

Why Have There Been No Great Female Artists?

The article “Why Have There Been No Great Female Artists?” was written by a famous American art historian named Linda Nochlin. Throughout my reading of this article, it became clear that it focuses on the history and theory of feminist art. The author begins the piece with a declaration of her will to take a different feminist stance from recent feminist activities. Linda Nochlin drives most of her argument by appealing to the emotions of the reader and providing historical investigations.

In the article, Linda begins by pointing out several important issues that women face in modern society. She then states that we should avoid judging women and instead look at the history of how female artists are perceived in the art industry (Nochlin and Linda 54). Linda also talks about the semi-religious beginnings of artists up until the 19th century.

You will always find notable artists with sentimentalized success stories, those who have worked to rise out of poverty and succeeded against all odds (Nochlin and Linda 43). Linda also discusses the stereotypical role of women in society, especially in aristocratic circles. She states that the expectations placed on women do not leave them time to practice and develop as artists.

Linda also challenges the idea that female artists are different from male artists. It is a redundant idea nowadays because we know that there are plenty of great women artists, musicians, actors, and others. There are also historical women writers, like Sylvia Plath, whose writing ability can stand against most male writing of the era (Parker, Rozsika and Griselda 98). In this case and many more, female artists can easily be equated to male artists in their respective periods.

Linda Nochlin also notes that the reason there are no great women in art is the lack of opportunities for women in the art industry. Notably, it is incorrect to argue that art is any different from any other job that requires decent prospects and training (Haynes, Rachael, and Courtney 76). Art institutions were historically not as accepting of women as they were of men. Most up-and-coming artists in the past were men. It is also worth noting that only men in the family could learn art and that art schools accepted only male students. From the article, one will realize that women who could study art came from extremely wealthy families. These women could only study art as a hobby and not as a stable career.

According to Linda Nochlin, the lack of these training opportunities is the reason why great female artists did not exist. Female artists were not able to learn the language of art or its evolution in the past. Presently, with new technological prospects, anybody can become an artist, and we have seen more and more female artists rise in the industry. To understand feminist art fully, one must understand the historical context under which it was born.

1. Haynes, Rachael, and Courtney Pedersen. "Acting out: Performing Feminisms in the Contemporary Art Museum." *Journal of Australian Studies* 40.2 (2016): 203-214.
2. Nochlin, Linda. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* (1971): 229-233. Origin: A Multidisciplinary Approach, 421-448.
3. Parker, Rozsika, and Griselda Pollock. *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology*. IB Tauris, 2013.