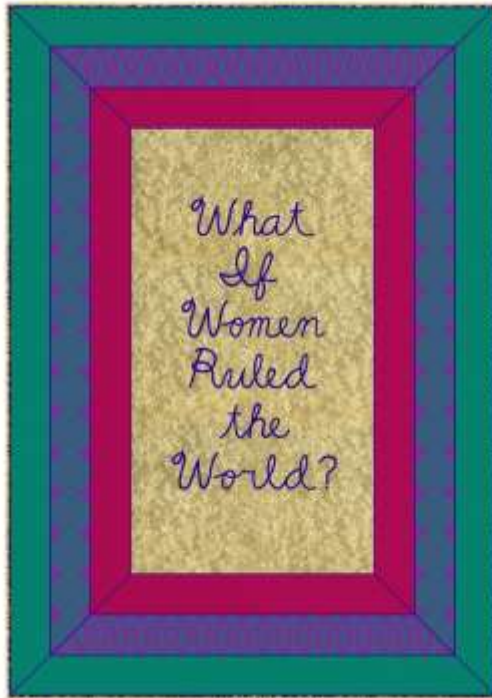


## Feminist Art, a Force For Change



[Judy Chicago, What if Women Ruled the World?](#)

By Madelyn Evans

Feminist art, although transcending one definition, can be defined as art which is created with the conscious aim of addressing [equality of the sexes](#). Associated with developments in the feminist movement in the early [1970s](#), feminist art seeks to highlight the societal and political differences women experience within their lives and often challenge patriarchal systems through activism. In 1971, female art historian [Linda Nochlin](#) sparked debate with her seminal piece entitled *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, in which she discussed the socioeconomic, and inherently sexist, factors which had prevented talented female artists from achieving the same status as their male counterparts. In response, many female artists were inspired to create work dealing with the female experience and explore the [intersection](#) between artistic creation and political action. Since then, the number of female artists who have explored

feminist ideas has exponentially increased and women around the world continue to challenge prevailing attitudes and structural inequalities through their artwork today.

One woman who is a [key figure](#) in the feminist art movement is Judy Chicago, who is an American artist who often incorporates stereotypical women's artistic skills such as needlework, counterbalanced with stereotypical male skills such as welding and pyrotechnics. Chicago's most iconic piece, *The Dinner Party* (1979), changed the feminist art movement forever. The installation was made of 39 place settings arranged along a triangular table for various famous women, with each plate [featuring a flower](#) intentionally manipulated to look vaginal. Another artist, [Cindy Sherman](#), uses conceptual portraits to explore identity and the nature of representation, often playing with female stereotypes.

Artists Zaren Healey White and Alexandra Fox also discuss the meaning of feminist art in their art show entitled "[Feminisms{Re}Framed](#)," which was featured in St. Johns, Newfoundland and Labrador in 2015. The organizers discussed how feminist art can broadly range from "any art exploring, navigating, or challenging feminist themes and issues and/or art that is feminist through the means of its creation and production." This means that the art featured in their show varies from topics such as mental illness to embodiment, to traditional gender roles, violence, body image, or eating disorders. One of the exhibiting artists, Desiree Baker, emphasizes the importance of embracing a broad definition of feminist art. Baker [states](#) that, "It could be the content in the artwork itself that could be a political message, or it could be just the act of a woman artist making art. I think that in itself can be feminist." Thus, while feminist art can be expressed in a vast variety of ways, its plurality is powerful in conveying the female struggle for equality and liberation.

The feminist art movement, which grew during the late 1960s and continues to flourish today, has been led by female artists who were fed up and determined to break free from the art world's oppressive structures and [rigid gender roles](#). Female artists have used their artistic creations, exhibitions, and public spaces to rejecting patriarchy in the art world and, more broadly, within society. Feminist art has been crucial in activism, altering a male-dominated art history, and in protesting at the lack of inclusion of women artists in galleries and museums. Contemporary feminist artists continue to challenge unequal relationships within both art and society, pushing towards a more equal future for females.



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**If you like to read more, here are Madelyn’s recommendation:**

Editors, Artspace. “How Did Feminist Art Begin? A Brief History of Women Rejecting Patriarchy in the Art World,” October 12, 2017. [https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art\\_101/book\\_report/how-did-feminist-art-begin-a-brief-history-of-women-rejecting-patriarchy-in-the-art-world-55016](https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/book_report/how-did-feminist-art-begin-a-brief-history-of-women-rejecting-patriarchy-in-the-art-world-55016).

Ariane Osman. “The Future Is Female For Middle Eastern Art, Thanks To These 8 Trailblazers” <https://www.abouter.com/node/3696/entertainment/art-books/future-female-middle-eastern-art-thanks-these-8-trailblazers>

Kordic, Angie. “How Art Fought for Women's Rights.” Widewalls, March 8, 2018. <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/how-art-fought-for-womens-rights-feature-2015>.

Tate. “Feminist Art – Art Term.” Tate. Accessed April 28, 2021. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/feminist-art>.