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Towards an Inclusive Art History: the Canonization of Female Artists in Surrealism

by
Martine Geeret Wilts
Student number: 1920049
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Supervised by Dr. M.A. Leigh
Second reader: Prof. Dr. R. Zwijnenberg

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Introduction

Jacqueline Lamba, Alice Rahon, Loren MacIver, or Helen Lundeberg – do these names ring a bell? They might for the specialized scholars in the field of art history, or even more specific in the fields of feminist or women’s studies in the arts. Putting these names next to some of their male contemporaries like Max Ernst, Man Ray, Yves Tanguy and Salvador Dalí shows that these male artists completely overshadow the names of female artists associated with Surrealism. Is this because of the fact that the works of those women were less qualified? Because there simply ‘were no great women artists?’ These questions might seem outdated but they refer to a current problem: the exclusion of women in the canon of art history. When art historians discuss female artists it is usually in comparison to their male contemporaries or in the separate categories of feminism or gender studies. Art made by women even appears to be an isolated category – the fact that they are referred to as ‘women artists’ instead of just artists is a remarkable indication and shows that gender inequity is embedded in the social construction of the English language.¹

During my own Bachelor in Art History (2011-2014) at the University of Groningen I noticed that the subjects of all the classes were dominated by male Western artists. As first year students we got introduced to a broad scale of male artists, male art critics and male art historians; ‘the heroes’ of art history. One of the handbooks that is still used at universities that teach art history is *The Story of Art* by Ernst Gombrich (1950) – a book that did not even include one female artist when it was first published. In later revisions of this publication female artists have been added to ‘the story of art,’ yet it is problematic that an outdated publication that does not represent an inclusive art history from the core is still used at universities today to introduce students to the history of art. Nonetheless it is important to note that publications as *The Story of Art* are additionally used as examples for the biased and subjective ways of art historical writings through the years.

The introduction of female artists and the concept of feminism came later on during my studies. Yet women were not presented as equivalents of great masters like Leonardo Da Vinci, Vincent van Gogh, or Salvador Dalí, they were presented in the separate category of feminist art of the 1960s and 1970s. The works of these artists were linked to utter feminine

¹ In this thesis the still widely used term ‘woman artist’ will not be used. Many female artists associated with the Surrealist movement expressed their difficulties with this term and rejected the label of woman artist. In this research these women will be referred to as artists who were female with the aim to escape the conservation of the separate category of ‘women artists.’

topics such as motherhood, the female body and female genitals; a proper explanation of the crucial difference between art made by feminists, feminist art and art made by women was missing. In this way, the art of female artists was dismissed as another subcategory in the history of art.

The illustration of my own experience is related to the structural exclusion of female artists in the art world. Statistics from 2012 show that works by female artists made up three to five per cent of major art collections in the United States and Europe.² In 2015 The Museum of Modern Art in New York only had seven per cent of works on display in their permanent exhibitions that was made by women.³ It is remarkable that particularly in the last few years the debate on the exclusion of women in the art world is recurring. Popular online art platforms such as *Frieze*, *Artsy*, *The Art Newspaper* and *ARTnews* are featuring critical articles on the gender imbalance in the art world on a regular basis. *Frieze* established a section titled “Women in the Arts” in 2018 where they weekly publish interviews with important female art world professionals on their experiences in relation to gender inequity in the arts.⁴ In 2017 *Artsy* created a video project in collaboration with the fashion design brand Gucci called “Artists for Gender Equality” where female artists were interviewed on their ideas of the past, present and future position of women in the arts.⁵ In *The Art Newspaper* the exclusion of female art world professionals and artists at prestigious art fairs including TEFAF and Frieze Art Fair has recently been critically examined, concluding that the issue of gender imbalance should be tackled in today’s art world in order to move forward towards equality.⁶

Authors are still trying to catch up on research and literature about female artists, patrons, dealers and collectors since there is still a lot underexposed in the field of women in art history. The idea of ‘the male genius’ continues to dominate the art historical discourse. This might be among the reasons why we simply don’t know as much about female artists as we do about their male contemporaries. An example of this tendency is the ongoing discussion on the creator of the work *Fountain* (1917), which has been attributed to Marcel Duchamp for decades. Yet several art historians have attributed this work repeatedly to the

² <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/inquiry-wall-flowers-women-historical-art-collections/>

³ <http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/taking-the-measure-of-sexism-facts-figures-and-fixes/>

⁴ <https://frieze.com/article/women-arts-iwona-blazwick>

⁵ <https://www.artsy.net/gender-equality/past>

⁶ <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/tackling-tefaf-s-gender-imbalance-is-vital-to-move-with-the-times> and <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/frieze-shines-spotlight-on-avant-garde-women-who-challenged-the-male-dominated-1980s-art-market>

German Dada artist and Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874-1927). The most recent article on this debate was published in June 2018, which indicates the current state of this ongoing discussion.⁷ Even though the question of the real creator of the work is secondary in relation to my research, the debate shows that the celebrated stories of male artists should not always be considered as fixed art historical facts. Professor of Contemporary Art History Kitty Zijlmans stated in this context that the idea of the male genius should be questioned: “It is time to refute the stories of male artists and to reconstruct the stories of female artists. Art History should be rewritten.”⁸ The necessity of rewriting art history can further be explained through the exclusion of female artists from major art exhibitions and collections. The position of curators is of crucial importance in this regard since they are partly responsible for the representation of diversity in the art world. Curator and author of the recent publication *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating* (2018) Maura Reilly questioned the position of the curator and wondered why curators don’t seem to be more involved with the representation of an inclusive art history anno 2018:

“Have curators today become so arrogant that asking them to include more non-white and/or women artists is an affront to their egos? [...] Are they too market-centric? Are they studying in curatorial programs that don’t offer up a more inclusive curriculum? If a curator simply does not bother with Other artists, is it out of habit, misogyny, racism, homophobia—or is it just plain laziness? Are they only choosing works they’ve seen in NYC galleries or collector’s homes, instead of traveling to non-western contexts in search of more unfamiliar work/artists?”⁹

The questions that Reilly posed all correspond with the ones that came up in my own mind during the last year. Travelling and living in a non-Western continent myself made me realize that there is so much we – as European art historians – don’t know, and don’t learn about. Reilly introduced transparency and education as the most important sources to establish an inclusion of female artists in the art historical canon. While art historians fulfill the function of education, this responsibility can also be found in how curators present art history to the world. As ‘translators’ of art history to the broader public of museum and gallery visitors, it can be stated that curators carry a certain educational responsibility when it

⁷ <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/06/27/de-barones-is-de-ware-dada-koningin-a1608093>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ <http://www.maurareilly.com/pdf/essays/CIAFessay.pdf>

comes to the representation of an inclusive art history. The term ‘Curatorial Activism’ was coined by Reilly and enhances the upcoming movement of curators who are dedicated to change the current master narrative of art history. The political and slightly aggressive term ‘activism’ indicates that the aim of this phenomenon is to establish a structural change in the art world and to raise awareness for the problem of sexism and racism today. As Reilly put her concern into suiting words: “these are not issues from the past, folks. *This is now.*”¹⁰

Canonical critique has been a fundamental part of the art historical discourse since the 1980s. It is remarkable that while the problem of the exclusion of women in the art historical canon has been widely acknowledged, a shift towards inclusion still seems far away. Female artists are not readily thought of together with their male contemporaries as established pioneers of the avant-garde. This thesis focuses therefore on the women who were associated with Surrealism in the United States including Jacqueline Lamba, Leonora Carrington, Loren MacIver and Helen Lundeberg. In this thesis I talk about female artists ‘associated with the Surrealist movement’ because not all of these women physically worked with the Surrealists in Paris.¹¹ The female artists discussed in this thesis come from various backgrounds, ranging from Europe to the United States, and all have a connection with Surrealism and its transcultural processes.¹² Director of the Mexican Secretariat of Culture Roxana del Consuelo Sáizar Guerro pointed out that these women “cultivated Surrealism from a perspective distinct from that developed by men;” where women were dismissed as objects of desire and as symbols of beauty.¹³ My research specifically covers the period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s when many artists associated with Surrealism were residing in the world’s new art capital New York City due to the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe.

One of the most recent studies concerning the position of female artists in mid-twentieth century America is *American Women Artists, 1935-1970: Gender, Culture, and Politics* (2016). Associate Professor of American Art Helen Langa and Associate Professor of Art History Paula Wisotzki dedicated this publication to the social, cultural, intellectual, and political interests and the challenges that women artists battled in this period. Even though

¹⁰ <http://www.artnews.com/2017/11/07/what-is-curatorial-activism/>

¹¹ “The Surrealist movement” specifically refers to the group of artists and writers under the authority of André Breton who were located in Paris from 1924 until the second half of the 1930s and is also referred to as ‘Parisian’ and ‘Bretonian’ Surrealism. The members of this group are defined as ‘Surrealists.’

¹² Fort and Arcq (eds.) 2012, p. 9

¹³ Ibid.

this publication offers a crucial insight in the challenges and development of female artists in the United States, it lacks a contextual overview of the New York art scene in the 1930s and 1940s and there is no examination of the decision-making in the canonization process of female artists. Associate Professor of Art History Siobhan M. Conathy wrote the introductory essay in this publication about Peggy Guggenheim's gallery Art of This Century as "a transitional space for women."¹⁴ She explained the gallery as an important starting point for the debate on the position of female artists, which she describes as "a discourse on gender that continues today."¹⁵ The practices of Art of This Century can therefore be considered of great importance for this research. In 2012 the exhibition catalogue *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States* was published by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in collaboration with the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City. The aim of this catalogue and exhibition was to expand the Surrealist canon by inserting a great amount of formerly unknown female artists into the history of Surrealist art. An overview is provided on the coexisting art scenes in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s and on how female artists functioned in these contexts. The research focuses on the art historical contexts of these women, a further examination of the exclusion of these women from the canon and the process of canonization is lacking.

Art Historian Ann Eden Gibson discussed the issues of using biased source material in relation to Abstract Expressionism in her publication *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (1997). Gibson showed that decision-making in art historical writings is inseparable from social attitudes. Art historians themselves are an integral part of the selectivity and exclusion of the 'others' in the process of canonization. Professor of American Studies Erika Doss indicated this problem by exposing the sided ways in which art historical scholarship was, and still is practiced: "one reason these 'others' remain unrecorded is bound up in the problems of doing revisionist art historical scholarship in the first place: where do we look? what do we read? who do we talk with? what do we talk about? Dependent on art world institutions, museums, galleries, archives, libraries for research and sources, it is no surprise that the artists not included in those institutions are generally excluded from mainstream accounts of American art."¹⁶

These writings are among the works that have further developed my awareness of the exclusion of women in the art world. It also shows that there is work to be done when it

¹⁴ Conathy 2016, p. 1

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Doss 1998, p. 843

comes to a broader overview of the position of female artists associated with Surrealism in 1940s New York and the process of canonization in this context. This thesis retraces the exclusion of female artists associated with Surrealism in the formation of the canon of art history. The following research question serves as a thread through this thesis: *how is it possible that female artists associated with Surrealism are not integral part of the art historical canon today?* In order to formulate an answer on this question, it is necessary to disassemble the process of canonization; who decides whose art counts, and whose apparently does not?

By exposing the politics of decision-making Gibson posed the following questions in relation to the valuation of the works of women; “according to whom?” and “expressing whose experiences?” In this thesis I use a similar approach and pose the same questions concerning female Surrealist artists residing in New York in relation to the canonized story of Surrealism. It is necessary to distill the functioning of the network around the artists to indicate who were involved in this decision-making. “According to whom?” and “expressing whose experiences?” will be answered by how these artists were represented in contemporary collections, exhibitions and writings. In which collections and exhibitions was the art of female artists associated with Surrealism included (collectors, museums and galleries); who wrote about them (art critics); and who promoted them (patrons, dealers, and collectors)? When we look at important exhibitions in the process of canonization, were these women included or not? By researching these matters of representation I intend to expose the power structures in the formation of the Surrealist canon and to contribute to one of the stories in art history. The further aim of this thesis is to contribute to right the balance in the literature on women in art history.

Chapter 1 discusses the definitions of the terminology used in this thesis. Here I explain the theoretical framework through the concepts of the canon and canonization. An insight into the formation and the structure of the canon will be provided and the actors included in the formation of the canon are defined and explained. The practice of feminism will be discussed in relation to the construction of art history through gender politics, which leads to the examination of the current problems of the perception of feminism in art history. Furthermore the relation between female artists and the Surrealist movement will be examined through the conceptions of female artists themselves.

In Chapter 2 the recognition of peer artists in relation to female artists associated with Surrealism will be researched through three canonical Surrealist magazines that were

distributed in New York during the 1940s. I further research the collecting, exhibiting and writing practices in relation to female artists associated with Surrealism in 1930s and 1940s New York. The aim of the chapter is to find out if female artists were visible in the art scene in this period. The actors in the process of canonization will be discussed to retrace where in the formation of the canon the exclusion can be found. The network of peer artists, collectors, critics, patrons, dealers and museums will become visible and will be distilled to expose the power structures.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the current state of the canonization of female artists in Surrealism. I introduce different methods to reform the canon that have been defined by art historians in relation to feminism. The role of education in the context of art historical literature and museum exhibitions will be explored and defined by looking at the handbooks that are used at universities in the Netherlands. Furthermore the attempts of inclusion in the art world will be indicated by looking at exhibitions in important museums and galleries. Lastly, I examine the idea of the structural change, this chapter explores how a paradigm shift could be established through the methods that were introduced in the beginning of this chapter in order to achieve an inclusive art history.

Chapter 1

Canonical Critique and Decision-Making

This chapter provides the theoretical framework of this thesis. First the terminology in relation to the canon is defined, together with an explanation of the structure of the canon to provide insight into how and why it was formed. I explore the topic of canonical critique and partisanship in relation to the canon and female artists with the discussion of the terminology of in- and exclusion. This chapter examines the process of canonization by deconstructing the establishment of the canon to retrace the exclusion of female artists in the canon formation. This is done by exposing the actors that are involved with the process of canonization according to Art Historians Griselda Pollock and Alan Bowness, Cultural Sociologists Howard Becker and Sarah Thornton, Economist and Professor of Business Don Thompson and Professor of Sociology Diana Crane. I further explain the definition and the necessity of feminism in relation to the field of art history to expose the existing problems in the perception of feminism at educational institutions such as universities. Lastly this chapter discusses the relation between female artists, the Surrealist movement and the canon. Is the celebration of Surrealism as one of the first movements that gave women space to develop themselves as artists justified? This question is explored through the opinions of the female artists associated with the Surrealist movement.

1.1 Defining and explaining

The exclusion of women from museums and collections is specifically the result of the canon of art history that we know today. The definition of the canon comes from the Greek word *kanon*; translated as ‘rule’ or ‘standard.’¹⁷ The canon can be defined as an established principle that functions as the “universal standard of quality.”¹⁸ In art history the canon consists of a group of artists, objects or writings that are considered as the most important or most emblematic. The practice of value judgment is something that we, as art historians, are continuously involved with in our daily procedures. Whether it regards the decision on what to research or what to include in an exhibition, decisions are always being made based on the judgment of value. Art Historian Hubert Locher explained that it is precisely this art historical

¹⁷ Locher 2012, p. 30

¹⁸ Brzyski 2007, p. 1 of 53

practice of value judgment that has resulted in the canon of art history that we know today.¹⁹ The structure of the canon can be defined as an organization of the information that has been valued according to this so-called universal quality standard under different social, cultural and geographical circumstances. The canon thus functions as a point of reference and as a way to organize the writings and records of art history. The concept of the canon immediately raises questions such as *how* is this particular principle established, and by *whom*? These questions indicate that there is a form of partisanship involved with the formation of the canon. It is important to be aware that the canon is a product of different ideological approaches, politics and concepts in different times of history that define the history of art. This indicates that neither art history nor its canon is neutral or fixed.

The definition of the canon as one fixed universal standard is problematic because it seemingly refers to one particular principle, which is the canon of Western art. In relation to the conception of definitions in the English language, Art Historian Griselda Pollock has stated that the politics of gender are already encoded in language.²⁰ The seemingly impartial term ‘artist’ appears not to be neutral since it only refers to men; one needs to accompany the noun ‘artist’ with adjectives as ‘female’ or ‘woman’ to specify that we are talking about women. Because of this, two different concepts have been established; namely the ‘artist’ and the ‘woman artist.’ Art Historian Rozsika Parker and Pollock introduced the thesis that the field of language has disqualified women to be treated as real artists for this particular reason.²¹ Therefore Pollock defined the canon in relation to feminism as “a discursive formation which constitutes the objects/text it selects as the products of artistic mastery and, thereby contributes to the legitimation of white masculinity’s exclusive identification with creativity and with Culture.”²² This definition additionally explains the politics of gender that have been involved with the establishment of the canon.

The partisanship that is encoded in the English language can further be found in the conception of the term ‘canon.’ This mechanism Art Historian Anna Brzyski has defined as cultural appraisal: “when the canon appears unaccompanied by a specific modifier (as in the canon of ‘Chinese’ art) it actually refers to the Western cultural tradition.”²³ The fact that the term canon can be explained as a standard or rule, and the matter that this specific standard

¹⁹ Locher 2012, p. 32

²⁰ Pollock 2011, p. 6

²¹ Parker and Pollock 2013, p. xix

²² Pollock 1999, p. 9

²³ Brzyski 2007, p. 10 of 53

only refers to Western art reveals the partiality of the canon. It is therefore important to realize that in the history of art there are competing canons that have been formed in different social, political and geographical environments.

The canon of Western art has been subjected to many different forms of critique in the last decades regarding the exclusion of different groups, e.g. women, artists of color, 'non-Western artists' and LGBTIQ²⁴ artists. Since the rise of the feminist movement in the 1960s there has been a structural demand for the inclusion of women in the canon of art history, aiming for gender balance and equal representation. It is well known that women have been excluded from art historical writings and records; it was feminist Art Historian Linda Nochlin who explained this exclusion due to women's lower status in the art world because of institutional prejudices and practical obstacles.²⁵ It would seem apparent that if we keep on reading, teaching, and learning from the same sources for generations, the content of the canon would continue to be biased throughout history.

It is noteworthy that while the exclusive character of the canon has been acknowledged in the extensive amount of canonical critique, this same canon of established, male, artists is still generally considered as the most relevant today. Through the acknowledgement of the need of a canon reform, a structure has been developing that Locher defined as the 'open canon.'²⁶ This structure does not define the existing canon as a fixed rule or standard but as a canon that is under construction on a daily basis and consists of "collectively developed and agreed reference systems, representing sets of values deemed to be important for society as a whole, or for groups within it."²⁷ Brzyski acknowledged this structure of different local canons that developed in different geographical places, in different times and under different social circumstances as well.²⁸

The acknowledgement of several, equal, coexisting reference systems in relation to the canon refers to the existence of the different stories of art, represented by individual voices. Being aware of these different stories and theories leads to the problematic representation of the concept of feminism in the academic field of art history. The term 'feminism' has been subjected to debate and has been interpreted differently through the years. In this thesis I use the following definition of feminism as "the belief in the social, economic, and political

²⁴ LGBTIQ is the abbreviation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning sexualities.

²⁵ Hatt and Klonk 2006, p. 150

²⁶ Locher 2012, p. 29

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Brzyski 2007, p. 6 of 56

equality of the sexes.”²⁹ In the context of feminist politics Pollock defined gender as “a construction of social, economic and cultural power, and relations between the sexes as relations of dominations and oppression.”³⁰ I agree with Pollock that, like feminism, art history should to be seen in relation to gender politics. This can be done by questioning the existing assumptions in the field of art history and by exposing the value systems that are active behind what have been considered art historical facts. Pollock further described the extensive character of feminism in relation to art history that goes beyond the collecting and exhibiting works of female artists: “it also implies a shifting of paradigms, including going beyond notions of gender (men and women artists) and engaging with difference.”³¹ This interpretation will further be followed in this thesis.³²

The problem of the perception of feminism in the field of art history is that feminism is often dismissed as a framework that can be applied to one of the stories of art. Art Historian James Elkins explored the different ‘shapes’ of art history in *Stories of Art* (2002). In this publication he points to the practice of exclusion that, to him, seems inevitable. When an author picks a certain artist to write about others are simply excluded; a matter of personal choice. To Elkins, selectivity and exclusion seem inescapable, every person is different and has his or her own vision on the history of art. What Elkins seems to forget is that the practice of selectivity and value judgment in the canon differs from the general exclusion of women in art history. He states that the different stories of art can be like a guide: “helping you to find the shape of art history that makes most sense to you.”³³ Here feminism, in one of its “half-dozen varieties,” is listed as one of the many tools that help art historians to interpret what they see. Elkins dismissed the ‘feminist desire of inclusion’ as another subsection, or as a theory to understand art. I follow Pollock’s statement that feminism should indicate the shifting of the existing paradigms. Feminism cannot be reduced to just another ‘-ism’ to be added to the list different movements in the history of art. As Pollock has stated: “feminism is not merely a minor incident in the History of Art.”³⁴ She illustrated the same type of dismissing feminism in educational institutions by the example of how books on women and feminism are filed in art libraries. Apart from the preliminary category including the major

²⁹ Source of definition: Encyclopædia Britannica

³⁰ Pollock 2012, p. 1

³¹ Pollock 2008, p. 251

³² While I would like to follow Pollock’s approach in going beyond the notions of gender, I consider it necessary to specify the female gender in this thesis to indicate the reference to the female artists in the story of male dominated Surrealism.

³³ Elkins 2002, p. xiv-xv

³⁴ Parker and Pollock 2013, p. xxvi

and most important topics in art history, there are always lesser-known subsections where books on women and feminism are filed. With this illustrative example Pollock exposed the subsections that represent an unchanged authoritative history without women. Pollock hereby further encourages a change in the Western society's way of thinking about this effect of excluding women from canonical publications.³⁵

The existing structure of the canon that consists of selective value judgment and the creation of meaning seems inescapable in the field of art history. Brzyski described this structure as “qualitative distinctions”³⁶ that are made on a daily basis to create understanding.³⁷ It is important to determine how this process of valuing, meaning-making and decision-making functions. What does it take for artists to be included in the canon? Pollock defined the process of canonization and explained the canon as a “retrospectively legitimating backbone of a cultural and political identity. [...] An indication of what academic institutions, artists and writers establish as the best, the most representative, and the most significant.”³⁸ The canon is formed in retrospect by what established artists and writers deemed as more significant. The acknowledgement of artists and writers can be seen as one of the factors in the definition of the success of artists and in further establishing their recording in the canon.

The stages towards artistic success have been researched by Art Historian Alan Bowness in *The Conditions of Success: How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame* (1989). Bowness proposed that the success of artists can be predicted by an accumulation of factors and introduced four consecutive stages that define artistic success. He divided the stages into the recognition of peer artists, recognition of the artist by art critics, patronage by collectors and dealers and the public acclaim of fame.³⁹ According to Bowness, an artist achieves these four stages of recognition over a period of approximately 25 years, which indicates that fame can only be achieved for middle-aged artists or, more often, after their deaths. He pointed out that peer recognition of fellow artists is the most significant stage in this process.⁴⁰

The acknowledgement of critics is furthermore of crucial importance in the conditions of artistic success and in the canon formation. Bowness explained that critics fulfill two main functions, including the development of the vocabulary in talking about art that makes it more

³⁵ Pollock 2011, p. 7-8

³⁶ Brzyski 2007, p. 4 of 53

³⁷ Ibid., p. 6 of 53

³⁸ Pollock 1999, p. 3

³⁹ Bowness 1989, p. 11

⁴⁰ Ibid.

approachable to a broader audience, and the critic's contribution to the critical debate.⁴¹ This critical debate is essential in the discourse of modern art. As has been explained, the value judgments that are involved with the daily practices of art history are not neutral or fixed. Bowness explained that these judgments "are sustained by consensus. [...] Critical opinions carry an implied interrogative. Once the critical consensus is established, changes are relatively minor."⁴² This indicates that critics play a leading role in the development of the discourse of modern art that continues in the critical consensus of today. Bowness stated that the art critic has an authority that should be recognized; he or she offers a "responsible choice"⁴³ instead of imposing his or her personal taste when criticizing exhibitions because of his or her profound knowledge of the art scene and its actors. It is remarkable that Bowness attributes such a pivotal role to the critic and seems to justify any art criticism for having the capability of 'responsible decision-making.' This argument will further be examined in the context of the New York art scene of the 1940s in Chapter 2 and in the current art world in Chapter 3.

Outside of the four conditions of success, Bowness additionally identified museums of modern art as a significant actor in the development of an artistic career. Museums have a leading position in the art world due to their role as educators and communicators of art to the broader public. The purchase of an artist's work by a major art museum and the inclusion of their work in (semi) permanent collection displays and exhibitions are therefore of crucial importance for artists in their development towards success.⁴⁴ Economist and Professor of Business who is specialized in the art market Don Thompson additionally explained the importance of the museum in the development of an artistic career. Major museums function as high-level brands in the art world because they carry "personality, distinctiveness and value."⁴⁵ Art that has been included in a museum show or collection commands a higher price because of the provenance.⁴⁶ Thompson explained that the judgment of museums is seldom questioned because they are independent of the art market process; it is because of this that he defined the inclusion of an artist's work in a museum as "the highest level of branding."⁴⁷ It can be stated that museums function as a major platform for the inclusion of artists in art

⁴¹ Bowness 1989, p. 21

⁴² Ibid., p. 27-28

⁴³ Ibid., p. 33

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 33, 37

⁴⁵ Thompson 2008, p. 12

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 13

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 233

history and in the formation of the canon. Art dealers and patrons who were often owners of galleries can further be defined as important ‘tastemakers’ because of their pioneering position in the promotion of emerging avant-garde artists at their galleries.⁴⁸ Art dealers functioned, and still function, as the artist’s financier, advisor, agent and friend, which epitomizes the significant role of the dealer for the development of an artist.⁴⁹

Cultural Sociologist Howard Becker specifically researched the social context of the success of the artist in 1982. He stated that in order to be successful the artist “depends” on a great amount of actors, including dealers, collectors, museum curators, critics, patrons and on the recognition of past and contemporary artists.⁵⁰ The social context of artistic success was more recently defined by Cultural Sociologist Sarah Thornton in 2009. She additionally pointed out that artists do not simply surface but that there are certain actors that are responsible for the success of an artist. Art works and artists are ‘made’ by art dealers, curators, critics and collectors that all support the art works in their own way.⁵¹ Thornton defined art dealers as “the most pivotal” in the making of artists because of their significant role in the promotion of young emerging artists.⁵² In *The Transformation of the Avant-Garde: The New York Art World, 1940-1985* (1987) Professor of Sociology Diana Crane additionally explained the importance of a social network for the development of an artist. She pointed out that a vital social network should include influential critics, dealers and curators who would contribute to making the artist visible in the art world.⁵³ Crane further characterized the role of the patron, who was often a collector at the same time, as personally involved with the artist through a protective attitude towards his or her work.⁵⁴ Through the results that were defined by these specialists it can be concluded that the most important actors in the formation of the canon are peer artists, critics, patrons, collectors, dealers, museums and curators, and academic institutions; including art historians and writers. These actors will be further analyzed in Chapter 2 and 3 to retrace where in the process of canon formation female artists associated with Surrealism have been excluded.

⁴⁸ Bowness 1989, p. 39

⁴⁹ Thompson 2008, p. 49

⁵⁰ Becker 1982, p. 13

⁵¹ Thornton 2009, p. xiv

⁵² Ibid., p. xii

⁵³ Crane 1987, p. 41-42

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 38

1.2 Surrealism, female artists and mechanisms of oppression

To make the practice of decision-making in the formation of the canon transparent is it important to expose the mechanisms of oppression. Several scholars in the field of feminism and art history including Parker, Pollock and Gibson researched the process of decision-making and canonization in relation to female artists of the twentieth century. They all questioned Nochlin's wide known assumption, introduced in her article "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists" (1971), that the main reason we don't know many female artists today is because of the reason that they didn't have the chance to participate in the art world the same way as men did because of sexism and discrimination. Parker, Pollock and Gibson went a step further with their research and contradicted Nochlin's assumption. Gibson pointed to the participation of female artists in the American art scene of the mid-twentieth century by stating the following: "female artists were always there, they just weren't seen."⁵⁵ Gibson, as well as Pollock and Parker stated that female artists did participate in the art world but that they were deliberately removed from art historical writings and exhibitions in the twentieth century – the age of modern art. In this age, modern art was actively promoted and presented in a format of a specific narrative that is still used today.

Pollock illustrated this narrative with the well known 'diagram of stylistic development' designed by Alfred H. Barr Jr. in 1936 [fig. 1].⁵⁶ The diagram can be seen as the main example of the format of this specific narrative and as an example of the problematic use of the same, biased source through the years. In the diagram art movements from Neo-Impressionism to abstraction have been placed in a flow chart, the movements are highlighted by the names of their male initiators.⁵⁷ This certain way of actively promoting and presenting modern art in the twentieth century can be seen as one of the major reasons where the structural problem of gender inequity seems to come from. Problematic is that this diagram was further used as a main source for the classification system in important art museums and to introduce first year art history students to the history of art. Researches have examined that female artists were always there, but in the twentieth century something happened that

⁵⁵ Gibson 1997, p. ix

⁵⁶ Barr's diagram was additionally used by Anna Brzyski to illustrate the partisanship of canons in her publication *Partisan Canons* (2007).

⁵⁷ Pollock 2002, p. 50

excluded female artists from the canonical publications.⁵⁸ This ‘something’ can be defined as the mechanisms of oppression that are at stake regarding decision-making in the canonical system. Extended research has been done on female artists in relation to Abstract Expressionism and Impressionism, yet the relation between Surrealism and female artists remains an ambiguous one. Important for this research is to go back to the relation between the canon, Surrealism and female artists. How can the relation between female artists and the Surrealist movement be defined to begin with?⁵⁹

The Surrealist movement has often been described as the first artistic movement that included an important number of women participants. Many authors have dedicated writings on how the Surrealist movement included female artists in their group, more than had ever occurred before in the history of any art movement. Art Historian Whitney Chadwick researched the role of female artists associated with Surrealism in *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985). Chadwick pointed out that female artists actively started participating in Surrealist exhibitions after 1929. “[...] While the Surrealist movement did show interest in the question of women’s liberty, it is nevertheless necessary to keep in mind that the history of her place in Surrealism has not been written by, or about, real women. [...] We know more about Kiki of Montparnasse and Nadja than Lee Miller and Valentine Hugo.”⁶⁰ More is known about women who were depicted as mysterious muses than about women with the aim to develop serious careers as independent artists. I agree with Chadwick that it is striking that art history has not recorded any of the women associated with Surrealism as “essential to the movement.”⁶¹ Even though Surrealism has been celebrated in literature as unique for the development of female artists, it is important to be critical of this celebration.

First of all it is important to note that we are dealing with the history of individuals. Even though the Surrealist movement is often seen as a unity, the group consisted of many different individuals with diverging opinions. Realizing this, the question that French

⁵⁸ Examples of these researches are the following: Ann Eden Gibson (1997) on women and Abstract Expressionism, Griselda Pollock and T.J. Clark on women and Impressionism, and Whitney Chadwick (1985) on women and Surrealism.

⁵⁹ This thesis does not focus on the biographical or art historical interpretation of the oeuvres of female artists in relation to Surrealism but examines power structures in relation to the formation of the Surrealist canon. Because of this reason the women mentioned in this research that remain relatively unknown in today’s art world are only briefly explained in the art historical context.

⁶⁰ Chadwick 1985, p. 7

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 8

Surrealist artist Jacqueline Lamba (1910-1993) posed to Scholar Marticia Sawin in relation to Sawin's research for *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (1995) should be kept in mind: "How are you going to make one truth out of all the lies people will tell you?"⁶² The quotes by artists that are used in this thesis originate from different kinds of sources, including interviews, biographies and monographs. By using these different sources and combining as many different voices as possible, the aim is to contribute to a balanced story that shines a new light on the lives and works of these artists in the context of art history today.

When it comes to the opinions of female artists associated with Surrealism themselves, the ambiguous position of women is confirmed in both ways. Many of these women mentioned that they received support and encouragement from André Breton and the other Surrealists.⁶³ Yet many female artists who would later work in the United States commented on the patriarchal structure of the movement and the sexist attitudes. American artist Dorothea Tanning (1910-2012) mentioned that the place of women in the Surrealist circle was in no way different from the position of women in society.⁶⁴ British poet Mina Loy (1882-1966) was closely involved with the Surrealists in Paris.⁶⁵ She stated that Surrealism was the only wholly satisfactory art movement, but even though she initially had a feminist perception of the movement, she later realized that she would never be appreciated as an independent artist.⁶⁶ Jacqueline Lamba commented that it was hard to be a female painter: "women were still undervalued, over and over I heard the same 'but you are not really a Surrealist, or, she was a very good painter but of course she wasn't really a Surrealist.'"⁶⁷ Also the English Leonora Carrington (1917-2011) as a committed feminist commented on the role of women in the Surrealist circle: "the women Surrealists were considered secondary to the male Surrealists. The women were considered... people there to inspire, aside from doing the washing, cooking, cleaning, and feeding... I never thought of myself as a muse."⁶⁸ Carrington

⁶² Sawin 1995, p. x

⁶³ Chadwick 1985, p. 11

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ While the works of Tanning receive an extensive amount of art historical interest today, Mina Loy remains relatively unknown. Loy was active as a poet since the 1910s and later as a painter. Her works can be characterized by an experimental Surrealist content, often combined with intimate aspects of female sexuality.

⁶⁶ Fort 2012, p. 34

⁶⁷ Chadwick 1985, p. 11

⁶⁸ Alberth 2010, p. 37

also stated that the women, usually cherished as *femme enfant*, were not interesting anymore for the male Surrealists in their main role as muse as soon as they had reached the age of 25.⁶⁹

These different voices of female artists indicate that the position of women in Parisian Surrealism can be considered closer to muse than to respected artist, which should not be considered celebratory at all. Because of this reason it seems unjustified to celebrate Surrealism as one of the first art movements that made space for the development of the individual careers of female artists. Even though we should be careful with celebrating Surrealism in relation to female artists, the time in which Surrealism developed was also a time where the position of women changed in society (1930s and 1940s). The geographical change of the art world from Europe to North America was also a crucial factor for female artists in the development and establishment of their independent artistic careers. What is interesting about the shift of these female émigrés from Europe to the United States is that women in the United States experienced a new kind of society with a different culture and a sense of liberation.⁷⁰ Art Historian and Curator Ilene Susan Fort has described the social situation that these women found when they arrived in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s as liberating and life changing: “[here] the lack of century-old traditions, the existence of more fluid social mores and the franchise — which women did not receive in France until 1944 — encouraged their greater sense of independence and self-worth and their exploration of identity issues. That many émigré women did not flourish as Surrealists until their move to the United States demonstrates how liberating American culture was for them.”⁷¹

The 1940s can be seen as the most important decade for Surrealism in the United States.⁷² Many Surrealist émigré artists from Europe had made New York City their new home because of the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe. The art scene developed rapidly, many new avant-garde galleries opened their doors and galleries as well as museums organized exhibitions on Surrealism. While museums were, and still are seen as the most influential players in the art world, galleries often paved the way for the canonization of emerging avant-garde artists. As was defined by Bowness and Thornton these dealers, patrons and collectors (characteristics that were often combined in the position of the gallerist) were crucial for their valuable and creative role in promoting emerging artists.⁷³ To this extend, it

⁶⁹ Alberth 2010, p. 38

⁷⁰ Fort and Arcq (eds.) 2012, p. 19

⁷¹ Fort 2017, p. 3

⁷² Sawin 1995, p. 150-151

⁷³ Bowness 1989, p. 39 and Thornton 2009, p. xii

were mostly the commercial galleries in New York that organized exhibitions dedicated to female artists.⁷⁴ Where the role of women in Parisian Surrealism wandered between muse and mistress, female artists found a new kind of freedom in the environment of the United States. Being away from the war in Europe, Paris and the Surrealist circle that was dominated by men, women found peace and artistic liberty in the environment of the United States.⁷⁵ Even though many male Surrealists had also settled in New York, there was no such thing as the hierarchic Bretonian Surrealist circle as there was in Paris. Since the War broke out many artists had fled Europe and went to different destinations, ranging from Mexico to the Caribbean, to the United States, which created a diaspora of Surrealist artists in different continents.⁷⁶

Pollock explained the art scene of New York during the 1930s and 1940s in relation to the changing position of women where modernization was mainly about the modernizing concepts of gender.⁷⁷ She described the mid-1930s as “the first period in history when there were lots of these women artists around in every movement, capital and coterie.”⁷⁸ This context is specifically important because of the landmark exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* that was organized by Alfred Barr Jr. at The Museum of Modern Art in 1936. It is noteworthy that Barr was living in an environment where many female artists were around. The question remains if these women were included in important exhibitions as such. The social circumstances and the idea of a new, liberated environment in the United States have often been cited by art historians as important motifs that gave women the opportunity to establish independent artistic careers. Yet many of these women are not included in the canon of Surrealism and still remain unknown today. It is therefore necessary to examine the art world of New York in the 1930s and 1940s to indicate if the works of female artists were visible and exhibited in order to further explain their exclusion from the canon of Surrealism.

⁷⁴ Fort 2017, p. 2

⁷⁵ Fort and Arcq (eds.) 2012, p. 19

⁷⁶ Lozano (eds.) 2014, p. 14-15

⁷⁷ Pollock 2011, p. 8

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Chapter 2

Power Structures in the Network

This chapter follows Alan Bowness's explanation of peer recognition as a crucial stage in the process of canonization. I analyze the recognition of female artists associated with the Surrealist movement according to this first stage of artistic success. Literature can be defined as a significant practice for the Surrealists during the 1930s and 1940s. As an artist, writer, and specialist on Surrealism in America, Penelope Rosemont pointed out that most of the literature on female artists associated with Surrealism was written by the Surrealists themselves.⁷⁹ In relation to this statement, Surrealist publications from the 1930s and 1940s are researched in order to analyze the recognition of peer artists. I explore the Surrealist magazines *Minotaure* (1933-1939), *VVV* (1942-1944), *View* (1940-1942) and *Dyn* (1942-1944) to retrace the participation of female artists in these issues. The second part of this chapter examines the visibility of female artists associated with Surrealism in the art scene of New York during this time. The most important exhibitions and (semi) permanent collection displays in galleries and museums function as indicators to find out if the works of these women were visible in the art scene. I additionally research the in- or exclusion of these women in museum collections to analyze the role of the museum in the process of the canonization of female artists. The actors involved with the formation of the canon are discussed here in order to retrace where in this process the exclusion of female artists can be found. As defined by Pollock, Bowness, Becker, Thornton, Thompson and Crane, these actors consist of peer artists, critics, writers, patrons, collectors, dealers, curators and museums.

2.1 Peer recognition: female artists in Surrealist writings

Rosemont wrote in 1998: "Until very recently most of the literature on women Surrealists was written by other Surrealists [...] If these women remain little known to the larger reading public it is because critics and scholars have been shirking their responsibilities."⁸⁰ In order to analyze if it were indeed the critics and scholars that Rosemont accused of 'shirking' their responsibilities, I will examine Rosemont's statement in the context of the New York art scene. The research on the contribution of women to Surrealist publications consists of

⁷⁹ Rosemont 1998, p. xxx

⁸⁰ Ibid.

locating the in- or exclusion of their own writings and illustrations, and the writings about these artists by the Surrealists. The move of many émigré artists to the United States by the end of the 1930s has been indicated as liberating for women, the question however is if this liberation can be retraced in the inclusion of women in Surrealist writings during this time.

Before the shift of the art world's capital from Paris to New York during the end of the 1930s, the Surrealists were located in Paris where they published *Minotaure* magazine (1933-1939). This magazine can be considered as one of the most important writings of the Surrealists in this decade. Shortly after the arrival of the Surrealist émigrés in the United States, they started publishing *VVV* (1942-1944) in New York. The Surrealists simultaneously contributed to *View* magazine in New York from 1940 until 1942. Austrian born artist Wolfgang Paalen (1905-1959), who found refuge in Mexico in 1939, established the Mexican rooted Surrealist magazine *Dyn* in 1942 that would be distributed in New York during the same time. The comparison of the Parisian publication of *Minotaure* to the New York based *VVV* magazine shows a significant development in the attitude of the Surrealists towards the inclusion of women.⁸¹ Rosemont pointed out that the three issues of *VVV* included more works by female artists than any magazine on Surrealism had before: "they even included more than all previous Surrealist periodicals put together."⁸² This indicates to a certain extent that the shift from Paris to New York can indeed be defined as liberating for women in relation to their development as individual artists.

The 'liberation' of the role of women in Surrealism thus seems closely related to the geographical change of the end of the late 1930s. Since the Surrealist circle fell apart in a diaspora of Surrealists ranging from Europe to the United States and Mexico, there was no such thing as one defined circle of hierarchic patriarchal domination. Even though Breton was still the initiator of many of these projects, the density of the male dominated circle as it existed in Paris was gone.⁸³ The necessity of relocation in particular moments of history has further been explained by Bowness in relation to artistic development. He stated that at certain times in history it would be necessary for artists to relocate to a different place because of the shifting of dominant positions in the art world.⁸⁴ In the context of the late 1930s this shift can clearly be marked because of the outbreak of the Second World War that resulted in the change from Paris to New York as the dominant location in the art world.

⁸¹ Sawin 1995, p. 306

⁸² Rosemont 1998, p. 120

⁸³ Fort and Arcq (eds.) 2012, p. 11

⁸⁴ Bowness 1989, p. 54

VVV magazine was established in New York and directed by Breton and Max Ernst (Germany, 1891-1976). They followed the same line as they did with *Minotaure*, which was trying to create a widespread influence and inform people on Surrealism through accessible topics such as poetry, art, anthropology, sociology and psychology.⁸⁵ It is noteworthy that VVV directly seemed to reflect on the events in the contemporary New York art scene. In 1943 the female artists who were included in the second double publication were Leonora Carrington, Jacqueline Lamba, American burlesque performer and artist Gypsy Rose Lee (1911-1970), Surrealist painter Kay Sage (United States, 1898-1963), the future Abstract Expressionist painter Sonja Sekula (Switzerland, 1918-1963), Barbara Reis (1922-2013),⁸⁶ Dorothea Tanning and Susanna Hare (United States, 1916-?).⁸⁷ Sawin linked the sudden inclusion of these specific women in VVV to the exhibition of *31 Women* that was hosted earlier that year at Art of This Century by Peggy Guggenheim. The majority of the artists that participated in this show, including Carrington, Lamba, Lee, Sage, Sekula, Reis, Tanning and Hare, correspond with the ones that were included in the double publication of VVV that was published later in 1943.⁸⁸ It is in this context important to realize that the New York art scene of the 1940s was characterized by a close network of artists, dealers, patrons and collectors who were familiar with the development of Surrealism in New York through exhibitions, collections, writings and publications. This tendency was further explained by Diana Crane who defined the informal group of people that connected in gallery spaces in New York as “the acquaintance network.”⁸⁹ Because of the existence of this network, a direct influence of the *31 Women* exhibition on VVV magazine is highly possible and additionally indicates the intertwining of Surrealist writings and the Surrealist art practices in the contemporary art scene.

The second important journal that made the Surrealists in New York visible ‘in print’ was *View*, established by the American poet Charles Henri Ford. Ford was familiar with the Surrealist movement and supported the Surrealists in New York by giving them a platform in *View* magazine. From 1943 on *View* started working with galleries as Sidney Janis, Julien Levy and Art of This Century and included full-page advertisements of their exhibitions with

⁸⁵ Sawin 1995, p. 214

⁸⁶ Barbara Reis, also known as Barbara Poe Levee, was born in New York and was active as a painter and art collector. She organized several art exhibitions in her life and became an important actor in the art scene of Los Angeles where she moved in 1945. For more information see <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/latimes/obituary.aspx?pid=167493764>

⁸⁷ Rosemont 1998, p. 162

⁸⁸ Sawin 1995, p. 306

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 31

large reproductions of displayed art works. This added to the exposure of young artists who were represented by these galleries, Leonora Carrington was one of them.⁹⁰ Several of the publications of *View* were dedicated to Surrealist artists such as Max Ernst and Yves Tanguy.⁹¹ It is notable that specifically the works of Leonora Carrington were regularly included in *View*. Carrington was one of the women whose literary works were highly appreciated by the Surrealists. While she is mainly known as a painter, she also wrote an extensive amount of magic realistic stories inspired by her youth, animals and the fantastic. Breton repeatedly quoted Carrington's writings in his own essays, such as "Anthology of Black Humor" (1939), which indicates his serious appreciation for her work as an artist. Two of her short stories were included in this first issue of *View* in which Carrington's self-portrait *The Inn of the Dawn Horse* (c. 1937-38) [fig. 2] was also published.⁹² Carrington's self-portrait would two years later be included in the exhibition *Twentieth Century Portraits* (1942) at The Museum of Modern Art and was also published in the exhibition catalogue of this exhibition.⁹³ *The Inn of the Dawn Horse* is now considered as one of Carrington's most emblematic works and is currently part of the permanent collection display of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The extensive contribution of Carrington in relation to *VVV*⁹⁴ and *View* points to a dilemma in the participation of women in these Surrealist journals. Both *VVV* and *View* were edited or strongly influenced by Max Ernst, who became Carrington's lover in 1937. Carrington and Ernst were forcefully separated in 1940 when he was imprisoned by the French because of his German nationality. Even though they never got officially back together, their mutual admiration remained.⁹⁵ While the position of women in Surrealism has often been discussed in relation to their romantic relationships with prominent male Surrealists,⁹⁶ there is a difficulty in the conception of their contributions in this context. It is questionable if Carrington was included because she was romantically involved with Ernst or because of the peer recognition of the quality of her work as an artist. This similar tendency can additionally be explained in relation to Jacqueline Lamba. She started working as a

⁹⁰ Nessen 1986, p. 10

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 60, 120

⁹² Ibid., p. 30, 43

⁹³ https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_1732_300061981.pdf (p. 122)

⁹⁴ Rosemont 1998, p. 103

⁹⁵ Hubert 1991, p. 720-721

⁹⁶ An exemplary publication in this context is Chadwick, W. and De Courtivron, I. (eds.) (1993) *Significant Others: Creativity & Intimate Partnership*, UK: Thames and Hudson.

translator for *VVV*⁹⁷ and her artistic works were included in the majority of the issues of the magazine.⁹⁸ She was married to Breton from 1934 until 1943, which resulted in the fact that she was often dismissed as ‘Surrealist wife,’ yet this can simultaneously be considered as a privileged position.⁹⁹ The extensive inclusion of Lamba’s work can be linked to the fact that she was Breton’s wife during this period since Breton was the editor of the magazine. While I would like to propose a focus on the quality of Lamba’s and Carrington’s contributions instead of dismissing the inclusion of their works as a result of their social relations, it is crucial to consider the personal relations of these women in this context.

In the comparison of the literary sources a significant difference can be identified in relation to the inclusion of female artists. All the magazines have in common that they were edited by European émigré artists. Although *VVV* and *View* were both created in New York, *Dyn* was located in a different social context, which was the art scene of Mexico City. With *Dyn*, short for the Greek word *Dynaton*; translated as ‘the possible,’ Wolfgang Paalen “proposed to open the way for better understanding of the importance of imagination.”¹⁰⁰ He introduced a new format of Surrealist thinking, which was characterized by a critical review of modern art and a strong criticism on the existing work practices of Surrealist painters as Salvador Dalí.¹⁰¹ The magazine consisted of articles mainly written by Paalen himself, together with other writers, poets, and fellow artists, focusing on subjects as ethnography, poetry and art. Paalen usually invited people of his close social circle of friends to participate. Noteworthy is that female artists were consistently part of all the *Dyn* publications.¹⁰² The French artist and poet Alice Rahon (1904-1987),¹⁰³ who was Paalen’s wife in the early 1940s, contributed to every issue of the magazine with her poems and paintings.¹⁰⁴ The Swiss-born photographer, musician, collector and filmmaker Eva Sulzer (1902-1990) was a close friend of Paalen and Rahon and additionally contributed to all of the publications with her

⁹⁷ Fort and Arcq (eds.) 2012, p. 229

⁹⁸ Rosemont 1998, p. 76

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Kloyber (eds.) 2000, p. 3

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 7-9

¹⁰² For the information of the content of the publications of *Dyn* magazine, the following publication was used: Kloyber, C. (eds.) (2000) *Wolfgang Paalen’s DYN: The Complete Reprint*.

¹⁰³ Notable about the reception of Alice Rahon is that while her work remains unknown in Europe she is widely known and represented in Mexico where she moved in 1939. In Mexico City, Rahon’s works are included in the collection of the Museo de Arte Moderno and are represented by the most prominent modern art galleries.

¹⁰⁴ In relation to Rahon, Paalen and *Dyn* the same dilemma can be indicated as has been explained in the context of Carrington and Ernst, and Lamba and Breton on the extensive inclusion of their works in *VVV* and *View*.

photography and critical ethnographical articles, including “Did Henri Rousseau ever get to Mexico?” in the second issue.

Female artists, photographers and writers were already included in the two first issues of *Dyn*, yet in the third publication of the magazine almost half of the contributions were made by women. While the women in *VVV* and *View* were mainly included to illustrate articles by male Surrealist writers, in *Dyn* they contributed with their own writings and articles, as well as with photography, paintings and drawings. Female intellectuals including the American poet Marian Castleman (1921-?), French writer Anaïs Nin (1903-1977), French poet and artist Valentine Penrose (1898-1978) and American astronomer Maud Worcester Makemson (1891-1977) were considered as equals to their male contemporaries, which can be indicated through the amount of space they got to publish their writings in relation to the male contributions.

As has been proven by the examining of these Surrealist writings, women were included and recognized by peer artists to a certain extent. While women’s works were included, they were not always presented as equal. It is therefore not possible to state that women were included in the same way as their male contemporaries in *VVV* and *View*. Publications of *View* magazine were dedicated to male artists and would be illustrated by women. It is remarkable that in the context of Mexico City women seemingly had a different role in comparison to the New York rooted publications. In *Dyn* women fulfilled an equal position, they contributed to every issue of the magazine with their art works and writings and were not solely included to illustrate the writings of their male contemporaries. This can partly be explained through the different geographical context. The community of émigré artists in Mexico City was closely connected and isolated due to language barriers, cultural isolation and a shared experience of the cruelties of the Second World War.¹⁰⁵ This resulted in a strong companionship of both male and female artists, writers and intellectuals that can be seen reflected in *Dyn*. The magazines in New York were created under the leadership of the male Parisian Surrealists who did not seem to be involved with equal opportunities for female artists since the establishment of the patriarchal movement.

¹⁰⁵ Alberth 2010, p. 59-60

2.2 Art collections, exhibitions and critics: in- or exclusion?

When the female émigré artists from Europe arrived to the United States in the late 1930s and early 1940s it was difficult for refugees to enter the country due to the strict immigration policy. Political affinities that were different from the American government were not appreciated. Since some of these artists had strong political democratic opinions, they had to reach out to other countries such as Mexico.¹⁰⁶ The women who finally settled down in the United States found a society that was different from Europe. The social circumstances here allowed female artists to develop their careers and to participate in the art scene as independent artists. Fort stated the following in this context: “social mores, customs, and identities associated with gender were not as bound to centuries of tradition as they were in Europe [...] rather, they were more fluid.”¹⁰⁷ Regarding the social circumstances in the New York art scene the French artist associated with Surrealism Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) mentioned in 1947 that her geographic shift had a crucial influence on her work: “Even though I am French, I cannot think of one of these pictures being painted in France. Every one of these pictures is American, from New York.”¹⁰⁸ This statement once more epitomizes how the geographical change away from Parisian Surrealism was of crucial importance for the development of these women’s artistic careers.

By the 1940s the American art scene was generally familiar with the Surrealist idea, mainly because of the exhibitions held in the country throughout the 1920s and 1930s. An increasing amount of exhibitions dedicated to Surrealism took place in New York at the beginning of the 1940s.¹⁰⁹ I will argue that the Surrealist exhibitions that were hosted in New York in the 1930s and early 1940s would serve as catalysts for the popularity of Surrealism in the following years. The female artists discussed in this research were not generally known as established artists in this period. It is in this regard important to realize that exhibitions at galleries were more likely to include the works of these artists instead of shows at prestigious museums as The Museum of Modern Art. As stated in Chapter 1, galleries were specially known to promote works of emerging artists while museums were more likely to pick up on these artists if they had already achieved a certain level of success in the art scene. Galleries were further important actors in the art scene because of their functioning as social centers

¹⁰⁶ Fort 2012, p. 20

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Sawin 1995, p. 295-296

and meeting points for the exchange of ideas between artists, dealers, patrons and collectors.¹¹⁰ Crane additionally stated that the works of emerging artists were not very likely to be purchased by major museums in this period.¹¹¹ This additionally defines the pivotal role of galleries in relation to the exhibiting, collecting and patronage of the works of female artists. For this reason, the main focus of this chapter will be on exhibitions and collections of the avant-garde galleries in New York.

Even though galleries were more likely to promote the works of female artists, both Bowness and Thompson pointed out that museums fulfill a significant position in the development of artistic success. The acquisition of a work of art by a museum and the inclusion in (semi) permanent collection displays and exhibitions are crucial factors in the canonization process of artists. The Museum of Modern Art can be considered as the most prominent player in the New York art scene of the 1930s and 1940s. Following the arguments of Thompson, the inclusion of an artist's work in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art can be defined as "the highest level of branding."¹¹² Alfred Barr Jr. was in charge of the museum from its founding in 1929 until 1943 and can therefore be considered as the most important actor in the decision-making of the museum practices during this time.¹¹³ It is noteworthy that it was precisely Barr who designed the diagram of stylistic development in 1936, a concept where no female artists were included in the gradual development of modern art and its innovators.

Through the examination of the exhibition history of the museum in these decades it becomes clear that the inclusion of female artists can be retraced in two main exhibitions. In 1936 the works of seven women were included in the influential *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* exhibition.¹¹⁴ Some of the women who participated in this particular show have reached the status of established artist today and have received a decent amount of art historical interest through the years. Among the artists that were included in this exhibition were Meret Oppenheim (Germany, 1913-1985) and Georgia O'Keeffe (United States, 1887-1986). Barr's inclusion of two works by New Yorker Loren MacIver (1909-1998)¹¹⁵ was of

¹¹⁰ Crane 1987, p. 30

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 35

¹¹² Thompson 2008, p. 233

¹¹³ <https://www.moma.org/artists/9168>

¹¹⁴ The female artists included in this show were Leonor Fini with three works on view, Dora Maar, Georgia O'Keeffe and Sophie Taeuber-Arp with two works, and Hanna Höch, Meret Oppenheim and Loren MacIver with one work on view, source:

https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325071.pdf

¹¹⁵ https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325071.pdf

special importance in relation to The Museum of Modern Art. In 1938 the museum purchased MacIver's painting *Shack*, [fig. 3] which was one of the first works of a female artist that the museum would include in their permanent collection.¹¹⁶ It was also because of this exhibition that Barr purchased Oppenheim's radical conceived work *Object* (1936).¹¹⁷

The second significant exhibition in relation to the inclusion of female artists was hosted a decade later, titled *Fourteen Americans* (1946), organized by curator Dorothy C. Miller. While in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* the contributions of women were limited to one, two, or a maximum of three works per artist, *Fourteen Americans* included twelve works of abstract painter and poet Irene Rice Pereira (United States 1902-1971) and four works by MacIver.¹¹⁸ The inclusion of more than ten works by a female artist in one show can be considered as extensive during this time. It is a remarkable indication that the most important museum of modern art in New York only hosted two significant shows that included a reasonable amount of works of female artists over a period of a decade. The acquisitions of the museum in this time neither show a beneficial attitude towards the inclusion of women. From 1936 until 1946 circa eight works of female artists were purchased by the museum. This shows that in a period of ten years the inclusion of women in the exhibitions and the collection of The Museum of Modern Art was minimal.

It is noteworthy that from the exhibitions that were hosted by the museum from the mid 1930s until the mid 1940s the same, small amount of women was repeatedly included. The female artists who participated in these temporary as well as (semi) permanent collection displays that changed at least once a year were Loren MacIver, Georgia O'Keeffe and Irene Rice Pereira. MacIver's oil painting *Hopscotch* (1940) [fig. 4] had been part of the museum collection since 1940 and has repeatedly been presented in exhibitions including *Painting and sculpture from the museum collection* in 1940, and *What is modern painting?* in 1945.¹¹⁹ The works of Georgia O'Keeffe had been part of the museum collection since 1936 and her art was almost regularly on display in museum shows at least once a year from 1936 until the mid 1940s. It was only in 1946 that the museum hosted the first solo show of a female artist, which was Georgia O'Keeffe's.

Not only the exhibitions and acquisitions of the museum indicate a significant gender imbalance in this period. An illustrative example of the attitude of the museum towards

¹¹⁶ https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325127.pdf

¹¹⁷ Fort and Arcq (eds.) 2012, p. 36

¹¹⁸ https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_387274.pdf

¹¹⁹ https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325192.pdf and https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325461.pdf

women can be found in the checklist for the *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* exhibition that was edited by Barr. The list was divided in categories of different art movements, the most important category of “20th century pioneers” consisted solely of male artists.¹²⁰ In the category “Artists independent of the Dada-Surrealist movements” the American artist Helen Lundeberg (1908-1999) and her husband and artist Lorser Feitelson (1898-1978) were included. Ilene Susan Fort has recently dedicated an innovative research to Lundeberg as the leader of the American Post Surrealist movement (“Surrealist networks: Post Surrealism and Helen Lundeberg,” 2017). Fort researched the positions of Lundeberg and Feitelson in relation to Post Surrealism and points out that it was Lundeberg who wrote the manifesto of the movement in 1934. In the writing of the manifesto Lundeberg was encouraged by Feitelson through his knowledge on the Parisian Surrealist movement.¹²¹

Fort states that Lundeberg played a significant role in the development of Surrealism in the United States. Lundeberg had studied astronomy and biology, which resulted in the fact that she brought the concepts of science and Surrealism together in ‘Post Surrealism.’¹²² It is in this context remarkable that in the checklist of *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, Lundeberg was described as “American painter and member of the California Post-Surrealist group,” while Barr defined Feitelson as “American painter and leader of the California Post-Surrealists.”¹²³ A high-level museum brand as The Museum of Modern Art has played a crucial role in the formation of the canon of modern art history. The majority of the artists that have been included in the (semi) permanent collection displays and publications of the museum are well known today. The way in which the museum presented artists has been highly influential in the art world, it is therefore adverse for the position of female artists that Lundeberg was dismissed in 1936 as a member of the movement that she had founded herself two years earlier.

Opposing to the position of major museums, galleries and specifically art dealers have been defined as significant actors in the social network of an artist. One of the most important actors in the representation of Surrealist artists in New York during the 1930s was art dealer, collector, and gallerist Julien Levy. The individual Levy is generally mentioned in relation to the promotion of Surrealism in New York, yet it is important to realize that he did not operate alone. An important figure for Levy’s decision-making at the gallery was his mother in law

¹²⁰ https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325071.pdf (p. 259-263)

¹²¹ Fort 2017, p. 4

¹²² Karlstrom 1996, p. 185

¹²³ https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_2823_300293441.pdf (p. 279-280)

and artist Mina Loy. She was a key-figure regarding his choice of which artists to represent in his New York gallery. Levy used to refer to Loy as his “spiritual mother,” which exemplifies her crucial position in the context of Levy’s gallery practices.¹²⁴ The Julien Levy Gallery, existing from 1931 until 1949, can be seen as an important space in the representation of female artists associated with Surrealism and served as a catalyst that helped to transform the New York art scene. In 1932, before the arrival of the European émigrés, Levy organized *Surréalisme*, which is considered as one of the first exhibitions to introduce Surrealist works to New Yorkers. Paintings by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) were included in this show and the reviews on the exhibition by art critics were praising.¹²⁵ Levy hosted Kahlo’s first solo exhibition in New York in 1938. Yet, the title of the exhibition, *Frida Kahlo (Frida Rivera)*, indicates the popular tendency in which women remained to be associated with their famous husbands, which partly dismissed them as being recognized as an independent artist.¹²⁶ Levy would organize further solo exhibitions of women associated with Surrealism in the years of running his gallery. Leonor Fini’s first solo show was hosted there in 1936. Fini (1907-1966) was born in Argentina; most of her works explore the identity of femininity and are associated with Surrealism. American photographer Lee Miller’s (1907-1977) only solo show during her life was held at the Julien Levy Gallery. Levy further hosted solo shows for the Surrealist artists Dorothea Tanning, Kay Sage and Mina Loy.¹²⁷

The story of female artists associated with Surrealism in New York does not solely consist of émigré artists. Miller, Sage, and Tanning were all born in the United States and are among the most famous artists associated with Surrealism today. Another artist of American origins was Lundeberg; in addition to the artists mentioned before, her reputation remains obscure in today’s art world. Even though she had never left the country and only visited New York once, Lundeberg developed herself into the leader of the Post Surrealist movement. She has recently been described as “the most important woman surrealist on the west coast” by Art Historian and Curator Terri Geis.¹²⁸ The Post Surrealist movement was initiated by Lundeberg and her husband Lorser Feitelson as ‘New Classicism’ in 1934. She and Feitelson founded the movement as a response to Parisian Surrealism and wrote a manifesto to

¹²⁴ Fort 2012, p. 34

¹²⁵ Somerville 2016, p. 81

¹²⁶ <https://www.moma.org/artists/3522>

¹²⁷ Fort 2012, p. 37

¹²⁸ Fort and Arcq (eds.) 2012, p. 230

authorize their movement. For this reason, together with the pictorial similarities of the movements, ‘New Classicism’ has later been labeled by critics as Post Surrealism.¹²⁹

Fort points out that the Post Surrealists had their first group show in 1934 at the Centaur Gallery in Hollywood and would further exhibit their works in San Francisco (1935) and at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York (1936). The Post Surrealist movement included a great number of American, California based female artists that remain unknown today; among them was Dorr Bothwell (1902-2000) from San Francisco. Bothwell regularly painted self-portraits with influences from non-Western cultures. Her works have been regularly exhibited in California and New York. The painter Grace Clements (1905-1969) was also a member of the Post Surrealist movement. Clements was one of the few artists who incorporated strong communist political ideas in her art during this time. She was highly influenced by the Mexican muralist movement and the politic ideals of Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros who did several mural projects in Los Angeles in the early 1930s. Other artists from California who were included in the Post Surrealist movement were Ethel Evans, Helen Klokke and Elizabeth Mills.¹³⁰ Unfortunately, academic literature or source material on the lives and works of these artists remain scarce. The importance of especially Lundeberg’s work did not remain unnoticed in New York. In 1936 she got invited by Barr to participate in the *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* exhibition with her work *Cosmicide* (1935).¹³¹ [fig. 5] Lundeberg would further participate in the MoMA exhibition *Americans 1942: 18 artists from 9 states* in which six of her works were included.

The role of art patrons as Levy has proven to be crucial for the development of artistic success. Bowness defined the acknowledgement of the art patron as the third stage in the conditions of success. Thornton stated that the role of the art dealer, who often functioned as patron, could be considered as the most significant in the process of canonization. Art patrons, who were usually active as art dealers as well as gallery owners, supported artists financially and would repeatedly represent them in their collections and exhibitions. Among these power players was the American art collector Peggy Guggenheim. Guggenheim’s gallery Art of This Century opened in 1942 and would function as an important space for the position of women in the arts on many levels. The gallery can be seen as a continuous thread running through the Surrealist art scene in New York during its existence from 1942 until 1947. Art of This

¹²⁹ Fort and Arcq (eds.) 2012, p. 230

¹³⁰ Fort 2012, p. 36, information on the lives and works of Evans, Klokke and Mills remains unknown.

¹³¹ Fort 2017, p. 2 and

https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_2823_300293441.pdf (p. 280)

Century further functioned as one of the most important centers for the acquaintance network of artists, patrons, dealers and collectors in New York at this time.¹³²

The inaugural exhibition of the permanent collection display in 1942 was of great significance because it would define the image of the gallery. The works for the show were selected from Guggenheim's private collection that represented Cubist, abstract and Surrealist art and included works of several female artists.¹³³ For the inaugural exhibition she selected works by Leonora Carrington, Leonor Fini and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Guggenheim expressed her thoughts on this exhibition as follows: "[...] the function of the permanent collection was to serve as a basis and as background for the temporary exhibitions of individuals or groups henceforth to be held in the daylight gallery."¹³⁴ The fact that Carrington, Fini and Von Loringhoven were included, indicates that Guggenheim considered these artists as a basis, just as much as the art works of the already well-known male exponents of Surrealism that were also included in this show. Guggenheim was further praised for her "discriminating choice of quality examples" by the press.¹³⁵ At Art of This Century, the works of many female artists were exhibited on a regular basis. Artists that were featured in at least two or more exhibitions through the existence of the gallery were émigré artists including Carrington, Lamba, Sage, Sekula, the abstract and Surreal painter Hedda Sterne (Romania, 1910-2011), who is mainly known for being the only woman included in the iconic Abstract Expressionist group portrait "The Irascibles," and sculptor associated with Surrealism Isabelle Waldberg (Switzerland, 1911-1990).

Guggenheim further hosted the exhibition titled *31 Women* (1943), which was one of the first shows solely dedicated to female artists.¹³⁶ The artists that were approached for the show were not all enthusiastic to include their works in an exhibition focusing on gender. Among the artists who strongly denied the label of 'women artist' were O'Keeffe,

¹³² Prose 2015, p. 136

¹³³ Lader 1981, p. 131

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 132

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 131

¹³⁶ The artists participating in *31 Women* were: Djuna Barnes, Xenia Cage, Leonora Carrington, Elisabeth Eyre da Lanux, Leonor Fini, Suzy Frelinghuysen, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Meraud Guevara, Anne Harvey, Valentine Hugo, Buffie Johnson, Frida Kahlo, Jacqueline Lamba, Gypsy Rose Lee, Aline Meyer Liebman, Hazel McKinley, Louise Nevelson, Meret Oppenheim, Milena Pavlovic Barili, Barbara Reis, Irene Rice Pereira, Kay Sage, Gretchen Schoeninger, Sonja Sekula, Esphyr Slobodkina, Hedda Sterne, Dorothea Tanning, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Julia Thecia, Pegeen Vail, and Maria Elena Vieira da Silva.

Oppenheim and Taeuber-Arp, yet they did participate in the show. Further criticism came from the side of the art critics. Responses by art critics including Edward Alden Jewell, Henry McBride and Rosamund Frost were mocking, which indicates that they did not take the art of women seriously. Critic James Stern even refused to review an exhibition on women, stating that women could simply not be considered as artists.¹³⁷ The idea for a ‘women only’ show came from Guggenheim and Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). However, the American abstract and Surrealist artist Buffie Johnson (1912-2006) had claimed several times that it was her who had the initial idea for a show dedicated to female artists. This indicates that the issue of the exclusion of women was already a social topic of discussion around 1943.

After *31 Women*, a second show dedicated to female artists would be hosted at Art of This Century titled *The Women* in 1944-1945.¹³⁸ Until now there is still little known about this exhibition and its reception. The information that is available proves that in *The Women* the work of the Ukrainian born artist Janet Sobel (1894-1968) was included. Sobel initially painted folk motives from Ukraine combined with a drip painting technique while she would later develop her work into pure abstraction. In 1946 Guggenheim hosted a solo exhibition of Janet Sobel that included her oil painting *The Burning Bush* (1944) [fig. 6]. Sobel’s work was further praised by the influential New York born art dealer and collector Sidney Janis. In 1944 he commented on her work stating the following: “Sobel’s brushwork is so spontaneous and free that it approaches pure automatism.”¹³⁹ While Janis is mainly known for promoting the Abstract Expressionists he was also one of the first to include emerging female artists in important exhibition texts on Surrealism. Janis wrote a text for the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition (1942) and wrote the book *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America* (1944), in the latter he linked his definition of Surrealism to American female artists as Tanning, MacIver and Sobel.¹⁴⁰

Through the existence of her gallery Guggenheim further hosted solo shows of artists as Sekula, Waldberg and Rahon. The exhibition of Alice Rahon consisted of 34 works, mostly abstract and inspired by magical motives from the Mexican culture. The exhibition received almost no attention from the press.¹⁴¹ This indicates that even though gallerists initiated shows dedicated to women, critics did not always pick up on them. It is important to note in this

¹³⁷ Davidson (eds.) 2004, p. 202

¹³⁸ Fort 2012, p. 40

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 57

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 41

¹⁴¹ Lader 1981, p. 292

regard that during the 1940s an extensive amount of exhibitions were held in New York in relation to Surrealism. Crane stated these shows could not all be reviewed by critics because there were simply too many.¹⁴² Here the mechanism of value judgment from critics can be indicated. It seems that decisions in relation to value judgment had to be made on which exhibitions ‘deserved’ to be reviewed and which not. Yet it would be deficient to dismiss the fact that so little information has been recorded on solo exhibitions of female artists during this period as accidental.

Examining the critical responses on the *31 Women* exhibition indicates the contemporary state of affairs; namely that works by women were not conceived as equal to their male contemporaries or sometimes were not even considered as ‘real art’ by art critics. The ‘compliment’ that Hedda Sterne and many other female painters received that they “painted like a man,”¹⁴³ has repeatedly been mentioned as one of the best compliments a female painter could get in this period. This attitude of critics, who were mostly male, can partly be traced back to the sexism towards women that had been integrated in society for centuries. It is problematic in this context that Bowness earlier legitimated the opinion of the art critic as indisputably responsible. Bowness acknowledged the position of the critic as authoritarian due to his or her knowledge of the art world. I disagree with Bowness on the position of the art critic as an authority. The problem of this idea of the critic as an authority is exposed through the responses and the neglect of critics in relation to female artists during the 1940s. It is precisely this practice of the art critic that has partly resulted the exclusion of women from the canon of Surrealism. According to Bowness this exclusion seems to be justified because of the authority of the critic. I propose that Bowness’s argumentation should be considered outdated through the acknowledgement of gender politics in the formation of the canon.

It is a noteworthy observation that critics have often neglected the art of female artists while the works of these women were displayed next to the works of the well-known male heroes of art history in exhibitions. Their works were not incidentally put together once or twice; there was a tendency where works of these women were considered equal to their male contemporaries by gallerists, dealers, curators and collectors. The *International collage exhibition* (1943) at Art of This Century proves this thesis once more. Jackson Pollock (United States, 1912-1956) and Robert Motherwell (United States, 1915-1991) were invited to

¹⁴² Crane 1987, p. 35

¹⁴³ Conathy 2016, p. 7

participate to this show while they had never produced a collage before. Next to Pollock and Motherwell, collages by Pereira and Reis were included.¹⁴⁴ Noteworthy is that in 1943 Pereira was more familiar to the New York art scene than Pollock and Motherwell were.¹⁴⁵ The fact that these men had never even produced a collage and were invited to participate in a collage exhibition together with Pereira and Reis indicates that their works were likely to be considered as being on the same quality level.

One of the major exhibitions of international value that was organized in 1942 by the Surrealists themselves was *First Papers of Surrealism*. The show was initiated by Breton and the works were selected by Duchamp, Ernst and Breton. Because the selection was made by the Surrealists themselves this exhibition can additionally be seen in the context of the first condition of artistic success, the recognition of peer artists. Interestingly enough is that in this so-called landmark exhibition that has been celebrated by authors ever since, the works of female artists that remain unknown today were included. In total over 30 artists were represented and six of them were women.¹⁴⁶ It is remarkable that in 1942 the works of Reis, Sage and Sterne, who seem to have fallen into obscurity in art history today, were exhibited next to the works of our celebrated heroes Pablo Picasso and Rene Magritte. The structure of the inclusion of women in the same important collections and exhibitions as their male contemporaries can additionally be determined in relation to the exhibition program of art dealer Howard Putzel. Putzel opened The 67 Gallery in 1944, one of the exhibitions that he hosted here was *40 American Moderns*. This show was a selection of the most important American modern painters and included works by Sage and Tanning. Putzel further organized solo shows for artists as Buffie Johnson, Adolph Gottlieb and Hans Hofmann.¹⁴⁷ The fact that Johnson is listed together with Gottlieb and Hofmann demonstrates that Putzel thought of Johnson as well as Gottlieb and Hofmann as artists who deserved solo shows in his gallery, and proves the level of considered equality between these artists back in the mid-1940s by art dealers and gallerists.

Even though gallerists and art dealers provided a stage for these women, art critics were often operating the opposite way. The art critic has proven to be an important actor in the second stage towards artistic success that was introduced by Bowness. As has been proven, critics did not review exhibitions of female artists on a regular basis. If they did, it was often

¹⁴⁴ Lader 1981, p. 208

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 171

¹⁴⁶ Breton (eds.) 1942, p. 9

¹⁴⁷ Lader 1981, p. 172

with a double meaning. Jacqueline Lamba's situation functions as a suiting example of how art critics received women's works. Lamba was widely known as 'Surrealist wife,' as a muse and as an outstanding beauty yet she was never fully acknowledged as an independent artist, in her belief because she was a woman. She mentioned that she would have probably been more successful as artist if she had not been beautiful.¹⁴⁸ In 1943 the turbulent marriage between Lamba and Breton ended up in a divorce where Breton destroyed the majority of her works. It was during this time that her first solo show took place in New York (1944). The Norllyst Gallery organized this exhibition that consisted of eleven oil paintings and six works on paper.¹⁴⁹ [fig. 7] Lamba's solo show was noticed by the critics and, at first glance, positively reviewed. One of the comments in the magazine *Art Digest* was rewarding: "Lamba thinks of space as something destroyed by light when light makes full forms and objects in it [...] She creates an intoxicating dream world."¹⁵⁰ Yet, just like Kahlo and Sage, also Lamba would still be dismissed as 'the wife of...' in the review of her work, which indicates that critics hardly considered these women as independent artists.

It can be concluded that the works of female artists were included in important exhibitions in New York during the 1940s. Their works hung next to the works of the well-known male artists that gain so much fame today. A practice of the exclusion of female artists from the art historical discourse can be indicated through the position of the art critic. It has been proven that art critics have dismissed the works of female artists as less important, or not important to review at all, which has partly resulted in the exclusion of female artists from art historical records. Critics provided the general public with information on the most important exhibitions that were worth visiting. These reviews were published in newspapers that were widely distributed. Because of this reason art critics were, and still are, of crucial importance for the development of artistic careers and for the formation of the canon of art history. It is remarkable that a pivotal actor as The Museum of Modern Art included several works of women in two important exhibitions from 1936 until 1946, but that the practices of the museum further remained minimal in relation to the inclusion of female artists. From the mid-

¹⁴⁸ Grimberg 2001, p. 5

¹⁴⁹ It is unknown which exact works were included in this exhibition. In the catalogue for the show Lamba described her visit to Michoacán in Mexico in 1943 as highly inspirational, she was inspired by the folk art of Santa Clara del Cobre and defined her stay there as transformational for her art. Lamba's work *Untitled (Dedicated to Frida)*, 1944 [fig. 7] was created after her visit to Michoacán and functions therefore as an example of the works that could have been included in her solo show of 1944.

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-bold-surrealist-alongside-magritte-miro-destroyed-work>

1930s until the mid-1940s, the museum acquired no more than ten art works by female artists for their collection. The female artists that did participate on a yearly basis in exhibitions at the MoMA can be reduced to a maximum of three women.

Going back to the four stages of artistic success as defined by Bowness, the recognition of art critics is necessary in order to achieve patronage by collectors. The next, fourth, step would be the public acclaim of fame that could be achieved through the artist's inclusion in major museum collections and exhibitions. The fact that critics have neglected the art of women can be defined as one of the major reasons that the majority of the female artists never achieved the level of artistic success that was necessary to be included in museum collections and exhibitions. The role of art patrons, dealers and collectors has proven to be the most important in regard to the promotion of female artists associated with Surrealism. Powerful gallerists such as Levy, Guggenheim and Putzel have been supporting these women by giving them space to exhibit and by collecting their works. Becker and Thornton explained the importance of these actors the social context and pointed out that great art works and artists do not simply arise; great artists are 'made' through the support and influence of art dealers, collectors, patrons and critics.¹⁵¹ The collectors, patrons and art dealers that have been discussed in this chapter can thus be defined as discoverers and tastemakers in the New York art scene of the 1940s. As has been stated by Gibson in the introduction of this thesis: 'female artists were there, they just weren't seen;' it can now be defined that these women mainly 'weren't seen' by the art critics. The written records of art critics have proven to be of crucial importance for the recording of artists in the formation of the canon.

¹⁵¹ Thornton 2009, p. xiv

Chapter 3

Female Surrealist Artists in Today's Art World

In Chapter 3 I explore the current situation of the canonization of female artists in relation to Surrealism. Different methods in relation to the reform of the canon will be introduced here and examined through the role of educational institutions, such as universities and museums. The structures of canon reformation as defined by Griselda Pollock, Professor of Art History Nanette Salomon, Art Historians and Feminist Scholars Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard and Scholar in the field of Art History Joanne Heath will function as a starting point. The most important canonical art historical publications will be analyzed and characterized in relation to the changing concept of the canon. This is done through the exploration of the handbooks that are used at Bachelor programs of Art History at universities in the Netherlands. The structures of these Bachelor programs in the first introductory year will be exposed to find out which concept of the canon is taught. The attempts in the art world towards the inclusion of women are further discussed through recent museum exhibitions. I conclude this chapter with the localization of the methods in the current art world that have been introduced by Pollock, Salomon, Broude, Garrard and Heath and the possible solutions to achieve a structural shift in art history towards inclusion.

3.1 Methods for changing the canon

In working towards an inclusive art history, different structures have been introduced by art historians to challenge, difference and reform the canon. As I have explained in Chapter 1, it is necessary to broaden the idea of the inclusion of female artists in relation to art history through a paradigm shift. Griselda Pollock stated that the approach of feminism in relation to an inclusive art history by only inserting women into 'the story of art' is not sufficient: "it also implies a shifting of paradigms, including going beyond notions of gender (men and women artists) and engaging with difference."¹⁵² She proposed a deconstructive rereading of the formation of art history to reveal the underlying structure of gender politics.¹⁵³ Nanette Salomon additionally pointed out that inserting female artists in the existing structure of the canon is not enough to achieve an inclusive art history. She introduced several strategies produced by the feminist practice to deal with the canon and the academic field of art history.

¹⁵² Pollock 2008, p. 251

¹⁵³ Pollock 1999, p. 34

One of these strategies is the re-strengthening of women as artists and critics.¹⁵⁴ According to Salomon “the uncritical insertion of women artists into the pre-existing structure of art history as a discipline tends to confirm rather than challenge the prejudicial tropes through which women’s creativity is dismissed.”¹⁵⁵ Only because the works of those women measured up against the already existing masculine quality standard of the canon, they were celebrated as successful artists. This has resulted in art critical reviews that defined women’s works according to this masculine standard – exemplary here are the earlier cited ‘compliments’ received by artists including Hedda Sterne, stating that “she paints like a man.”¹⁵⁶

I agree with Pollock and Salomon that the insertion of forgotten artists into the history of art has proven to be insufficient and is not adequate to establish a structural change. A broader structure is necessary in working towards an inclusive art history and to challenge the prejudices that have dismissed women’s creativity. Art Historians and Feminist Scholars Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard additionally stated that the goal of feminist art history “is the radical alternation of the discipline’s methodology and theory by experiencing in a new way the images and objects of the old art historical litany.”¹⁵⁷ This ‘new way’ has been researched by several art historians in the field of feminist art history and has resulted in different methods.

In this context Pollock introduced three strategies of feminism’s encounters with the canon since the women’s movement came up in the early 1970s.¹⁵⁸ The feminist encounters with the canon can be divided into: exposing the canon as a structure of exclusion; as a structure of subordination and domination that marginalizes all women and their works; and as a discursive strategy in the production and reproduction of sexual difference. These encounters lead to the question if the canon should be rejected, replaced or reformed. A rejection of a structure that has been known and used ever since the beginning of times seems impossible. Rejecting the canon would lead to a new structure to replace the existing canon. This is a process that could not be established in a short amount of time, it would further require a long period of time to finally be generally accepted in the art world and in the social society. Brzyski has also stated that avoiding or rejecting the existing structure of the canon as a structure of organizing the “production of qualitative distinctions” is not possible since it is

¹⁵⁴ Salomon 1991, p. 349-350

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 351

¹⁵⁶ Conathy 2016, p, 7

¹⁵⁷ Stein 1984, p. 44

¹⁵⁸ These strategies were introduced in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (1999).

still daily embraced, produced and maintained in the academic field as well as in the practical field of museums and galleries.¹⁵⁹

While avoiding and rejecting the canon seems impossible, a rereading of the structure and the content of the canon of Surrealism has been explained by Scholar in the field of Art History Joanne Heath, which seems a promising approach. Heath researched the field of museum exhibitions in relation to the representation of women and introduced a rereading of the canon in the context of feminism and the museum. This rereading could be established through what Heath defined as critical feminist framing.¹⁶⁰ She proposed that exhibitions could be accompanied by this critical feminist framing to provide a framework that explains the politics of gender and exclusion in relation to art history. A framework as such can be translated as the need for a broader explanation and the provision of contextual information on the gender politics and the social circumstances in the history of art in the format of exhibition texts and catalogues. Completely dismissing the canonical structure seems an impossible task, it is therefore important to explore the rereading, revising, and differencing of the canonical structure. The use of the methods that have been introduced by Pollock, Salomon, Broude, Garrard and Heath will further be examined in the practices of the art world and universities today.

3.2 Universities and art historical literature today

The transmission of the canon can be found at educational institutions such as universities that teach art history. I will examine how female artists are discussed at these educational institutions through the literature that is used at universities and by the way that the canon is taught at these institutions. As was explained by Maura Reilly in Chapter 1 it became clear that education could function as one of the tools to establish an inclusive history of art. To create a mainstream recognition of the practice of exclusion in art history the problem need to be widely exposed. Reilly has defined the degree of education as one of the most important sources to change the current conception of the canon: “if we cannot help others to see the structural/systemic problems, then we can’t even begin to fix them.”¹⁶¹ This proves the

¹⁵⁹ Brzyski 2007, p. 13 of 53

¹⁶⁰ Heath 2008, p. 28

¹⁶¹ <http://www.artnews.com/2017/11/07/what-is-curatorial-activism>

importance of art historical education and the necessity of revealing the power structures and partisanship in the canon.

The current state of the transmission of knowledge at universities in relation to women, exclusion and the canon can be defined through the use of literature. A way to determine what are considered the most important publications on art history is to look at the curricula that are currently presented at universities in their Bachelor programs in the Netherlands. The standard textbooks that are used at these universities function as a starting point to find out more about the teaching of the concept of the canon. The most important handbooks in relation to the history of modern art have been determined by the online course overviews of the Bachelor programs of the following universities: The University of Amsterdam, The University of Groningen, VU University Amsterdam, The University of Leiden and the Radboud University. The most used publications by these universities are the following: a recent revision of *Janson's History of Art: the Western Tradition* (Janson and Janson, first published in 1962), *Thames & Hudson Introduction to Art* (Dewitte and Larmann, 2015), *Thinking About Art* (Huntsman, 2015), *History of Modern Art. Painting sculpture architecture photography* (Arnason and Mansfield, 2009), *Gardner's Art through the Ages: The Western Perspective* (Kleiner, 2010), and a recent revision of *The Story of Art* (Gombrich, first published in 1950).

It is noteworthy that in the majority of these handbooks the same, small amount of female artists is included as exemplary for Surrealism. The first chapter of the publication *Thinking About Art* (2015) is divided into the different genres of art, all of the genres are highlighted by emblematic artists of these specific genres. The subjects that have generally been defined as 'female subjects' in the art historical discourse are also in this publication linked to the names of female artists: "Self Portraiture" and "Still Life" are defined by the art of Frida Kahlo and "Landscape as Emotional Expression" is exemplified by the work of Georgia O'Keeffe. It is remarkable that when the pioneers of the twentieth century avant-garde are discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, women are completely excluded. The exclusion of women as innovators in the history of art can additionally be found in *The Thames & Hudson Introduction to Art* (2015). In this publication, every chapter is highlighted by the name of the 'most important' artist in the context of each movement. Also in this handbook not even one female artist functions as exemplary for an artistic movement. Arnason and Mansfield's *History of Art* (2009) is a recent revision of their earlier publications from 1977 and 1986. The structure of the chapters has remained almost the same since the first published version. It is notable that they revised their chapter on Surrealism in relation to the inclusion female

artists in 2009 by simply inserting a paragraph titled “Women and Surrealism: Oppenheim, Cahun, Maar, Tanning and Carrington.” The paragraph consists of four half pages where a brief explanation is provided on the patriarchal character of the movement. The art of the four women is shortly discussed and illustrated with a large reproduction of their ‘most emblematic’ artwork. It is problematic that the inclusion of female artists into the story of Surrealism is attempted through the insertion of a small paragraph that consists of four pages, into an extensive chapter consisting of circa 80 pages.

The structure of the handbooks that have been analyzed show that the main practice of including women into the story of Surrealism has been by inserting them into the master narrative of art history. This reveals the problem that was explained by Pollock and Salomon; by simply inserting women into the existing, problematic, structure of art history, the idea of the male genius continues to exist and the art of women remains to be dismissed as insignificant. Through analyzing the handbooks it becomes clear that specifically two female artists reoccur in these publications, which are Georgia O’Keeffe and Meret Oppenheim. It is notable that specifically Oppenheim’s *Object* is included in the majority of the literature on women and the Surrealist movement.¹⁶² It remains ambiguous why some of the female artists that have been represented in exhibition and collections at prestigious galleries and at The Museum of Modern Art during the 1930s and 1940s are often included in the story of Surrealism, such as Oppenheim and O’Keeffe, while an artist as Loren MacIver who was one of the first women to be included in the permanent collection of the museum and received the same amount of patronage from the MoMA as Oppenheim and O’Keeffe remains unknown in the canon of art history today.

It is noteworthy that outdated publications as Gombrich’s *The Story of Art* as well as Janson’s *History of Art* are still used as primary handbooks. They were first published in the 1950 and 1962, the period before the existence of canonical critique and even before the acknowledgement of women as ‘real artists’ by art historians. Nanette Salomon defined in 1991 that one of the most important texts to influence the canon of art history that we know today was the selection of artists that the Janson’s had made in *The History of Art*, which in their turn was inspired by Vasari’s selection from 1550.¹⁶³ Mentioned as a cynical side note, Salomon stated: “it seems hardly necessary to say that a fundamental condition of canonical

¹⁶² Oppenheim’s *Object* has regularly been part of the semi permanent collection displays at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. This might be among the reasons why this specific artwork has often been included in literature on the subject of women and Surrealism.

¹⁶³ Salomon 1991, p. 344

selection by Vasari until and including Janson, is that only male artists are taken seriously.”¹⁶⁴ Women were thus completely excluded from both of these publications. While revisions of the publications are used now, these books are rooted in the conception of *the* canon, dominated by the idea of the male genius. It has to be mentioned that the ‘proper’ use of these publications depends on the context in which they are used. If they are used as examples of partiality or as results of the value judgment of white Western men, the publications can function as accurate examples of exclusivity in canon formation. The revisions of the publications of Janson and Gombrich, as well as Arnason and Mansfield’s, have functioned to insert ‘forgotten’ artists into the history of art, this specific approach has proven to be insufficient by several scholars. It can therefore be stated that the traditional use of handbooks as such as leading study material does not offer a solution for the exclusion of women from the canon of art history.

All the mentioned publications that have been distilled from Bachelor programs have in common that they offer an art historical base that is derived from the canon. The works are overviews from the Western perspective of art history which, as has been defined in Chapter 1, is unfortunate since this view dismisses the idea of multiple canon formations in different social, geographical and historical contexts. If this same type of structure is still used in the majority of the Bachelor programs of Art History in the Netherlands in 2018 as introductory material, it can be concluded that the use of the existing canonical structure has indeed proven to be inescapable. The publications rooted in the idea of a universal standard of quality are all characterized by a value judgment to define the most important stylistic developments and their initiators in the history of art. This type of publication can be questioned because of the selectivity, the issue of in- and exclusion, and the motif of the specific author. While the idea of art history as a linear development of artistic movements has been tackled many decades ago, the male initiators of these specific styles still surprisingly function as a base for art historical education. In relation to the use of these sources Brzyski pointed out that while most art historians would like to distance themselves from “the survey’s textbook litany of canonical artists,” the ‘masters’ still receive the greatest amount of scholarly interest – “as any survey of recent art historical bibliography will readily demonstrate.”¹⁶⁵ I agree with Brzyski

¹⁶⁴ Salomon 1991, p. 347

¹⁶⁵ Brzyski 2007, p. 4 of 54

that because of the reason that the canon is so deeply embedded in the art historical practice, it would be impossible to distance ourselves from it completely.¹⁶⁶

A closer look at the specialized literature on the subject of female artists in relation to the Surrealist movement that has been listed in the bibliography of this thesis shows that material on a 'specific' subject as female artists associated with Surrealism is out there. It has been proven that female artists have been excluded from the majority of the canonical art historical literature, yet there is a development in the publication of specialized literature on these women. Slight attempts of art historians towards inclusion can be located through recent research and publications on women and the Surrealist movement and through the publication of more specific articles and biographies on individual artists. It is remarkable that while publications as *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985), *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States* (2012), and *American Women Artists, 1935-1970: Gender, Culture, and Politics* (2016) offer a detailed and significant explanation of the contributions of female artists in relation to the Surrealist movement, a wider acknowledgement and use of these publications at educational institutions is still lacking. With the establishment of this literature a slight shift can be indicated towards the inclusion of women in the history of Surrealist art. Erika Doss has encouraged scholars to look beyond the usual sources in order to find more specific literature on former excluded subjects.¹⁶⁷ The problem that remains is that while general overviews on the subject of women might be out there, an extensive amount of female artists still remain unknown today due to the lack of academic literature, articles and biographies on these artists.¹⁶⁸

3.3 Attempts towards inclusion in the art world

It is noteworthy that specifically since the last decade exhibitions dedicated to female artists in museums and galleries seem to become more prominent. Attempts towards inclusion in the field of museums and galleries can be located through the renewed interest in the works of a specific selection of female artists. As has been shown through the exhibiting and collecting practices of The Museum of Modern Art from the mid-1930s until the mid-1940s and through

¹⁶⁶ Brzyski 2007, p. 4 of 54

¹⁶⁷ Doss 1998, p. 843

¹⁶⁸ The literature on several female artists that have been cited in this thesis remains scarce; basic facts such as dates of birth and death and nationalities of artists including Ethel Evans, Helen Klokke and Elizabeth Mills are still missing.

the canonical handbooks on modern art today, there is a tendency where only this small specific selection of women seems to be actively promoted. An artist who functions as an example of this specific interest is Leonora Carrington. Recently the first specialized publications and biographies have been published on Carrington's work.¹⁶⁹ In 2015 Carrington was honored with a solo show at Tate Liverpool and currently the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City has an extensive retrospective on display of Carrington's interdisciplinary works titled *Leonora Carrington. Cuentos mágicos. (Leonora Carrington. Magical Stories)* (April-September, 2018). It is notable that since 2010 the interest in this particular artist has grown so extensively. Lee Miller's photographic works are also gaining more fame today. A significant amount of her works have been included in the exhibition *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States* (2012) in Los Angeles and Mexico City. The most recent solo show on her work was organized at the NSU Art Museum in Fort Lauderdale, Florida (2015).

The practice of inserting these women in the existing structure of the art historical canon has resulted a paradox that can be explained by the current representation of Kay Sage. Interesting about the renewed interest in the work of Sage is that The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has recently described her as "one of the most prominent women associated with Surrealism in the United States."¹⁷⁰ While Sage remains relatively unknown in today's art world it is paradoxical to label her as one of the most prominent Surrealist women. By solely publishing this statement instead of regularly exhibiting Sage's works, a structural change is not likely to be established. Yet a growing amount of female artists have recently been honored with solo shows in important galleries and museums. Sonja Sekula's work was displayed at the exhibition *Sonja Sekula: A Survey* at the Peter Blumm Gallery in New York (2017).¹⁷¹ The works of Janet Sobel have recently been exhibited in *Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction* (2017) at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. The Tate Modern in London hosted a major retrospective of Frida Kahlo in 2005 and Kahlo's paintings and personal belongings are currently presented at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in the exhibition *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up* (June-November, 2018).

Even though artists as Carrington, Miller, and Sekula might have recently been honored with solo shows in prestigious museums and galleries; these incidental exhibitions have not achieved equality in the perception of these women in relation to their male

¹⁶⁹ Including Moorhead (2017), Alberth (2010) and Van Raay (eds.) (2010).

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/488856>

¹⁷¹ <https://hyperallergic.com/375678/sonja-sekula-a-survey-peter-blum-gallery-201>

contemporaries. One of the reasons for this can be found in the perception and interpretation of these shows. Joanne Heath has further researched the recent phenomenon of blockbuster retrospectives of female artists. In her research Heath pointed out that in relation to the recent exhibitions on women there is a dominant tendency of focusing on biographical anecdotes instead of a focus on the quality of the art works. This tendency was earlier indicated by Chadwick in 1985, she pointed out that while the lives of male artists are automatically considered as “history,” women are usually approached with a sensational “gossip” attitude.¹⁷²

This approach can furthermore be traced back to art critics. As has been analyzed in Chapter 2, art critics fulfill a significant role in artist’s recordings in the canon. They provide the museum visitors and the society with information on art exhibitions that is usually widely visible in newspaper articles and online platforms. A wide range of criticism has been cited by Heath in relation to the retrospective of Frida Kahlo (Tate Modern, London 2005).¹⁷³ The reviews on this show all had in common that they harshly questioned and dismissed the artistic quality of Kahlo’s artworks on display.¹⁷⁴ Kahlo’s so called “ultimate feminist trauma” was the main subject of one of the reviews instead of an art historical, stylistic examination of her art works.¹⁷⁵ Regrettably this review was not exceptional, which indicates that the perception of the work of female artists is still problematic. It was in this regard that Heath proposed the introduction of critical feminist framing to provide the viewer with contextual information on the historical position and structural exclusion of women in the arts. I consider it necessary to return to the definition of the art critic by Bowness as an authority. It has been proven that art critics have been lacking in their responsibility to acknowledge female artists during the 1930s and 1940s. This practice of neglecting has been highly problematic because of the crucial role of the critic in the development of artistic success and in the formation of the canon.

Yet, in the current reviews of the exhibition *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up* a more inclusive and elaborative attitude from art critics can be found. Online platforms of English newspapers including *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times* have published an extensive amount of reviews on this exhibition. The majority of these critics still seem to focus on Kahlo’s trauma’s through a sensational approach, using titles such as “Seductive glimpses into a life of art, pain and artifice” and “An extraordinary testimony to suffering and

¹⁷² Chadwick 1985, p. 7

¹⁷³ Excerpts of these reviews can be read in Heath (2008), p. 25-29

¹⁷⁴ Heath 2008, p. 28

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29

spirit.”¹⁷⁶ In this context I would like to introduce the review by Art Historian Jonathan Jones titled “Forget the paintings, here's her false leg” as an exemplary attempt towards the structural shift of the acknowledgement of the exclusion of women in art history.¹⁷⁷ Jones questions the critics who have put Kahlo’s biographical story above her paintings and states that he disagrees with the curator’s interpretation of Frida Kahlo: “She [Kahlo] wouldn’t want us to be gawping at her possessions, however arresting they might be. She’d want us to be encountering her art.”¹⁷⁸ This quote is illustrative for the interpretation of the lives and works of female artists through history, the sensational and biographical approach that is often used in relation to the works of female artists should be banned. In order to achieve an inclusive art history, the critical focus should be on the quality of women’s art. As Jonathan Jones states “by focusing on Kahlo’s life and her suffering rather than her art, [the exhibition] stifles her blazing visionary brilliance.”¹⁷⁹

3.4 Acknowledgement and change: the structural shift

While an extensive amount of publications has been written on the acknowledgement of the problem of exclusion of women, partisanship and the necessity of reforming the canon, a structural shift in the art world is still missing. These problems have been widely presented in the form of canonical critique since the 1980s – this is almost forty years ago now. The demand for inclusion is growing every day due to the still existing issues of racism and sexism in the art world. As has been revealed, attempts in the art world are being made towards the inclusion of female artists in literature and exhibitions. Yet it is the general review of female artists in today’s society that remains problematic. Getting back to the strategies that were introduced in the beginning of this chapter it can be concluded that even though art historians have indicated that the practice of inserting women into the existing structure of the canon is insufficient, this is still the most widely applied approach.

I propose that the acknowledgement of the power structures, gender politics and ideologies that are an integral part of art history can be considered as the most important step towards inclusiveness. The realization that knowledge, and the presentation of knowledge in

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/what-to-see/frida-kahlo-making-self-va-review-seductive-glimpses-life-art/> and <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jun/10/frida-kahlo-making-her-self-up-v-and-a-cindy-sherman-spruth-magers-review>

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jun/12/frida-kahlo-making-her-self-up-review-v-and-a-london>

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

museums and academic literature, is a result from the practice of meaning-making and value judgment is crucial in this regard. As Professor of Art History Donald Preziosi has pointed out: “knowledge is a practice that does things, and one of the things it does best is to masquerade as a neutral tool or method.”¹⁸⁰ When the idea of the ideological structure of the art historical canon is widely acknowledged, there can be worked towards, what Pollock has introduced as, a rereading of the canon. Pollock proposed several ways of establishing this rereading; one of them is “to do deconstructive readings of the disciplinary formation that established and polices the canon and to question the inscriptions of femininity in the works of female artists.”¹⁸¹ What are the characteristics that critics have classified as feminine that distinguishes the art between men and women? Why is the art of women so often linked to topics as self-portraiture and nature? When looking at an artwork, can one *see* that it was made by a woman or a man? Asking these questions might result in the awareness that the possibility and the necessity of distinguishing art by gender are both absurd assumptions. The critical feminist frame that was proposed by Heath to accompany exhibitions might be a valuable way to create a general awareness of the gender inequity issue in the art world and to further expose the partiality of the canon in the museum and gallery context.

The structure of the open canon; a continuous canon formation that is daily under construction, introduced by Locher could possibly offer a revision of the canon through the acknowledgement of the existence of multiple canon formations in different social and geographical contexts that are considered as equal. The reformation of the canon can in this way be seen as an acknowledgement of the existing canon as a political and social construction in relation to gender with an open structure that continues to change. The idea of the canon as the universal standard of quality should therefore be dismissed. The realization of equal co-existing canon formations could function as a step forwards towards an inclusive art history. In contrast to Elkin’s earlier cited conception of feminism as a tool to understand art, it now has been proven that a broader structure is needed to make the inclusion of women as innovators in the canon of art history possible. The approaches of feminism that have been introduced by Pollock, Parker and Salomon are of crucial importance to create this inclusiveness. Parker and Pollock both defined art history as an ideological construction and argued that feminist art history has a ‘double project’: on the one hand there is the recovery of information on female artists, but this can only be done in a right way by a deconstruction of

¹⁸⁰ Preziosi 1998, p. 340

¹⁸¹ Pollock 1999, p. 34

art history itself; it is therefore necessary to question the existing assumptions in the field in order to be able to revise it.¹⁸²

Pollock put the current state of affairs in relation to the canon and feminism in a somewhat cynical, positive light: “a bit of newness and controversy may actually keep the discipline alive.”¹⁸³ Pollock referred to the critiques on the discipline of art history itself – which according to some critics is considered ‘dead.’ According to this group of critics, research in the context of the social history of art or feminism are not considered as art historical but should be filed as politics, sociology or even be separately categorized as women studies.¹⁸⁴ The argument from this group of critics to discuss feminism outside the field of art history was defined by Art Historians Derek Conrad Murray and Soraya Murray: “the field is by some considered as too hybrid, rudimentary, global, and too theoretically scattered to be intellectually effective.”¹⁸⁵ This takes us back to the discussed issue of dismissing feminism as a subcategory, or as a category outside the field of art history in Chapter 1. James Elkins is one of these critics that strives for a ‘traditional’ art history and argues to keep the discipline of feminism separate from art history.¹⁸⁶

These opposing positions regarding the function of art history show the difficulty of the move towards a structural shift. Understanding that feminist practices should be an integral part of art history and the acknowledgement that art history was constructed through gender politics are crucial factors in this development. As long as feminism and art history are perceived as two separate entities, a real acknowledgement has not been achieved yet. As Art Historian Jean-Francois Chervier has pointed out: “the discipline of art history should become inclusive and seriously respectful;”¹⁸⁷ only then the structure of the open canon could properly function. The majority of the specialists that have been cited in this thesis pointed out that acknowledgement, explanation and visibility of the existing problem of power structures and exclusion of women in art history are the most important factors in the development of a structural shift. A rereading of the canon by raising awareness of the partiality of the existing assumptions in art history, starting with a change in education seems the highest and fastest way possible to achieve this. A reformation of the teaching of the canon at universities needs

¹⁸² Pollock 2002, p. 55

¹⁸³ Pollock 1999, p. 11

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 12

¹⁸⁵ Murray and Murray 2006, p. 22

¹⁸⁶ For more information on the opposing positions of Pollock and Elkins in the debate on feminism and art history, see Murray and Murray (2006).

¹⁸⁷ Chervier 2013, p. 21

to go hand in hand with the practices in museums and galleries in order to make a structural change happen. Museums and galleries should develop inclusive exhibition and collection programs, perhaps accompanied by a critical feminist frame, to achieve visibility and recognition of the problem of exclusion in art history in today's society.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the canonization process of female artists associated with Surrealism in the art scene of New York during the 1930s and 1940s by defining the concepts of the canon and by the most important actors in this process that were introduced by Bowness, Pollock, Becker, Thornton, Thompson and Crane. The relation between feminism, art history and gender politics was established and the visibility of female artists in the New York art scene of the 1930s and 1940s was retraced. Exposing the power structures in the formation of the canon has been the aim of this thesis. The main question *how is it possible that female artists associated with Surrealism are not integral part of the art historical canon today?* can now be answered with the results of this research.

I have concluded that female artists associated with Surrealism were acknowledged by peer artists through Surrealist writings and exhibitions that were hosted by Surrealists in the first half of the 1940s. These women were further acknowledged and promoted by art collectors, dealers and patrons in the New York art scene. It is remarkable that while these women were actively promoted by gallerists, collectors, dealers and patrons, the position of the art critics can be defined as one of the sources of the exclusion of these women from the canon formation. As has been proven, critics overlooked the majority of the exhibitions dedicated to female artists. If critics did review the shows of female artists, it was often in comparison to their male contemporaries. Another actor that can be defined in the context of exclusion is the museum. The practices of The Museum of Modern Art were not beneficial for female artists and remained minimal towards the inclusion of women in their collection and exhibition displays from the mid-1930s until the mid-1940s. Female artists were visible in the art scene and participated in important exhibitions thanks to art dealers, patrons and collectors. It has been the structure of overlooking from actors as the museum and the critic that excluded women from being recorded in the canon. The structural dismissive responses from, mostly male, art critics on the recent retrospectives of Kahlo that were analyzed by Heath show that a similar tendency can still be retraced in this century. However, attempts are being made towards equality; there is a positive development in the reviews of exhibitions on female artists that I have demonstrated with the critical review of Jonathan Jones, which was published in one of the world's most prestigious newspapers *The Guardian*.

The art world professionals that have been cited in this research have all pointed out that education and the acknowledgement of the problem of the exclusion of women in art history are among the main resolutions to make an inclusive art history happen. As I have

explained through the theories of Pollock and Salomon, it is not sufficient to insert forgotten female artists into the canon of art history. Yet the practice of insertion is still the most used method in the most important handbooks that are used at universities. To make a structural change happen, a shifting of the current paradigms has proven to be necessary. This paradigm shift could be established by a constant revising and rereading of the canon through feminist practices and by the acknowledgment of gender politics in the formation of art history. By the acknowledgement of power structures and the existence of equal coexisting canons through the structure of the 'open canon' that was introduced by Locher, the movement towards an inclusive art history can be activated.

By systematically highlighting the partiality of the canon, a broader recognition can be established. This highlighting can be, and is already done, at universities where art historical education often includes the notion of partiality and power structures. Yet universities could pay more attention to the partisanship that is involved with the formation of the canon and art historical education should clearly explain gender politics in relation to the field of art history. When feminism is still dismissed as a subcategory, this inclusion has not been established. An important responsibility in educating the broader public on the exclusion of women can further be found in the art world. Reilly encourages curators to get involved with research practices on former excluded groups from art history and to make these groups globally visible through exhibitions. Art exhibitions can be defined as the most visible transmitter of art history in the social context, it is therefore of crucial importance for curators to take responsibility in educating museum and gallery visitors. Art exhibitions could additionally be accompanied with what Heath defined as 'feminist frameworks,' to provide the general exhibition visitor with broad contextual information on gender politics in relation to the formation of the canon of Surrealism.

The acknowledgement of gender inequity and the general exclusion of specific groups in the social society context is becoming a popular subject in today's society. This shift in the social context can be indicated by the recent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, the Time's Up movement and the #MeToo movement that were all established between 2017 and 2018. The rising popularity of the promotion of LGBTIQ rights on social media shows that the idea of inclusion is a current topic of debate. The founding of these movements has gained an extensive amount of attention on online platforms and in the media and indicates that there is a growing demand for inclusion and equality. The necessity of feminism in today's society and art world shows that there is still a way to go. While a structural change towards an inclusive art history depends on the passing of time, I would like to encourage other art

historians and art world professionals to start or continue research on formerly excluded groups and to organize exhibitions outside of the master narrative of art history. These are not projects that should be established in the future. As I have aimed to express with this thesis, the practice of exclusion is a project that calls for exposure *now*.

Amount of words: 22049

List of Illustrations

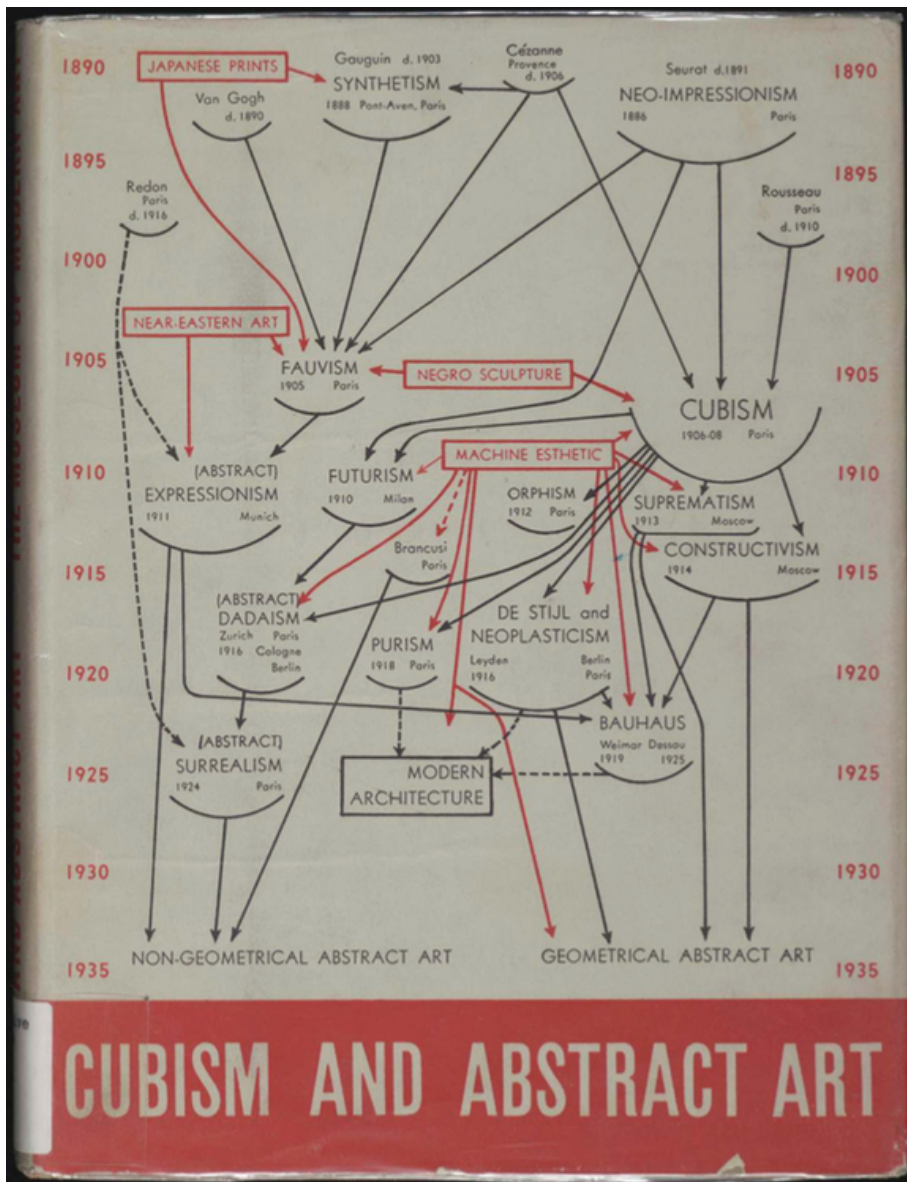


Fig. 1 Cover design by Alfred Barr Jr. of the exhibition catalogue *Cubism and Abstract Art*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936.

Source: <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2748> (Retrieved May 2018).



Fig. 2 Leonora Carrington, *The Inn of the Dawn Horse (Self-Portrait)*, c. 1937-38, oil on canvas, 65.1 x 81.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection.
Source: <https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/492697> (Retrieved July 2018).



Fig. 3 Loren MacIver, *Shack*, 1934, oil on canvas, 51.1 x 61 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Source: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79620> (Retrieved July 2018).



Fig. 4 Loren MacIver, *Hopscotch*, 1940, oil on canvas, 68.9 x 91.1 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Source: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80687?artist_id=3668&locale=pt&page=1&sov_referrer=artist (Retrieved July 2018).



Fig. 5 Helen Lundeberg, *Cosmicide*, 1935, oil on masonite, 101.6 x 61 cm. Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Source: <https://www.artslant.com/la/articles/show/29715> (Retrieved July 2018).



Fig. 6 Janet Sobel, *The Burning Bush*, 1944, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 55.9 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Source: <https://collections.lacma.org/node/215636> (Retrieved July 2018).



Fig. 7 Jacqueline Lamba, *Untitled (Dedicated to Frida)*, 1944, mixed media on paper, 41.5 x 56.4 cm. Pablo Goebel Fine Arts, Mexico City.
Source: digital archive Pablo Goebel Fine Arts.

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