept of time perception itself. An hour is devoured, disrupting the cycle and calling into question our very conception of time, our subjugation to its perception.



© Marek Gądulski

Glazed ceramic (7 half sphere parts), brass - Single ceramic part, half sphere: 12 x 5,5 x 12 cm

Brass part: square section 0,8 cm

Brass hands: length 100 cm

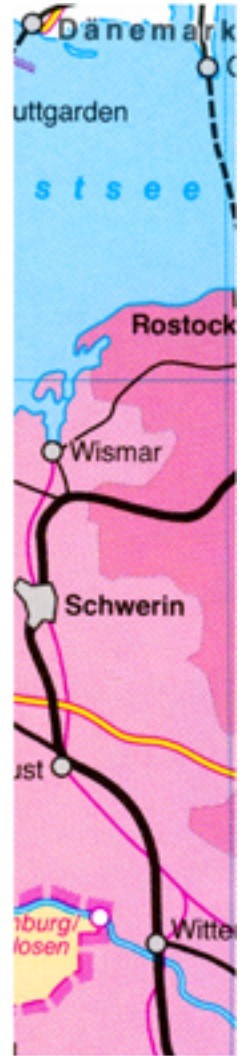
Viktoria BINSCHTOK (1972)

Cherry Blossom / Rostock, 2020

Viktoria Binschtok is a conceptual photographer who has managed to instrumentalize and subvert the internet as a creative tool. She graduated from her Masters in Fine Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig in 2002, and continued developing her practice under Prof. Timm Rautert, in the same institution, until 2005.

Whether using secondhand goods websites, Google Street View or tinkering with various search engines' algorithms – she plays on expectations and associations of image and referent. '*Cherry Blossom / Rostock*' is from Binschtok's 'Networked Images' series. In this work, she combines her own photographs taken in the physical world with photographs she staged based on found online image results. These image-search-algorithms are used to find visual connections between both images.

Since the algorithm only searches for similarities between images, she combines photographs from different contexts that only visually relate each another. The viewer cannot decode which image was generated after the image-search and which was originally created by the artist. Binschtok also visualizes the algorithmic omnipresence that has a major impact on our perception of the world. And since they are not visible to our eyes, we can easily overlook their power. From a strictly aesthetic point of view, the formal and chromatic parallels between the tree and the map is as poetic as unexpected, and is a beautiful piece of algorithmic levity.



Digital c-prints, mounted on Aludibond, custom-made frames, Edition 1 of 3 + 1 A.P.
90 x 68 cm Left side; 90 x 19 cm Right side

Jasmina CIBIC (1979)

Ideologies of Display (Athene Noctua), 2008

Jasmina Cibic's work revolves around the materialisations of 'soft power', the political use of art as a means to communicate ideals, values and narratives. She developed this capacity for critical appropriation and subversion of narrative tools and iconography as a student, first at the Academia Di Belle Arti in Venice (2003) and later at the Goldsmith College of Art in London (2004–2006).

Cibic accumulates, dissects, assorts and then overwrites cultural productions through a plethora of often-combined mediums. Film, sculpture, performance and installation all serve her mission. By layering and superimposing symbols and stories, she falsifies narratives, shifts meanings and – as she states herself – decodes 'the mechanisms of power whilst building her own allegorical structures'. Her meta-critical methodology, by untangling the treads of past tapestries enlightens us on and warns us about the ones that are shaping, encouraging an analytical eye and a constant healthy perspective on history as it proceeds. Such lessons are vital for governments, their institutions and citizens alike, making Cibic's contribution to the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection a fundamental one.



Lambda print, duratrans mounted with aluminium subframe
120 x 120 cm

Marta DELL'ANGELO (1970)

Caryatids, 2007

Marta Dell'Angelo is analytical about art in general, and her practice in particular. As a result, the artist takes a step back when questioning the reason for her creations. Indeed, Dell'Angelo believes we have bypassed the need for art to make sense. Sense, she argues, is a by-product of necessity, and art is necessary to initiate new points of view on the world, to create new avenues of expression and therefore communication. In other words, the act itself holds the meaning. Hence the uninhibited approach to technical experimentation. Video and photography, by their immediacy and accessibility allow the artist to reaffirm the fundamentals of her work. Technically approximative, unfinished or even amateur, creations never truly embrace the imperative of a 'finished work'. The artist considers that by accepting her technical shortcomings she uncovers new means of interpretation. Tools, machines and software are mastered only to the extent the artist requires for a particular work, never comprehensively. 'I use these instruments like a non-believer,' Dell'Angelo explains. Errors and imprecision become part of the process, define the desired rendering. As for the subject, human beings and human bodies are undeniably of central concern whether approached anthropologically or under an existential lens. *Caryatids* showcases the gestural potential of the human vessel that Dell'Angelo likes to copy and paste beyond one's expectations. Novelty achieved through simplicity.



3D collage, high and low res, colour and b/n printed
48 x 131 cm

Aneta GRZESZYKOWSKA (1974)

Plan no. 10 (Nadkole Sloneczna), 2003

Aneta Grzeszykowska works in tandem with Jan Smaga. The duo began working together in 1999 (although they still create independently in parallel). Grzeszykowska studied graphic art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, from which she graduated in 1999. The artist uses photography to graphic ends, namely as a documentation tool for spatial and personal identity. Spaces and bodies are presented, broken down and/or erased, as in her mutilated sculptural pieces. While initial manifestations of these questions in the 1950s, 60s and 70s mythologised the self under a traditional existential lens, Grzeszykowska's approach embraces the post-media society she lives in and its mutated existentialism. Smaga's complementary technological interest in photography resides in attempting to translate three-dimensional architectonic spaces into two-dimensional images.

Such is the ambition of Grzeszykowska and Smaga's collaborative series 'Plan', of which Plan n°10 (Nadkole Sloneczna) is a striking example. Using an aerial view, the artists virtually scan a lived-in space in minute detail and lay it out as a graphic pattern. Slightly voyeuristic in its intimate illustration of spatial appropriation, the series, as Plan n°10 beautifully shows, is a poetic reflection on the space we, as individuals and more generally as a species, take up. Plan n°10 is particularly efficient in that regard as the built space is contained in and contrasted with a natural space, which seems boundless. We take so much yet so little. A powerful utilisation of photography's illusory potential.



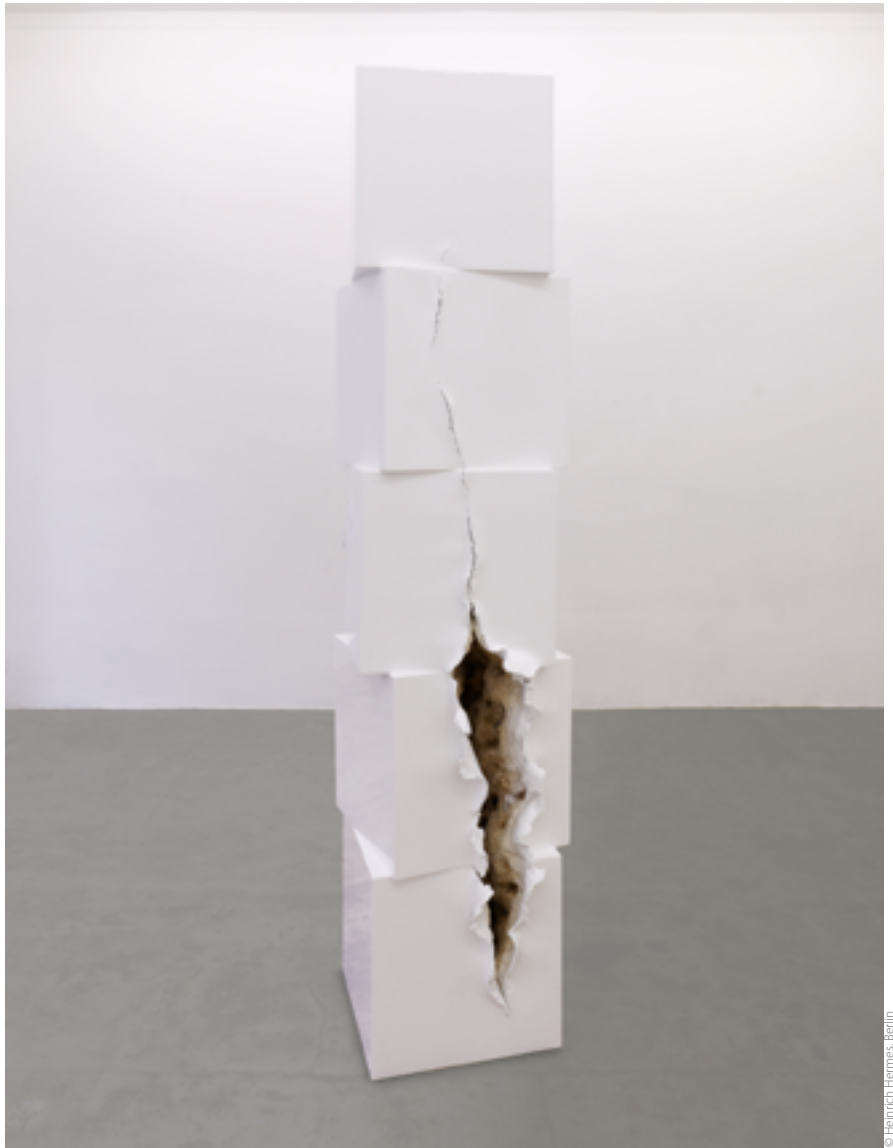
C-print on dibond
125 x 294 cm

Sabine GROSS (1961)

Nesting Site, 2018

Sabine Groß offers a conceptual interpretation of the minimal “what you see is what you see” motto using one of the movement’s staple elements: the cube. She studied at Academy of Fine Arts Munich (1985–1991). The following year she was the recipient of a DAAD scholarship, which took her to New York School of Visual Arts until 1993. Back in Europe, she received a scholarship for the Scholarship Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris (1994–1995). In 1998, she received yet another scholarship, the Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg. From educating herself to educating others, she started a lectureship at Academy of Fine Arts Braunschweig (2007–2009), which led to a full professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts Mainz, where she teaches sculpture since 2009.

The cube, here adapted into an everyday box, is used to question the very nature of art, when materials broach the threshold of object and “artistic object”. Through the means of repetition and serial arrangement, the viewer’s attention should be drawn to the specific expressive quality of the materials used, the clear design language and the spatial context. *Nesting Site* does just this. The high-gloss painted sculpture made of epoxy resin with an integrated fragment of polymerized and patinated plaster presents an aperture, a crack, inescapable to the eye, that runs through the otherwise immaculate surface of a tower of stacked white cubes. The title facilitates the interpretation conveyed by the contrast between a highly industrialized perfection and an organic disruption. It speaks to the space humankind’s habitat takes, preventing the animal populations from finding shelter, and their need to adapt – sometimes by destruction, by piercing – to find space in a natural environment colonized and/or destroyed by human beings.



© Henrich Hermes, Berlin

Epoxy resin, acrylic resin, pigments, laquer, cellulose varnishes
250 x 69 x 65 cm

Anna HULAČOVÁ (1984)

Spící dělník / Sleeping Worker, 2014

Plaster. Edition 2/3

European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection

The sculptor Anna Hulačová is inspired by the Czech folk tradition, art brut and personal mythology, be it in the materials she uses or in the forms and details she depicts. Her work contains intrinsically feminine elements, which she explores through a sense of mystery.

As an acclaimed sculptor, her work resonates both domestically and internationally, and she exhibits regularly at home and abroad. *Sleeping Worker* is ambiguous, which leads the viewer to wonder whether it represents an after-work rest or the Czech tradition of the sleeping army, which it is said will be awakened when the country most needs it. The surface of the sculpture is very detailed and yet its form is close to art brut's immediate simplicity.



© Anna Hulařová

Plaster,
110 x 64 x 8 cm (each)
Edition 2/3

Sanja IVEKOVIĆ (1949)

Women's House (Sunglasses), Marie & Josiane, 2012

Sanja Iveković is a central figure of Croatia's first experimental wave of contemporary artists. She studied graphics at the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts (1968–1971) and positioned herself artistically by bravely tackling yet unconsidered subjects within her scene, such as feminism and gender identity (though she should not be reduced to these explored themes). This approach logically led her to performance and body art, currents that had carried similar messages on the other side of the Atlantic, in her early years. A co-member of the New Art Practice alongside compatriot Boris Bučan, she too was drawn by the appeal of new technologies and the subversion of consumerist imagery.

Iveković focused her interest on the commercial ideal of feminine beauty, and proceeded to deconstruct it, lift the unhealthy veil of the glossed magazine paper and reveal the true unaltered beauty that lies within every woman. 'The Woman's House' series achieves this through contrast. Each edited and highly aesthetic magazine photograph is juxtaposed with a real portrait, a truthful story of what Iveković deems an authentic woman. The heartbreaking tales of Marie and Josiane, two Luxembourgish women, are sadly all too familiar: love, adoration, manipulation, isolation, psychological and physical violence, shame but, hopefully, the ultimate courage to leave. In the light of the brief texts, the sunglasses – fashion accessories in the magazine shoot – take on another meaning. They hide the bruises and tears of many real hurting women. Two very different understandings of femininity and beauty contrasted and compared through a shaded lens.



Åsa JUNGNELIUS (1975)

Vapen, 2020

Åsa Jungnelius understands glass to the point where she can transcend the material and create illusionary pieces that exist in spheres their material should not allow. She studied at Konstfack in Stockholm at the Department of Ceramics and Glass (1998–2004), and has grown to become of Sweden's foremost contemporary glass artist.

Blown by Jungnelius, glass can either take on the look, feel and finish of everyday objects, or embrace the transparency most associated with the delicate material. *Vapen* is a beautiful illustration of the latter. Mounted on a wall fixture Reminiscent of industrial lamps inspired by Bauhaus design, light is here celebrated in its purest form. The simple cylinder, taking on the role of a tubular bulb, barely exists, capturing light instead of shining it. This piece of solid glass is deprived of its expected functionality to disruptively highlight a more (meta)physical state. In physics, the term 'light' sometimes refers to electromagnetic radiation of any wavelength, whether visible or not. In this sculpture, in(visibility) is a material play on presence and absence, materiality and void, the piece inhabiting a poetic in-betweenness.



Glass, aluminium
70 x 10 x 10 cm

Diana LELONEK (1988)

*Auguste Comte with Geotrichum candidum,
Aristotle and Scedosporium apiospermum,
from the series Zoe-therapy, 2015*

Diana Lelonek blends mediums, techniques and thematic fields in an bio-engaging reflection on the place of human kind and the world its built for itself, and itself only. Between 2008 and 2011, she studied at the University of Art in Poznań, specializing in Photography. An exchange student scheme saw her spend time Shanghai Normal University in 2011. The following year, she studied briefly at Nottingham Trent University before returning to Poznań to study for her Masters. Since 2019, she's undertaken a PhD the Intermedia department, Faculty of Multimedia Communication, University of Art in Poznań.

Her two contributions to the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection are representative of Lelonek's transformative approach to photography while drawing on seminal referents of European knowledge. Aristotle (384- 322 BC), student of Plato, is a Greek Philosopher, founder of the Lyceum, the Peripatetic school of philosophy, and the Aristotelian tradition – and thus widely considered as one of the pillars of Western tradition. Under his quill, physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, theatre, music, rhetoric, psychology, linguistics, economics, politics, meteorology, geology and government have all been tackled and questioned. Auguste Comte, born Isidore Marie Auguste François Xavier Comte (1798-1857) is a prominent French philosopher and sociologist, widely considered as the founder of positivism. This current of thought, also called scientific positivism, consisted in privileging observable and documentable phenomena (as well as their relations) rather the grand all-encompassing transcendental truths. Theoretical, the movement's influence on the more methodological empirical logic is attested and undeniable.

Both figures are depicted in a vaporous and grainy finish respectively, their likeness challenged by the surface and medium. In addition to material reclaiming its rights on celebrated representatives of humanity, the artworks perhaps also suggest that the ideas and principles of these great thinkers have largely outlives their physical aspects/resemblance.



Aristotle and Scedosporium apiospermum

Pigment print on archival paper
150 x 105 cm



Auguste Comte with Geotrichum candidum

Pigment print on archival papers
100 x 70 cm

Martina MERLINI (1986)

Untitled, 2020

Enamel, wax, acrylic on wood

European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection

Merlini's work is known for its constant evolution. Starting with illustrations, she has explored new techniques and materials that are all reflective of her search for formal balance and geometric harmony. In recent years, she has developed and perfected her own technique using wax and enamel to try to define a rawness that recalls the typical casualty of nature, and yet also the invisible rules that flow through it.

As a keen investigator of human nature, Martina plays with geometric lines to investigate the notion of 'limits' in a subtle and refined way. Perpetually poised between the rational and the irrational, the artist utilises dense pictorial traits that are symmetrical by nature to continue her research. *Untitled* investigates the endless possibilities of a mistake. In opposition to contemporary trends – increasingly based on technical/aesthetic perfection and the decentralisation of the role of the artist – this work plays with materials that lead to unpredictable reactions, simulating in a certain way the random casualties of nature and reproducing erosion sculpted by time like forced sedimentation.



© Martina Merlini

Enamel, wax, acrylic on wood,
190 x 125 cm

Gizela MICKIEWICZ (1984)

*Letting the place In,
Weakening of the touch, 2017*

Gizela Mickiewicz is constantly renegotiating the relationship between sculpture and audience. She graduated from the Faculty of Art Education at the University of the Arts in Poznań (2007–2012) where she had previously studied painting (2006–2007).

Finding inspiration in her spectators rather than her peers or predecessors, the artist has developed a sculptural dialogue based on intrigue, composition, absurdity and stimulation. Touch, in particular, is elicited through the use of materials and/or scenography. *Weakening of the touch* (2017) is rather explicit in its ambition, the grainy multi-coloured surface calling the beholder's hand, engaging with them on an epidermal, primally haptic level. Yet, as the title suggests, the surface is weak, brittle, and cannot sustain the touch it calls. Through this piece, a subtle reflection of cause and effect, and more generally restraint, is explored. *Letting the place in* (2017) plays on another primal human instinct: curiosity. Indeed, with its soft light hidden behind a cracked aperture, the mural piece subverts expectations of where light might emanate from. Placed against a solid wall, nothing should allow it to shine in this manner, yet it does. Instinctively, one comes close to investigate and observe, seeking to uncover the workings of this little miracle of a daily encounter. Once again, fragility and discretion impose restraint, remind us that sometimes, appreciation is better achieved from a distance.



Weakening of the touch

Marble, stones, gravel, sand, styrodur, adhesive, acrylic paint, aluminium
30.5 x 80 x 21.5 cm



Letting the place In

Material, Styrodur, plaster, glue, fluorescent lamp
62 x 33 x 13 cm

Clara MONTROYA (1974)

Revolución, Carrara, 2015–2017

edition 2/3 + PA

Clara Montoya likes to mesh the timeless tropes with cutting edge technology. She studied at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, The Cooper Union, New York, obtained her BA in sculpture at Chelsea College Art, in London, before obtaining her Master in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art, again in the English capital.

A compulsive experimenter, she likes the idea of working interchangeably with the new technology and materials from an age-old tradition, sometimes integrating one with the other. Her sculptures may assume an overwhelming and threatening dimension in the relationship established with the spectator, or may target microperceptual phenomena which conjure special attention to detail and to the miniaturization and subtlety of virtually invisible gestures. This shift between different scales and resources that underpin built matter constitutes one of the most surprising aspects of her creative career.

Revolución, Carrara, 2015/2017 is a beautiful illustration of Montoya's key concerns. The double mounted screens, propped on a rotating foot and playing a time-lapse video of the destruction of a Carrara mine, rotates 360° in unison with the movement of the camera capturing the video being shown. This unified movement creates a hypotonic effect, forcing the spectator to walk around the piece in order to observe the sped-up footage and witness the subject's progressive destruction.



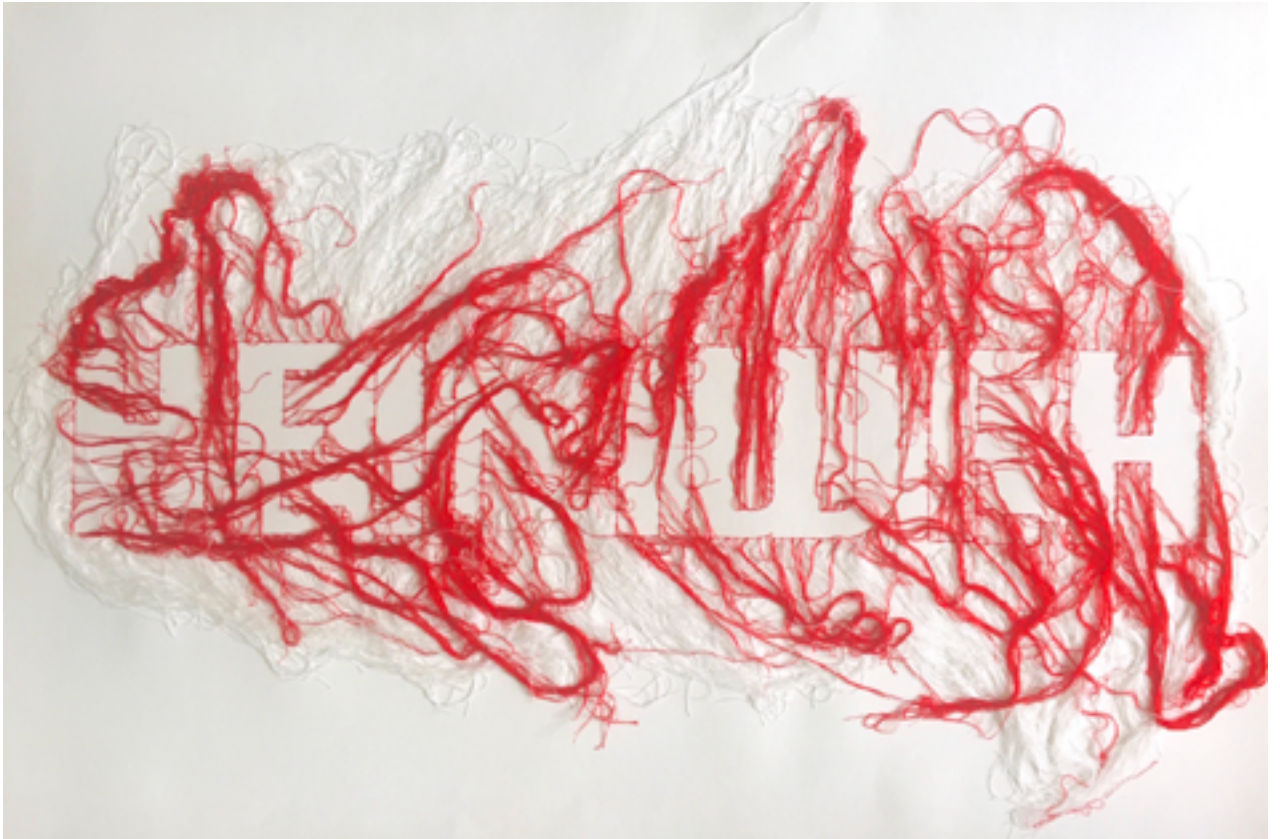
Two videolapse of 24h in 56min, presented on two back to back rotating screens. $142 \times 142 \times 200$ cm, two 65" Sharp 4K screens, motor, iron, aluminium

Emmanuelle RAPIN (1974)

Heimweh, 2019

Emmanuelle Rapin offers beautiful examples of contemporary weaved works. She began studying art at the National Academy of Arts, in Paris (ENSBA) under Vladimir Velickovic and Jean-Luc Vilmouth (1998-2002). During this period, she was awarded a DAAD scholarship which saw her travel to the Hochschule der Künste (HDK), in Berlin (2001). In 2002, she graduated from her National Master's degree in Arts. The following year, she obtained the Scholarship Art Research Program 'La Seine' directed by Tony Brown at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris (ENSBA), which ran until 2005.

Dedicated to artistic use of practices generally associated with "crafts", Rapin has mastered various techniques, from weaving to embroidery, which are implemented in highly artistic creations. The emotional core of these works are often relatable to the her materials of choice, as Heimweh illustrates. 'Heimweh' translates to homesickness, a word and concept the artist rediscovered when settling in Berlin. In the artist's own word "there is no stronger and a more perfect word in another language than 'Heimweh' to describe homesickness. I like this word because it draws exactly what it expresses. To learn a language you have to repeat it; embroidering a word allows you to integrate it completely in an almost obsessive way". In the context of the European Parliament where most members and employees come from abroad, the concept holds particular emotional strength, as it is likely experienced by a vast majority. The employed technique, embroidery, which requires more force, underlines the irrepressible feeling the work captures, as Rapin explains; "The red thread that should guide is tangled, unraveled and finally dissolves the word. 'Heimweh' then becomes a stifled cry".



Embroidered and knotted cotton threads on Watercolour paper
70 x 100 cm

Julia SPÍNOLA (1979)

Rojamente, 2020

Julia Spínola is a curator of gesture, a guide who invites the spectator on an active artistic journey. A graduate in Fine Arts from the Complutense University of Madrid, she also studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Lisbon and has recently been able to enjoy a year of residency in Berlin with the DAAD scholarship program.

Her artworks are often structured around the concept of accumulations. Be it forms or materials, she uses these to create self-sufficient environments in which the spectator is invited to navigate freely and not so freely. Indeed, although the viewer is encouraged to be active, aware and consciously aboard the space, they must accept to delegate a degree of agency and function within the rules dictated by the artistic installation. *Rojamente* is a perfect example of these highly curated encounters. The four mounds, installed directly on the ground, both delimitate and inhabit a space. By living in the same space as the spectator, they extend an official haptic invitation to move around and among them. By their size, they constitute real obstacle that confer them a degree of figurative quality likely orchestrated so as to orientate the spectator. Spínola is relatively specific about the overall scenography, implying a gesture, a dance, a interaction is anticipated and expected.



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Vegetal fiber
85 x 100 x 80 cm

Ritty TACSUM (1990)

Random Encounters, 2018-2021

Ritty Tacsum's art is inherently experimental without being weighed down by superfluous theoretical justifications. Using photography as a primary medium upon which to expand creative possibilities, Tacsum adds, subtracts, transforms, and layers images to reach a personal story. Intimacy, in its many forms, informs the narratives the artist puts forth. Insular experiences, that of the sea in particular, nourish her work. Vast, volatile and capable of inspiring emotions ranging from peace to rage, the ocean offers welcome metaphorical possibilities to an artist open about the biographical nature of her body of work. The bed is another staple location, one of contrasting vulnerability and safety. The figures that populate these spaces don a surreal quality through their posture, partially hidden features and sometimes androgynous eroticism. *Random Encounters* sensually illustrates the dream-like scenes, at a crossroads between fleeting memories and fantasies Tacsum proposes. Two faceless people sharing an intimate, playful, erotic, moment. There is no definite lecture of this and other pieces, as Tacsum herself is adamant no underlying concept or essay should accompany her art. Rather, the image is a straightforward, purely emotional composition.



Printed on archival smooth cotton paper
60 x 40 cm



Printed on archival smooth cotton paper
70 x 55 cm

SELECTIVE RELATED RESOURCES

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EXHIBITIONS

WOMEN AND CHANGE, ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, 5 February – 14 August 2022.

By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists of Italy, 1500–1800, Detroit Institute of Arts and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, February 6 - May 29, 2022.

I-You-They: A Century of Artist Women, Meşher, Istanbul 9 October 2021 - 27 March 2022.

Artemisia: Woman & Power, Rijksmuseum, Twenthe, 6 September 2021 - 23 January 2022.

Women in abstraction, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 19 May - 23 Aug 2021.

Women painters, 1780–1830 The birth of a battle, Musée du Luxembourg, Paris 19 May – 25 July 2021.

A Tale of Two Women Painters: Sofonisba Anguissola and Lavinia Fontana, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid 22 October 2019 – 2 February 2020.

Women's Histories: Artists before 1900, Museu de arte de São Paulo, São Paulo, 23 August – 17 November 2019.

Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 12 October 2018 – 23 April 2019.

Action (There's No Option): About Feminism, Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich 26 August – 22 October 2006.

Women Artists: 1550-1950, The Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1 October – 27 November 1977.

Les femmes artistes d'Europe exposent au Jeu de Paume, Jeu de Paume, Paris, 11 February – 28 February 1937.

The International Incheon Women Artists' Biennale established in Incheon, Korea (2007, 2009, 2011)

Modern Woman project at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010)

BOOKS

Zoe Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement - Gender in History*, Manchester University Press, 2022 (EN).

P L Henderson and Cheryl Robson, *Unravelling Women's Art: Creators, Rebels, & Innovators in Textile Arts*, Aurora Metro Publications, 2021 (EN).

Eva Rossetti and Valentina Grande, *The Women Who Changed Art Forever: Feminist Art - The Graphic Novel*, Laurence King Publishing, 2021 (EN)

Jitske Jasperse, *The Female Eye: Women as Patrons, Collectors and Artists*, Sterck & de Vreese, 2021 (NL)

Linda Nochlin, *Why have there been no great women artists?* (reedition), Thames & Hudson, 2021 (EN)

Whitney Chadwick, *The Militant Muse: Love, War and the Women of Surrealism*, Thames & Hudson, 2021 (EN)

Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society - World of Art*, Thames & Hudson, 2020 (EN) Rebecca Morrill (ed.), *Great Women Artists*, Phaidon, 2019. (EN/FR)

Flavia Frigeri, *Women Artists*, Thames & Hudson, 2019 (EN/FR)

Camille Viéville and Laure Adler, *Les femmes artistes sont dangereuses*, Flammarion, 2018 (FR)

Ángeles Caso Machicado, *Las olvidadas: una historia de mujeres creadoras*, Grupo Planeta, 2005 (ES)

Margarita Márquez Padorno (coord.), Almudena de la Cueva Batanero (coord.), *Mujeres en vanguardia. La Residencia de Señoritas en su centenario (1915-1936)* Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes, 2015 (ES)

Rafael Gil Salinas and Concha Lomba Serrano, *Olvidadas y silenciadas: Mujeres artistas en la España contemporánea*, coord. by Universitat de València, 2021 (ES)

ESSAYS / STUDIES

Sofia Cotrona, 'We Don't Need More Temporary Exhibitions of All Women Artists', 2021, for hyperallergic.com (EN)

European Parliamentary Research Service, *Women in arts and culture — Artists, not muses*, March 2021 (EN)

Anne de Coninck, 'Les femmes restent sous-représentées dans les musées', 2020 for slate.fr (FR)

Julia Halperin and Charlotte Burns, 'Museums Claim They're Paying More Attention to Female Artists. That's an Illusion', for Artnet, 2019 (EN)

Julia Halperin and Charlotte Burns, 'Female Artists Represent Just 2 Percent of the Market. Here's Why—and How That Can Change', for Artnet, 2019 (EN)

Chad M. Topaz, Bernhard Klingenberg, Daniel Turek, et al. 'Diversity of artists in major U.S. museums', in PLoS ONE 14(3), 2019 (EN)

Hilary Robinson, 'Feminism Meets the Big Exhibition: Museum Survey Shows since 2005', in On Curating, Issue 27, May 2016, pp. 29-40 (EN)

PODCASTS:

Femmes d'art (FR).

Les grandes dames de l'art (by Aware) (FR)

Bow Down: Women in Art (by Frieze) (EN)

The Great Women Artists (EN)

COLLECTIVES / WEBSITES

Archives of Women Artists, Research & Exhibitions <https://awarewomenartists.com>

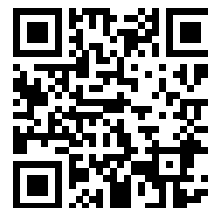
Guerrilla Girls <https://www.guerrillagirls.com/>

National Museum of Women in the Arts <https://nmwa.org/>

Art Herstory, celebrating artists from the Renaissance and Baroque eras: <https://artherstory.net/>

Femmes d'Art; Le média des femmes qui font le monde de l'art <https://femmes-dart.com/>

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Get the Facts <https://nmwa.org/support/advocacy/get-facts/>



<https://art-collection.europarl.europa.eu/>

