

Introduction

On February 10, 1910, the art historian Frida Schottmüller (1872–1936) applied for a permanent position at the Berlin Royal Museums (the forerunner institution of today's Staatliche Museen zu Berlin). She emphasised in her application that up to now, »no one had drawn a distinction with me due to my womanhood«. Already in 1902 she had been the first woman to publish a research article in the renowned *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* (Yearbook of the Royal Prussian Art Collections). Two years later, Schottmüller had been awarded a doctorate in art history at the University of Zurich (in her hometown of Berlin, women were first officially allowed to earn a doctorate in 1908).

Starting in 1905, Frida Schottmüller worked under temporary contracts as a research assistant for the Paintings Gallery (today Gemäldegalerie) and the Department of Christian Sculpture (today part of the Bode Museum). She acted as the right-hand woman of the director general, Wilhelm Bode (1845–1929), published, researched, taught, curated exhibitions, and on behalf of the museums made many trips to buy works of art. Despite Bode's support, however, the administration refused her a permanent position several times – sometimes with the argument that potentially »as a woman, she might not be able to cope with the difficult dealings with art dealers«, or also, that as a woman, she was inherently not suited to a leadership position. It was not until 1920 that she finally obtained a position as curator in the Department of Christian Sculpture, but then in 1934 was dismissed under the National Socialists. Even today, her numerous publications on sculpture, painting, and decorative arts form the cornerstone of much of the research of our collections. Despite that, the name Dr. Schottmüller seldom if ever pops up in the lists of (male) founders and important (male) researchers of our collection. Frida Schottmüller remains invisible to this day.

In general, the stories of women remain mostly invisible in the Bode Museum and its collections of sculpture and Byzantine art. And not because women played and play no role in the collections, but because as persons they go unnoticed there. Whether they were groundbreaking historians, artists, or patrons, whether they are real or fictional personalities – the invisibility of women can be viewed as a unifying feature of practically all museums for works by artists termed »Old Masters«. It is known that these women exist, occasionally they are mentioned, and in especially fortunate cases, a special exhibition is even devoted to them. But their stories are also quickly forgotten again, once such a project is completed.

The goal of the exhibition series »The Second Glance« is to permanently incorporate into the museum discourse narratives that to date have been overlooked or deliberately suppressed. The series opened in 2019 with the project »All Forms of Love«, which dealt with the theme of sexual identities. In 2021 the Bode Museum devotes itself to the women in its collections – their stories are spotlighted so that their contributions to the development of Europe become visible. Certainly you will recognise the names of some of the women that you will encounter in this publication – their stories, however, may not be familiar to you.

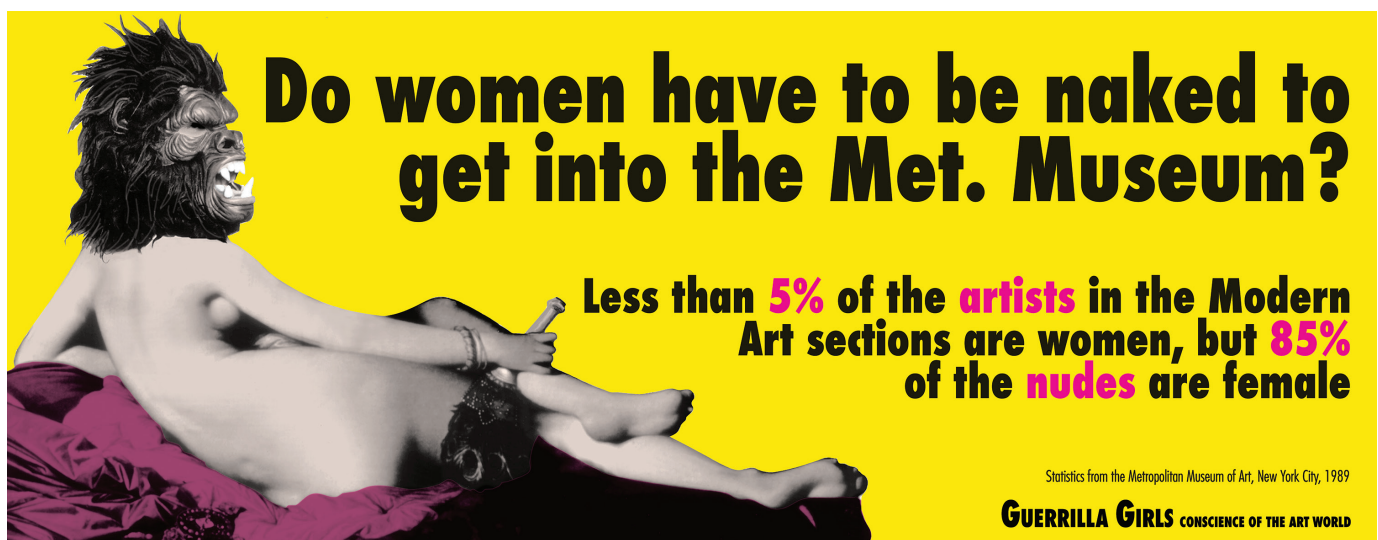
Since the 1970s, not least stimulated by Linda Rochlin's article published in 1971, »Why have there been no great women artists«, a feminist view of Western art has been established and systematised. Until now,

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Guerrilla Girls

Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? 1989

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however, the use of this approach has generally been limited to women's studies or gender studies. In other words, academic disciplines whose perspectives only with great effort find their way into a (male) canon that, by and large, still dominates secondary school and university curricula for the history of Western art as well as how this art is exhibited in museums. This canon is based primarily on the concepts of innovation and progress giving rise to a succession of famous (male) artist personalities in whose works women – and their naked bodies in particular – were central themes. Already in 1989, the feminist group of female artists and activists Guerilla Girls brought attention to this fact with a now legendary poster whose title provocatively asked: »Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?« (fig. 0-1). An accompanying subtitle pointed out that in the museum's Department of Modern Art, fewer than 5% of the works were by women, while at the same time 85% of the nudes showed female bodies. At the time, this imbalance was probably characteristic of almost all Western museums for modern art. However, to what extent the problems that had been raised also affected collections from previous epochs was not a theme then.

The scope and breadth of the holdings of sculpture and Byzantine art in the Bode Museum allow us to also direct the Guerilla Girls' polemic question to Western art from the time between the 4th and 18th centuries. In doing so, the cultural context of the works should be explored and their presentation, as well as their interpretation, in the museum should be examined more closely – from the level of large research and exhibition projects down to the interpretation communicated in the texts accompanying individual works. These texts, known as object labels, are still the most important and direct means of communication with the public in the museum. They include the names and dates of birth and death of the artists, the place it was created, and the materials the works were made of. In addition, they sometimes address important artistic and /or aesthetic aspects of the works. Virtually without exception, however, additional contextual information is lacking for depictions of women. As a result, the viewers seldom get enough fundamental background information to be able to better understand the role of the women portrayed. In line with the message of the Guerilla Girls, the possibility



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Germany

**Anatomical female model [with sheath],
17th century**

Ivory, 20,5 × 7 × 4,3 cm

Inv. Nr. 8706 © Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin / Antje Voigt

therefore arises that the public leaves the museum with the impression that nudity, chastity, or bashful restraint (or preferably all three traits together) are a basic requirement for depictions of women to be included in this institution.

The fascination with the female body is an essential constant throughout the history of art. A particularly

incisive illustration of this can be made by the female figurines, sculpted from the precious material ivory, that were found in German curio collections, known as curiosity cabinets (»Wunderkammern«), in the 17th century (fig. 0-2). At first glance, we see a naked female body on a bed of red velvet. The breasts and the plump belly can be removed, allowing the internal organs to be seen. Similarly removable are the intestines and the lungs. What is left are the heart and the unborn child that will make the woman a mother. The practical function of these anatomical objects is unknown. Given their small size, a didactic application in the medical field is difficult to imagine. We only know for sure that they were luxury articles and consequently became status symbols for their (male) collectors. Even today, such items are presented in museums almost exclusively as evidence for the virtuosity of the artist or the exquisite taste of the owner.

Equally puzzling is a coloured clay bust of Anna Harsdörffer (married name: Imhoff, 1528–1601, fig. 0-3). It was made by Johann Gregor van der Schardt in 1580, the year that Willibald Imhoff (1519–1580), whom Anna had married when she was 17, died. Willibald Imhoff is considered one of the most important collectors of the works of Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). His collection, which single-handedly created the European market for the works of the most famous German artist of the Renaissance, was carried on by his widow for 21 years after his death. To this day, however, Anna Imhoff's role as a collector has not been thoroughly researched (the same also applies to Willibald Imhoff's mother, Felicitas, who is supposed to have been essentially responsible for her son starting the collection in the first place). In her portrait in the Bode Museum, Anna Imhoff holds a book in her hands. It is presumed to be a Bible or a prayer book, which is wholly consistent with the passive and devoted role that is tacitly assumed for women like Anna. But does such a biased perspective do her justice?

The previously mentioned examples already suggest that it would be a worthwhile endeavour to take a closer look at the diverse women of the Bode Museum. Six different thematic paths through the collections offer the possibility for critical analysis of this theme – either first-hand at the museum, or by reading this catalogue. The first path deals with depictions of women in the collections who actively influenced European history. The contextualisation of Biblical women and their historical perception are the theme of the second path, while in the third path, the roles of women in classical mythology and their artistic portrayal are illuminated. Female artists and their (missing) presence in the museum holdings are the focus of the fourth path. The fifth is devoted to a critical look at the contributions to

gender equality made by some of the men represented in our collections. Finally, the sixth and last path segues from historical contemplation to the Berlin and Berliners of the 21st century.

An unavoidable component of the project »The Second Glance: Women« is the engagement with the verbal and physical assaults that women still suffer, both in everyday life and as part of their struggle for self-determination and equality. Probably almost every woman who is reading these sentences has already been called a »whore« or »bitch« more than once in her life, and it is likely that none of the male readers has escaped being branded a »son of a bitch« at least once so far. All of us have probably used these insults once before, or at least felt tempted to do so. Yet only seldom would we have really thought about their meaning and their associations with prostitution. So is it also in the arena of art. Nudity or lasciviousness are found in innumerable artistic portrayals of women. However, viewers today are scarcely aware that the theme of prostitution, or at least the accusation of prostitution, is frequently tied up in these depictions. In the Bode Museum's collections can be found images of women who either were sex workers or were deemed as such. Some did this legally, others illegally, some of their own free will, others were forced into it. Exactly like numerous women and men in present-day Berlin. They are often talked about but seldom listened to. As a result, in cooperation with the Frauentreff Olga – a drop-in and counselling centre for drug-using women, trans women, and sex workers, located on Kurfürstenstraße in Berlin – the Bode Museum, as part of »The Second Glance: Women«, is showing photographs by sex workers (of all genders) who earn their living on the Kurfürstenstraße. In the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, 14 persons from five countries tell about their everyday lives through stories and their own photographs as part of the project »Photovoice«. In this way, they provide us with an insight into their individual experiences that much too seldom attract the public's interest.

In order to make the following texts as reader-friendly as possible, direct source references have not been included. An overview of the used relevant literature, relevant internet sources, a chronological synopsis of the history of gender equality in Germany, and a glossary can be found as appendices.



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Johann Gregor van der Scharde (ca. 1530–1581)

Patrician Anna Imhoff, 1580

Terracotta with original polychromy,
65,5 × 56 × 38 cm

Inv. Nr. 539 © Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische
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