



The Woman in Art - Muse and Creator

Women have always been a central motif in art - revered, glorified, desired, but also overlooked and underestimated. She has been muse and model, object of admiration or desire, captured in paint, marble and bronze. Nevertheless, she was always more than that: a creator, a seeker, a designer of her own creator of her own artistic language. The exhibition is a journey through the multi-layered representation of women in the art of the 20th and 21st century - from the idealized images to the autonomous female artist of our time.

In the early 1900s, women were primarily a source of inspiration for male artists. **Henri Matisse**, one of the most important artists of the time, explored the female form and its relationship to color and composition in his works. This is particularly impressive in his etching "**Le Pleureuse**" (The Weeper, 1900/1903), in which the woman does not appear as an idealized figure but as an emotionally profound being.

With the rise of modernism in the 1920s, female artists such as **Ida Kerkovius**, a student of Paul Klee, began to develop their own artistic language. As one of the few women at the Bauhaus, she asserted herself in an art world dominated by men and created abstract works that introduced the female perspective to the avant-garde. Ida Kerkovius was not only a pioneer of abstract painting, but also an outstanding landscape painter. Vibrant colors and an almost lyrical formal language that makes a close connection to nature palpable characterize her landscape paintings. She reduced landscapes to their essential structures and conveyed an emotional depth through her color compositions that goes far beyond the mere reproduction of a scene. The painting "**Vacation by the Sea**" shows the playful balance between spontaneity and clear form, between reality and abstraction.



In the 1920s, the woman also became a stylized icon in Art Deco photography. Works by **František Drtikol** show the woman as a symbol of elegance, luxury and sensuality. A depiction that oscillates between aesthetic glorification and voyeuristic staging. Drtikol's photograph "**Nude Study**" (1927) stages the female body as part of a strictly composed play of light and geometry. The model stands in a reduced, almost abstract scenery of geometric shapes and shadows that dramatically emphasize her silhouette. The contrasts between light and darkness create an almost sculptural effect, while the precisely placed rays of light both reveal and fragment the body. Drtikol combines the tradition of the nude with a modern, avant-garde formal language that is strongly influenced by Cubism and Constructivism. As a result, the woman is not only depicted as an object of contemplation, but as an integral part of a well thought-out visual composition in which body and space form a harmonious unit.

Otto Dix's red chalk drawing "**Seated Woman**" from 1931 shows an undressed woman in a calm, almost meditative pose. Dix models the female body with fine, confident strokes, avoiding exaggerated drama and instead creating a restrained, almost intimate atmosphere. The sitter's gaze appears direct, but also dreamy - as if she is moving between presence and inner absence. The body is relaxed, the posture natural. The result is a moment of self-absorption that is characterized less by eroticism than by quiet dignity. Despite the realistic design of the drawing, there is still room for interpretation: the fine red line emphasizes skin, volume and posture, but dispenses with narrative embellishment. In its sobriety, "**Seated Woman**" shows the woman not as an object of desire, but as an independent figure in space - present, vulnerable, but also at peace with herself. Dix, often associated with drastic depictions of the female body, reveals here a quiet, almost tender view of the feminine that deliberately avoids the expectations of classical nudes.



Max Ackermann's drawing "**Bathers**" from 1933 shows a fine balance between figuration and abstraction. The female nude is clearly recognizable as such, but is transformed into a rhythmic composition through geometrically dissolved lines. Circles, arcs and hatching replace anatomical details without losing the feminine appearance of the figure. The body is thus not de-individualized, but transformed into a universal formal vocabulary that expresses movement, lightness and inwardness at the same time. Ackermann, who worked all his life on the connection between art and music, approaches the female nude here like a dance score. The body is not depicted, but made to vibrate. "**Bathers**" is thus exemplary of Ackermann's search for an abstract figuration that does not reduce the feminine, but rather transfers it into new visual contexts that exist beyond classical role models, towards a free, harmonious formal language.

From the 1950s and 60s, artists such as **Karl Hagedorn** and **Richard Lindner** addressed the role of women in American consumer society. Their works show the female body as a fetish and symbol of the seductive power of the modern world - often critically and ironically scrutinized. The German-American artist Karl Hagedorn formulated a positive vision of the connection between man and machine in his work. In his work "**On Stage**", he shows a split, almost machine-like female figure that combines both technical precision and a futuristic aesthetic. Through geometric shapes and a dynamic composition, Hagedorn creates an image that blurs the boundaries between organic body and mechanical construction. His depiction reflects not only technical progress, but also the increasing fusion of man and technology. Richard Lindner, on the other hand, combined his experience in advertising with an expressive color palette to present female figures in a mixture of glamour and artificiality. His depictions show women as exaggerated symbols of seduction and power that appear both anonymous and hyper-stylized.



In the 1980s, a new generation of artists emerged in the form of the Junge Wilde, who broke with traditional role models. **Elvira Bach** staged the woman as a self-confident, powerful figure who asserts herself with energy and sensuality. Her works **“Radish”**, **“Strawberry”** and **“Faith Love Hope”** depict strong female archetypes that are characterized by expressive colours and an emphatically self-confident expression. They reflect the self-image of a new, independent femininity that no longer allows itself to be restricted by social expectations. **Helge Leiberg**, on the other hand, focuses on movement and dynamism in his works. With its sweeping, dancing lines, his work **“Flight forwards!”** shows a figure in motion that symbolizes departure and the urge for freedom. His art lends the female figure an unbridled energy that is in constant interaction with space and time.

In contemporary art, the artistic discourse is no longer just about the deconstruction of female stereotypes, but about a new, universal confrontation with identity and transformation. In her works, **Cony Theis** questions the traditional ways of depicting female figures in art history. By subtly shifting familiar pictorial motifs, she creates a critical reflection on the perception of the female body in art. Cony Theis' **“Bunny”** shows an undressed woman striding forwards, seen from behind, as she walks along a narrow path towards the beach. The figure is depicted powerfully, sensually and realistically. A body that is not idealized, but taken seriously in its natural appearance. The scene seems like everyday, almost casual, but it is interrupted by an irritating figure in the foreground: A person, masked with a rabbit's head, whose gender remains deliberately ambiguous, turns towards the scene with an oversized eye. The rabbit figure stands frontally in the picture, capturing the viewer's gaze, not clearly as a voyeur, but not neutral either. Situated between human, animal and mask, it becomes a projection surface for culturally influenced viewing habits and ideas. In **“Bunny”**, Theis combines a classic motif, the female nude on her back on the way to the bathroom, with a contemporary twist. The interplay of body and gaze, of movement and observation, unfolds a complex field of tension between self-determination and the perception of others.



French artist **Alain Clément** also explores the depiction of women. His prints, including **"87 S 1G - Ava Gardner"** and **"87 S 3G - Marilyn Monroe"**, show abstract portraits of women that oscillate between dissolution of form and recognizability. Clément reduces the famous faces to basic geometric structures and color contrasts, giving them a new, almost iconic quality. He combines the classic iconography of female film stars with the principles of abstract painting, thus opening up a new level of perception in which the image of the woman becomes both myth and pure form.

In **"Spectrum I"**, **Jochen Pankrath** focuses on a female nude figure standing frontally and self-confidently in the pictorial space. Her body is contoured, almost sculpturally elaborated, whereby the depiction appears neither idealized nor voyeuristic. The presence of the figure is significantly enhanced by the unusual background: a grid of colored fields unfolds behind the nude. A color spectrum that not only serves as a formal contrast to the physicality, but can also be read as a commentary on perception and diversity. This colorful structure behind the figure acts as an analytical counterpart to the physical representation, as if the artificiality of the color fields reflects the naturalness of the body and at the same time calls it into question. The woman in the picture thus appears not only as an object of observation, but also as the active center of an exciting composition in which sensual presence and intellectual reflection meet. "Spectrum I" thus not only addresses the female body, but also its cultural coding - between color value and intrinsic value, between image and meaning.

Rubica von Streng's work **"Transition"** impressively combines visual language and concept to create a profound examination of gender roles and identity. It dissolves traditional attributions and focuses on humanity in all its complexity and changeability. "Transition" encourages us to question social norms and personal changes anew and expands the discourse to include a deeper, existential dimension. The work thus opens up a space in which identity is not understood as a rigid construct, but as a dynamic process.



The depiction of women in art has always been a reflection of social norms and values. While in antiquity and the Renaissance, the female figure appeared as an idealized but isolated being. However, since the modern era she has increasingly been portrayed as an autonomous personality. The 20th century in particular brought profound changes: The influences of the women's movement, postmodernism and gender theory led to a re-evaluation of female identity in art. From the idealized muse of classical modernism to the stylized femme fatale of Art Deco and the questioned identity of the present - the image of women is in a constant state of flux.

The selected works of art make it possible to visually experience the extent to which artistic trends and social developments are interdependent and how art reflects and questions power structures. They invite us to question our viewing habits and to rethink images of women in art - as a reflection of our history and as a glimpse into the future.