

Manchester Art Gallery's 2018 Artist Takeover:

A Curatorial Case Study

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Introduction

Manchester Art Gallery is a small but historic gallery that reached public headlines in 2018 in response to an artist ‘takeover’ event held in the gallery in February that same year. The Gallery had been hosting such events for number of a years as part of a larger movement within the institution to create a relationship between currently practising local artists and the historic collection. These takeovers would consist of a contemporary artist being invited to “intervene in the permanent collection in some way”.¹ The event would be held over a short period of time, often only an evening, and would not make any permanent changes to the collection. For the February 2018 Takeover, contemporary artist Sonia Boyce was invited to make a feminist interpretation of the collection, which would highlight the artist in the lead-up to her large retrospective in Manchester Art Gallery at the end of the year. Attendees at the event, which consisted of drag artists displaying their interpretations of the works in the nineteenth century galleries, were surprised when, at the end of the evening, a crew came and removed a work from the walls: John William Waterhouse’s *Hylas and the Nymphs*. The 1896 painting features the mythological scene of the moment before Hylas’s death at the hands of a group of water nymphs, depicted here as a nude young women (Fig 4). The removal, as explained by the organisers, was to prompt a conversation about the display of the galleries, in particular the representation of women. A member of the audience, a local Mancunian artist, promptly called a journalist of the *Guardian* newspaper after having attended the event to express his concern about what he perceived to be the censorship of an artwork.² The following week saw a media-storm that centred around the idea of radical Feminism and censorship.³

Media has always had a relationship with feminist action. From the days of its inception in the Suffrage movement, newspapers and journals would join the debate, criticising or hailing the women’s movement.⁴ Vitriolic resistance to Feminism is therefore not a new phenomenon. The 2018 Takeover, however, exemplified a number of issues that are increasingly relevant to curatorial practice far beyond the simple backlash to a feminist

¹ Lewis, “Should Manchester Art Gallery Change?”

² Clare Gannaway, appendix 3. interview question no. 3; member of the audience, available online “Manchester After Hours.”

³ For the purpose of this thesis, a working definition of censorship will be used based on the Oxford English Dictionary: “the suppression or prohibition of any part of books, films, news etc. that are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security.” This definition was chosen due to the emphasis on terms such as ‘obscene’ and ‘politically unacceptable’, which this author believes to be closely aligned with the terms use by the media and public with regards to the Takeover. Further nuances of the definitions of censorship will be explored further in section 3.4. *Oxford English dictionary* [online], 2000.

⁴ Savigny, *Cultural Sexism*, 56.

intervention. Media analysis of the event continued for months after *Hylas and the Nymphs* was returned, and public engagement on the statements made by Manchester Art Gallery online still happens today, the most recent post as created on 19th September 2020.⁵ The gallery held public debates and panels concerning the Takeover throughout the year, and curators involved, such as Clare Gannaway, continued to be interviewed and invited to panels discussing subjects such as curation and the #MeToo movement.⁶

This thesis will examine the extent to which the 2018 Artist Takeover of Manchester Art Gallery by Sonia Boyce problematised current day political interpretations of historical works in terms of curatorial practice. Alistair Hudson, Director of Manchester Art Gallery, retrospectively described his interpretation of the Takeover:

“I view it as a kind of experiment. Sometimes experiments work in lots of different ways, positively and negatively. You might say that it is a success, you might say that it didn’t work. But you learn from that.”⁷

This approach to the Takeover, viewing it as an experiment, describes the value that can be gained from studying such an event. The Takeover serves as a microcosm of cultural issues that existed in 2018 and are still present today, including: the role of a public gallery and cultural gatekeeping; the politics of looking, or the judgement of historical works by the values of the present; and the current state and perception of Feminism. These are the themes that will continuously arise throughout this thesis.

Chapter one will present the context and the Takeover event in detail. 2018 witnessed a number of celebratory feminist events in Manchester, as well as the continued rise of the #MeToo movement. This resulted in the Takeover occurring in a climate fuelled by feminist interventions both past and present. The events of the Takeover will be outlined in detail, as well as the various forms of response it received and their escalation. With the event and responses having been outlined in detail, the following two chapters will focus on some specific issues that were brought up by the Takeover.

Chapter two will delve further into the discussion occurring around the Takeover in order to identify and analyse the current-day conception of Victorian art and how it fed into the discourse. This chapter deals with the ‘politics of looking’ or the tendency to judge

⁵ ‘Charles Whitehead’, comment no. 816, on Manchester Art Gallery, “Presenting the Female Body.”

⁶ For example, Clare Gannaway’s participation in the panel of the Courtauld Institution of Art event Museums After #MeToo; Courtauld Institution, “Museums After #MeToo”, panel debate with Clare Gannaway, Nathaniel Hepburn, Rachel Cooke and Rhiannon Cosslett.

⁷ Director Alistair Hudson, “Manchester After Hours.”

historical works by the values of the present, which occurs in both the creation and response of the event. First, the stereotype of Victorian prudery will be addressed and contrasted with the variety of ideas that was the reality of the nineteenth century conception of sexuality and the nude. The concept of the femme fatale, something deliberately targeted in the Takeover as an inherently misogynistic subject, will be explored along with possible alternative interpretations it could present. Finally, Waterhouse's reputation as a 'pretty' but ultimately vapid painter and how this fed into the discourse around the Takeover will be examined and contrasted with his reception in the late nineteenth century. This examination is necessary to demonstrate the breadth of narratives at play when considering a single late nineteenth century work which allows a greater understanding of the basis of much of the response by both the curators and the public.

Chapter three will deal with issues of curation and Feminism in examining what became the overriding subject of the Takeover: censorship. It will first outline when the perception of the Takeover shifted from a feminist event to an act of censorship. Then the feminist theory of the Takeover, in particular the criticism of the late nineteenth century's representation of the female form, will be considered. This will build upon the historical framework already provided in chapter two. Finally, the definitions of censorship will be explored, as well as its relationship with Feminism and art. In light of this, the link between feminist aesthetics, art, pornography, and censorship will be evaluated. Thus, the context of the feminist critique of room 10 and the basis of its labelling as censorship will have been discussed.

Ultimately this thesis will demonstrate the value of the Takeover as a curatorial case study, in the breadth and complexity of themes and issues relevant to current-day curation that it deals with. Throughout this thesis three primary themes will continuously re-appear: the role of a public gallery and cultural gatekeeping; the politics of looking; and the current state and perception of Feminism. These will be further explored as outcomes of this research in the conclusion. In total, the case study of the Takeover will prove the relevancy of these issues and the need for their consideration in curating historical collections.

Feminist Waves

To understand the history behind feminist interpretations, and much of the reception of the Takeover, the so-called 'waves' or movements of Feminism must be outlined.⁸ The Suffrage movement began in the late nineteenth century and ended when all women over the age of eighteen achieved the right to vote in 1928.⁹ It has often been characterised as militant Feminism, due to the sometimes violent lengths protestors would go in order to have their case heard.¹⁰ This has retrospectively been labelled as the 'first wave' of Feminism.

Feminism saw a revival in the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Referred to as the second wave, it concentrated on increasing women's education, work options and sexual liberation. The focus was on breaking down cultural barriers based on misogynistic attitudes for women, their motto being 'the personal is the political'.¹¹

Feminism of the 1990s is labelled the third wave, and saw a broadening of what concerned the movement to encompass issues of race-gender politics and queer theory.¹² The strict rules of the second wave of what was and was not feminist loosened, and the third wave became characterised by inclusion and comradery between all types of women.¹³ Female sexuality and the pursuit of that sexuality was no longer seen as a rejection of feminist values but as a new form of Feminism, one that encouraged agency.

Contemporary Feminism, what is now being called fourth wave, is characterised primarily through the use of the internet and social media as a platform for activism.¹⁴ Building upon the values of the third wave, contemporary Feminism is also concerned with broadening the arena of activism to include all types of women, including transgender men and women. The #MeToo movement is a prime example of fourth wave Feminism in its utilisation of a social media device, the hashtag, to create awareness of women's issues through trending topics which in turn enacted change.¹⁵

⁸ It must be noted that the concept of separating feminist movements into 'waves' has been called into question, most notably by Griselda Pollock. Nevertheless, these definitions remain the most concise form of conceiving and discussing the ideological changes within the history of the movement; Pollock, "Is Feminism a Trauma, a Bad Memory, or a Virtual Future?", 28-29.

⁹ Munro, "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?", 22.

¹⁰ Pollock, "Is Feminism a Trauma, a Bad Memory, or a Virtual Future?", 48.

¹¹ Munro, "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?", 22.

¹² It was first distinguished as the third wave in a 1992 article by Rebecca Walker, a young African American writer, which ended with the statement "I am not a postfeminist feminist. I am the third wave"; Pollock, "Is Feminism a Trauma, a Bad Memory, or a Virtual Future?", 31.

¹³ Fields, "Frontiers in Feminist Art History", 7-8; Pollock, "Is Feminism a Trauma, a Bad Memory, or a Virtual Future?", 32.

¹⁴ Munro, "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?", 23.

¹⁵ Savigny, *Cultural Sexism*, 51.

Methodology

Before continuing, a note must be made on the sources and methodology used in this thesis. The primary sources are representative of three areas: the public, the media and the organisers. The nature of this topic has resulted in a large amount of the source material being drawn from the internet such as online articles, social media posts and public comments. These sources are not trusted as evidence of the events itself but are vital in evaluating public conception and opinion. The comments or posts used to represent such public conception within this thesis have been carefully chosen on the basis of said comments representing a specific theme or feeling that is repeated by multiple other individuals. It must be noted, however, that those who have gone as far to comment or post their opinion about the Takeover represents only a specific group of the public who feel confident enough to express such opinions publicly.

Similarly, the articles drawn from official news outlets covering the events are used as a representation of the media's interpretation of the events, not as evidence for the events themselves. The media coverage is distinctly separate to the opinions expressed by the public directly and the accounts given by the organisers. Furthermore, there is an added financial incentive in the sensationalised aspect of the media coverage in generating views and thus revenue for the newspaper. This motivation must also be kept in mind when evaluating such sources.

The intentions and opinions of the organisers of the event are difficult to evaluate due to a much smaller amount of documentation work with. Press releases and statements released by the gallery demonstrate their side as a collective or institution. Sonia Boyce submitted an article and an interview to the *Guardian* newspaper which expressed her conception of the events. There has been a number of interviews and panel debates, which have been recorded, and these have been drawn upon as primary material for both certain members of the public and also for the representative of the collective organisers, curator Clare Gannaway. An interview conducted by myself with Clare Gannaway, the full transcription of which is included in appendix three, is the final source of primary material on the intentions and conception of the event by the curators and organisers.

Chapter One:

Contextualising the Takeover

The 2018 Takeover was not expected by the organisers to garner as much attention as it did.¹⁶ What began on a Thursday evening as a small collaborative event in celebration of Feminism was, only a week later, declared on both national and international media as puritanical censorship. A week after the removal, Manchester Art Gallery's press release talks of the overwhelming nature of the response, and hints that it was not all positive:

“There's no denying it's been an interesting week. We anticipated a heated debate, but were amazed by the huge response to the temporary removal of Waterhouse's Pre-Raphaelite masterpiece. [...] We're working through them and all aside from the merely abusive will be published. Please feel free to continue the debate here.”¹⁷

To understand why such a small event became the topic of international news, it is necessary to establish the political, societal, and historical context of both Manchester Art Gallery and Manchester City. The Takeover was not an event that occurred in isolation; a number of factors, both historical and contemporary, can be identified in contributing to the lead up of the event. An evaluation of such factors can offer much insight into the decisions of the curators and the subsequent reaction of the public and the media. Thus, the following chapter will contextualise the Takeover by examining the history of feminist action within Manchester City and the contemporary feminist climate in which the Takeover took place. The factors of the event will be divided into two parts: external and internal. This will reveal a number of underlying issues, primarily the contrast between the public perception of the role of a gallery and the gallery's self-perception of that role, that may have been key in producing the vitriolic response that the Takeover did. It will then outline, in detail, the events of the Takeover, the public response and the response of the media.

1.1 The 2018 Centenary

The 6th February 2018 marked the one-hundred-year anniversary of the first women obtaining the right to vote in Britain.¹⁸ For Manchester, this was an important centenary, as the city was the birthplace of Suffrage in Britain. Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928), a Mancunian native,

¹⁶ Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 2.

¹⁷ Manchester Art Gallery, press release on “Presenting the Female Body.”

¹⁸ The Representation of the People Act of 1918: Women over the age of thirty who were a member or married to a member of the Local Government Register were granted the vote. Fawcett, *The Women's Victory*, 170.

established the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903 in her own house off Oxford Road, the society that would later become known as the Suffragettes.¹⁹ This heritage is worn proudly by Manchester, with several sites containing dedications to the historical figure and the movement she founded, including The Pankhurst Centre, The People's History Museum and Manchester City Library. The centenary was celebrated throughout the country, but in Manchester in particular there were multiple events spaced over the year which strongly integrated female artists.²⁰ Concurrent to the Centenary was the Wonder Woman Festival, an event which had begun four years previous to celebrate feminist cultural activity. 2018 was the fifth year of the festival and, due to the centenary, was marked as the biggest event cycle so far.²¹ The festival opened with Sonia Boyce's Artist Takeover of the Manchester Art Gallery, along with a retrospective of the female Victorian painter Annie Swynnerton.²²

While only a brief account, the purpose of mentioning such events is to point out that Manchester Art Gallery was not alone in its holding of feminist events in 2018. In fact, the prevalence of celebration in every corner of the city, specifically among cultural institutions, would have contributed to the gallery desire to hold a Takeover worthy of the Suffragette cause the city celebrated.²³ The pressure to hold such a feminist event in 2018 was added to by contemporary global events that were reaching a peak that year, namely the #MeToo movement.²⁴

¹⁹ Bartley, *Emmeline Pankhurst*, 71.

²⁰ The bronze statue of Emmeline Pankhurst, *Rise Up Women* designed by Hazel Reeves, which was unveiled in December 2018. A thirty-eight meter high mural by Vanessa Scott dedicated to Sylvia Pankhurst was displayed on Trafford House Building.²⁰ A limited art-piece magazine, *The Suffragette*, was published containing submissions of personal memories, poetry and stories. The Pankhurst centre held several events and workshops; Womanchester Statue Project, "Emmeline Pankhurst Statue Unveiled"; Visit Manchester, "Plans for the Unveiling of Emmeline Pankhurst Statue"; Bruntwood Works, "Bruntwood Works Unveils Huge Manchester Mural Honouring the Suffragette Movement"; Jobling, "The Colourful New Mural on the Side of a Building in Trafford – and What It Means"; Oldfield, "Women of Manchester Invited to Share Their Storied for Suffrage Celebration."

²¹ Jaspan, "Wonder Woman."

²² Other cultural institutes involved were the Museum of Science and Industry, which held a theatre performance of *She bangs the drums*, Whitworth Art Gallery's screening of the film *Suffragette*, SHE PWR music event at Gorrilla, an exhibition at Castlefield Gallery of contemporary female artists, *Lost Voices* event at Quarry Bank Mill, and *From Petticoats to Microscopes* in Manchester Museum; O'Connor, "Suffragette Cities: Events to Mark the Centenary of Voting Rights for Women"; Heward, "International Women's Day 2018 Events Manchester." Heward, "International Women's Day 2018 Events Manchester."

²³ Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 1.

²⁴ The phrase 'Me Too' was first coined in 2006 by Tarana Burke on early social media, however, it only truly took off over ten years later during the exposure in 2017 of the sexual abuse by Harvey Weinstein, a high profile movie producer in Hollywood. Over time, the term came to encompass a broader meaning than that specific to Hollywood, exposing sexual abuse occurring in any context, particularly those that involved a power imbalance which the abuser would use to their advantage. As a result, the MeToo hashtag was being widely used in 2018 to describe all forms of sexual abuse. Since 2016 the Western world has been described as living in a post-MeToo era; Burke, "From the Founder"; Savigny, *Cultural Sexism: The politics of Feminist Rage in the #MeToo era*, 51; Kantor, "Weinstein is Convicted. Where does #MeToo go from here?"; Donegan, "Harvey

1.2 #MeToo and Cultural Institutes.

Since the spread of #MeToo, artists, institutions, and artworks themselves have been subject to increasing interrogation and scrutiny with regards to potential abusive and sexist behaviour and depictions. This includes cases such as the protests concerning the Balthus exhibition in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, over the potential sexualisation of pre-pubescent girls and the Ditchling Museum's exhibit of Eric Gill who is now known to have sexually abused the young girls modelled in his work.²⁵ Both of these events were later discussed within the context of the Takeover, for example, a comment made by Director Alistair Hudson:

“[There] needs to be a sort of consensual decision about the subject matter in not just these paintings but any paintings. I mean, it was highlighted recently, you know, another case in the United States was the Balthus painting of the young girl.”²⁶

This demonstrates that while these individual controversies deal with very separate issues, they are fundamentally related in the minds of the audience and curators. In this increasingly scrutinised environment, museums and cultural institutes felt the public pressure and anger when dealing with such delicate subjects, often leading to the removal of works or the cancellation of exhibitions in fear of public backlash. In response, many were focused on pro-feminist agendas and exploring alternative methods of curation that recognised this new environment.

The external factors occurring around the 2018 Takeover build a picture of a cultural environment that was concerned with Feminism both past and present, and producing events that reflected this focus. There are, however, a number of factors relating specifically to Manchester Art Gallery, its history and ethos, that fed into the conception of the Takeover.

Weinstein went from untouchable to incarcerated. Thank #MeToo”; Gill and Rahman-Jones, “Me Too Founder Tarana Burke: Movement is Not Over.”

²⁵ Kinsella, “The Met Says ‘Suggestive’ Balthus Painting Will Stay After Petition For Its Removal Is Signed by Thousands”; Libbey, “Met Defends Suggestive Painting of a Girl After Petition Calls for Its Removal”; Bellafante, “We Need to Talk About Balthus”; Jones, “Arguing Over Art is Right But Trying To Ban It is The Work Of Fascists”; Cooke, “Eric Gill: Can We Separate The Artist From the Abuser”; Steel, “Eric Gill Exhibition to Confront Child Sex Abuse.”

²⁶ Alistair Hudson, “Museums After Hours” panel debate; Other mentions of these events by organisers can be found on Manchester Art Gallery, “Pre-Raphaelite masterpiece back on public display after it’s temporary removal”; Courtauld Institution, “Museums After #MeToo”, panel debate with Clare Gannaway, Nathaniel Hepburn, Rachel Cooke and Rhiannon Cosslett; Clare Gannaway in “Manchester After Hours.”

1.3 The Founding of Manchester City Art Gallery

The historical origins of Manchester Art Gallery are deeply intertwined with both the conception of the 2018 Takeover as well as the nineteenth century works that were its target. Manchester City Art Gallery was established as part of a larger move of English industrial cities in the nineteenth century to raise both their public image and the morality and culture of their predominantly working class population.²⁷ Their inspiration was drawn from the writings of John Ruskin (1819-1900), and much like the undercurrents of morality in Pre-Raphaelite paintings - also inspired by Ruskin's writings - city planners took on board the idea that good and beautiful art can change the person who observes it.²⁸ It was thought that in the industrial city in particular, the population's separation from nature had a negative impact on their ethical values. The public display of art to the masses was theorised to correct this imbalance. Founded in a time of social anxiety, these city galleries centred themselves within the debate on social and gender division, and a change in the constitution of local government.²⁹

Manchester Art Gallery emerged from a much earlier association: The Royal Manchester Institution (RMI) founded in 1823.³⁰ The RMI's aim was to foster a developing civic culture through art and it became an important organisation for the development of middle class aesthetics and cultural confidence. Through its annual exhibits, it disseminated 'high art' to the middle class, in the form of old masters. More notable, however, was its increased patronage to 'modern' British art, such as the Pre-Raphaelites, which was thought to reflect more clearly the intertwining of aesthetics and ethics that the society was encouraging. Soon the need for a permanent venue led to the construction of the neoclassical building by Charles Barry in 1829 (Fig 1).³¹

By the end of the nineteenth century, Manchester was a model of unfettered industrial capitalism, a 'cottonopolis'.³² The cotton famine of the 1860s drew to public attention the poverty of the lower classes, resulting in a new group of reformers. One, Charles Rowley, explained this revelation:

²⁷ Woodson-Boulton, Amy, "Introduction" in *Transformative Beauty*, 1-18.

²⁸ Ruskin, *The Collected Works of John Ruskin*; Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*, 1, 3, 5.

²⁹ The nature of these social and gender debates will be explored further in chapter 2.

³⁰ Manchester Art Gallery, "A History of the Collections"; Woodson-Boulton, Amy, *Transformative Beauty*, 42.

³¹ Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*, 43.

³² *Ibid.*, 19.

“The memories of the squalor and the potency of the odours of those appalling, stinging slums can never be effaced. We had been living next door to them all our lives, and yet were not aware of their bestial condition.”³³

They looked to Ruskin’s cultural and social criticism in order to find answers, and decided that the solution was bringing art, nature, and beauty to the public masses.³⁴ Charles Rowley and others of the institute, succeeded in opening the Manchester City Art Gallery in 1883: the new iteration of the RMI located in the same building.³⁵ The RMI made a gift to the city of their entire collection and thus the civic gallery was born.³⁶

Despite the high ideals of those who established the gallery, it soon took on a different role. While the initial growth of the collection was aimed at applied art for the view of the lower classes, the gallery began to focus its acquisitions on contemporary artists for the purpose of developing a civic identity for the growing city to change the country’s poor opinion of the ‘cottonopolis’. The art intended for the working class was moved to the lower galleries and class conflict of the exterior moved inside as the gallery was divided between a space for moral reform of the lower classes and a venue of middle-class entertainment and sociability.³⁷

1.4 The 1913 Incident

The earliest occurrence of what can be regarded as feminist action in Manchester Art Gallery was the Suffragette attack of 1913. On April 4th, near closing time, three women, Annie Briggs, Lilian Forrester, and Evelyn Manesta (Fig 2), entered Manchester Art Gallery and proceeded to smash the protective glass on thirteen paintings in response to the imprisonment of Emmeline Pankhurst. As reported by the Manchester Guardian:

“[...]two attendants ran into the gallery and found three women [...] running round, cracking the glass of the biggest and most valuable pictures in the collections. It had

³³ Rowley, *Fifty Years of Work Without Wages*, 32–33 quoted in Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*, 44.

³⁴ It is of note that Ruskin himself did not approve of the manner in which such civic galleries were established, believing that they were only treating the symptom of a problematic industrial society rather than the root cause. Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*, 46.

³⁵ Others involved included Thomas Coglean Horsfall, John Ernest Phythian and Charles James Pooley. The collection was gifted under the condition that £2,000 be spent on annual expansion; Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*, 45.

³⁶ Manchester Art Gallery, “A History of the Collections.”

³⁷ Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*, 51-52.

been well planned. Nowhere else in the gallery were there hung so many famous pictures, so close together.”³⁸

In custody, they stated that they did not wish to permanently destroy the artworks, merely smash the glass; however, extensive damage was done to many of the victimised works. At trial, each of the women made speeches, Forrester in particular, declaring their intentions as a political protest: “I do not stand here as a malicious person but as a patriot [...] a political offender.”³⁹ The jury acquitted Briggs and sentenced Forrester and Manesta to three and four months of imprisonment, respectively.⁴⁰ While this specific act was in response to the imprisonment of Emmeline Pankhurst, art galleries throughout the country continued as a subject for suffrage protests.⁴¹

What is of particular interest about this event, in reference to the 2018 Takeover, is the works chosen for attack by the women.⁴² Nearly all of these works were by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the same group by whom John William Waterhouse would be inspired when creating his *Hylas and the Nymphs*. While suffragettes targeted works due to their popularity, in order to create publicity from the actions, it is notable that ten of the thirteen works have women as a central character, although it is unknown whether this was a factor in their targeting or merely a reflection of the popularity of the subject at the time.⁴³

1.5 Manchester Art Gallery Today

The foundation and history of the gallery is important to consider when analysing the decisions and responses of the 2018 Takeover. As stated on the gallery website, the current primary objective of Manchester City Gallery is to be:

“[...] an educational institution to ensure that the city and all its people grow with creativity, imagination, health and production. The gallery is free and open to all as a

³⁸ Manchester Art Gallery. “Manchester Art Gallery Outrage.”

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Oberoi, Gursimran, “Protesting Watts.”

⁴² *The Last Watch of Hero* (1880) and *Captive Andromache* (1888) by Lord Frederic Leighton; *The Syrinx* (1892) by Arthur Hacker; *Sybilla Delphica* (1868) by Edward Burne-Jones; *Paola and Francesca* (1870) by George Frederick Watts; *The Last of the Garrison* (1875) by Briton Riviere; *Birnam Woods* (1891) by John Everett Millais; *The Prayer* (1860) and *Portrait of The Hon J L Motley* (unknown) by George Frederick Watts; *A Flood* (1870) by John Everett Millais; *When Apples were Golden* (1906) by John Melhuish Strudwick; *The Shadow of Death* (c1870) by William Holman Hunt; and *Astarte Syriaca* (1877) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

⁴³ In chapter two, the elements of late nineteenth century paintings that could have made them a target for feminist intervention will further analysed to help to understand the motivations behind the targeting of the Waterhouse painting in 2018.

place of civic thinking and public imagination, it promotes art as a means to achieve social change.”⁴⁴

What can be taken from this is that the gallery aims not to be an institution of preservation, but education, and thus has a responsibility to reflect the current society in which it exists and be daring when it comes to museum display. The decisions of the Takeover, and the gallery’s subsequent response, can be considered faithful to the gallery’s stated purpose.

However, within this same mission statement, a potential reason for public backlash can also be surmised: “the gallery is for and of the people of Manchester.”⁴⁵ As a public collection, the ownership is attributed to the citizens of Manchester. Some of the discussion that emerged subsequent to the Takeover touches on a disconnect between the ethos of the Gallery and the public perception of the role of museums in society. An example of this is expressed in the comments: “Did you ask the public before your desperate attempt at attention and relevance?”; “ask the public what they want and not a couple of dissenting voices.”⁴⁶ The Takeover revealed a public perception of the curators and management of the gallery as gatekeepers to their collection. In the public debate hosted by Manchester Art Gallery after the Takeover, one member of the audience stated the following:

“What my concern is that a lot of these things about what you decide as a curator – you are the kind of gatekeepers, deciding what should be here and what shouldn’t be here. [...] So you’ve got to decide, when you’re holding power in situations like this, whether you are reflecting your own interests or public interests.”⁴⁷

This member of the public expresses a concern echoed by others at various points throughout the Takeover: that the event was the decision of a few in gatekeeper positions based on personal opinions and not the public interest. Comments left on the website express this public sentiment:

“It is not your place to ‘challenge a Victorian fantasy’. Your role is to display art and to provide information about the historical context within which it was produced so that it may be appreciated for what it is. Your role is not to prompt people to judge

⁴⁴ Manchester Art Gallery, “About Us.”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ ‘Art Collector’, comment no. 118; ‘Evelyn Hill’, comment 146; Manchester Art Gallery, “Presenting the Female Body”

⁴⁷ Member of the audience, “Manchester After Hours.”

artworks produced in previous periods by your modern, yet regressive, social justice standards.”⁴⁸

This comment, one of 912 posts left in response to the gallery’s online press release, was echoed by hundreds of other responders. The same conception of the role of a museum again became a central focus in the public debate held by Manchester Art Gallery in order to discuss the Takeover with the public.⁴⁹ This response is of particular interest as the Takeover, according to curator Clare Gannaway, was in fact an attempt to involve the opinion of more than just the curators, and a step on her desired path to democratise the gallery display:

“It was always considered as part of a process, not just the process of Sonia and the artwork, but a process of how do we want to talk to each other? How do we want to think about the process of decision-making? How do we want to think about collective decision-making and democratising what the gallery is?”⁵⁰

While the Takeover’s organisation and decision making was broadened, from the perspectives of the curators, by including a wider range of staff’s opinions and ideas, this was simply not reflected in the public impression of the event. Thus, this perceived disenfranchisement of the public from their publicly owned collection fuelled much of the discourse around the Takeover.

1.6 The 2018 Artist Takeover

Now that the broader context of the Takeover and Manchester Art Gallery has been discussed, it is necessary to cover the events of the Takeover in detail. Artist takeovers at Manchester Art Gallery are regular events whose aim is to unite the contemporary art world, specifically the local one, to their historical collection. These takeovers would consist of an artist creating or displaying a work around the existing collection to present a re-interpretation of said works in line with their own artistic practice. In 2018, Manchester Art Gallery invited artist Sonia Boyce (1962-) to re-interpret their permanent collection as an Artist Takeover. Sonia Boyce is a British Afro-Caribbean visual artist whose work is focused

⁴⁸ ‘Henry Justin Marcel’, comment no. 276, Manchester Art Gallery. “Presenting the Female Body.”

⁴⁹ Manchester Art Gallery recorded the debate, headed by Director Alistair Hudson and curator Clare Gannaway, “Museums after Hours”; Manchester Art Gallery, “Presenting the Female Body.”

⁵⁰ Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 16.

on addressing issues of gender and race, through a wide range of media and she is a central figure in artistic practice in Black Britain (Fig 3).⁵¹

The resulting event from the partnership between the Manchester Art Gallery curators and Boyce consisted of two actions: the Takeover evening in January, and secondly the removal of John William Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* (Fig 4). The event, as stated by Boyce and the gallery press release, was part of both the launch of the 2018 Wonder Woman event celebrating the Suffragette centenary as well as the run up to Sonia Boyce's retrospective in Manchester Art Gallery the same year.⁵² The event was directly linked by both the artist and the curators to Manchester's history of Feminism through acknowledgement of the gallery as a site of previous feminist action (the 1913 incident), alongside Manchester's history of Suffrage.⁵³ Anne Louise Kershaw, who introduced the Wonder Woman festival as one of the co-curators, stated: "From suffragettes smashing windows in the gallery to a breath-taking exhibition of female surrealists, Manchester has a rich heritage of stereotype-smashing women. [...] This is an emergency. Join them in smashing the patriarchy with art."⁵⁴

The Takeover began in the evening of 26th January and occurred as a collaborative project where drag artist Lasana Shabazz and the drag collective Family Gorgeous (Anna Phylactic, Venus Vienna, Liquorice Black, Cheddar Gorgeous) were invited to perform in a "non-binary way" their interpretation of a work within the permanent collection (Fig 5 a, b & c).⁵⁵ These performances were filmed, photographed, and recorded by Boyce who subsequently turned the footage into the work *Six Acts* (2018) which was displayed in her retrospective (Fig 6).⁵⁶ The format of the performance was entirely up to the artists: Boyce decided not to have any input on the acts, merely stipulating that: "no one got hurt and nothing was damaged."⁵⁷ Over the two hours, visitors could interact with and observe the drag artists in costume inspired by the specific works in the gallery room.

⁵¹ Boyce has become well established over her career, receiving a number of honours including representing Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2001, a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in 2007, and a Royal Academicianship in 2016. She currently holds a professorship of Black Art & Design at the University of Arts London. Her work has developed to explore the dialogue, mediation, and enjoyment of cultural differences, with a specific focus on the experience of the audience; Royal Academy, "Sonia Boyce RA"; Tate, "Sonia Boyce OBE."

⁵² Boyce, "Our Removal of Waterhouse's Naked Nymphs Painting Was Art in Action"; Kershaw, "In Emergency Break Glass."

⁵³ Stated on multiple occasions by Clare Gannaway in the "Manchester After Hours" event.

⁵⁴ Kershaw, "In Emergency Break Glass: The Feminist Takeover Thursday Late."

⁵⁵ Boyce, "Our Removal of Waterhouse's Naked Nymphs Painting Was Art in Action."

⁵⁶ Manchester Art Gallery, "Sonia Boyce."

⁵⁷ Higgle, "Sonia Boyce."

The end of the evening saw the instigation of the second part of the Takeover: the removal of the artwork. Gallery technicians, observed by the public, carefully removed Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* (Fig 7). At the time of removal, the length of time the gallery intended to keep it out of display was not made public. In its place visitors were encouraged to attach a yellow post-it note recording their personal response to the act of removal. In the weeklong period *Hylas and the Nymphs* was gone from display, the increasingly negative response to the Takeover first manifested itself on these post-it notes on the gallery wall (Fig 8 & 10) (Appendix 1). The following are a small sample of the comments of dozens of notes left anonymously by visitors:

“good subject for debate – but please put it back! And analyse the painting in context! [sic]”

“FEMINISM GONE MAD! I'M ASHAMED TO BE A FEMINIST!”

“this sets a dangerous precedent”

“Nudity everywhere these days so why take the nymphs away. Crazy ”⁵⁸

The expressions on the post-it notes, such as those who felt Feminism had gone too far, that the work was not correctly interpreted or that the removal was a form of censorship, were a sample of the same issues that would be expressed on social media, online and by the mainstream media for the weeks and months to come.

1.7 The Public Response

While the response to the drag performances on the night of the Takeover was positive, guests immediately reacted negatively to the removal of *Hylas and the Nymphs*. The blank space where *Hylas and the Nymphs* was filled with a notice board (Fig 9 & 10) of which the following is an extract:

“We have left a temporary space here in place of *Hylas and the Nymphs* by JW Waterhouse to prompt conversation about how we display and interpret artworks in Manchester's public collection. How can we talk about the collection in ways which are relevant in the 21st century?[...]This gallery presents the female body as either a

⁵⁸ Transcription of post-it notes in Appendix 1. This is the author's own transcription from images taken of the event and posted to social media and newspapers.

‘passive decorative form’ or a ‘femme fatale’. Let’s challenge this Victorian fantasy![...]#MAGSoniaBoyce.”

Two things are to be noted about this announcement: the views of the artist and curator on the exhibition of Victorian female figures is clearly stated and the involvement of social media in the discussion was encouraged. The public response was overwhelmingly negative, angry, and outraged. On social media the hashtag intended to prompt discussion became overloaded with critique, with hundreds of comments left under the press release on Manchester Art Gallery website, and the hashtag #nymphgate trending on social media.⁵⁹ Mainstream media coverage further amplified the public outrage, with not only local media such as *I Love Manchester* and *Manchester’s Finest* publishing discussion, but well established newspapers such as *The Telegraph*, *The Manchester Evening News*, *The Sun*, *The BBC* and *The Guardian* publishing articles.⁶⁰ The latter even went on to create an entire series of articles dedicated to the topic.⁶¹

Clare Gannaway has stated that, although they had no official end-date to the removal of the work, it was always intended to be temporary.⁶² This temporary nature was clearly stated on the notice board replacing the work (Fig 9); however, the idea did not appear to fully disseminate throughout the public. News coverage of the event implied that the removal was permanent.⁶³ One audience member of “Museums after Hours”, when describing his experience from the Takeover night, said:

“I was here on the night of the presentation - the removal of that picture - and I wasn’t very happy at the time. I waited about two or three days and there was concern that

⁵⁹ Arias, Maria Paula, “From takeover to debacle: An analysis of the Nymphgate network using Twitter data”, 132-150; Manchester Art Gallery, “Presenting the Female Body”.

⁶⁰ Hudson, “Sonia Boyce has the ability to provoke and emotionally engage at the Manchester Art Gallery Takeover – review”; Lewis, “Should Manchester Art Gallery Change? Takeover Will Challenge Public Opinion About Its Role”; Lovell, “Manchester Art Gallery Removes Naked Nymphs Painting Because of the Way It Portrays Women”; BBC News, “Victorian Nymphs Painting Back on Display After Censorship Row”; Mayer, “Out Of The Picture: Victorian Masterpiece Of Naked Goddesses Is Pulled From Manchester Art Gallery In Wake Of Time’s Up Movement.”

⁶¹ Boyce, “Our Removal of Waterhouse’s Naked Nymphs Painting was Art in Action”; Brown, “Gallery Removes Naked Nymphs Painting to ‘Prompt Conversation’”; Jones, “Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed from a Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?”; Pidd, “Pre-Raphaelite ‘Soft-Porn’ Painting Back on View After Outcry”; Brown, “Gallery Removes Naked Nymphs Painting to ‘Prompt Conversation’”; Higgins, “‘The Vitriol Was Really Unhealthy’.”

⁶² Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 11.

⁶³ Mayer, “Out Of The Picture: Victorian Masterpiece Of Naked Goddesses Is Pulled From Manchester Art Gallery In Wake Of Time’s Up Movement”; BBC News, “Victorian Nymphs Painting Back on Display After Censorship Row.”

the painting would be off the wall for quite a long time. I had no idea if it was days, weeks. There was no timetable.”⁶⁴

After a week *Hylas and the Nymphs* was returned to display, albeit with the post-it notes still left on the surrounding wall. The decision to return the painting so quickly was made by the authorities in Manchester City Council who were concerned about the now international negative backlash the gallery was receiving.⁶⁵ The return of the painting did not slow down the media bombardment, and newspapers continued to publish articles discussing the decision. In order to mitigate some of the negative feeling with which the event had now been branded, Manchester Art Gallery created a press release explaining the removal and acknowledging the public outcry, although with an optimistically positive twist from Interim Director Manager Amanda Wallace:

“We were hoping the experiment would stimulate discussion, and it’s fair to say we’ve had that in spades – and not just from local people but from art-lovers around the world. Throughout the painting’s seven day absence, it has been clear that many people feel very strongly about the issues raised, and we now plan to harness this strength of feeling for some further debate on these wider issues.”⁶⁶

There is, therefore, reason to believe that the public and media reaction may have been different if an end date to the removal had been publicly provided.

1.8 The Media’s Response

The media ran riot with cries of censorship. Articles were written suggesting fears that other works were now in danger of removal.⁶⁷ The idea of the Takeover, the Centenary and even the involvement of Sonia Boyce herself was overshadowed and forgotten as the story was echoed throughout the media. The event had changed from a temporary removal to spark conversation in the creation of an artwork to the apparent permanent removal of *Hylas and the Nymphs* by the gallery, as demonstrated in the language of an article by Lucy Lovell: “its erotic content - combined with the rise of the #Metoo movement and the recent expose of the President’s Club - has prompted curators to take the artwork down.”⁶⁸ In order to realign the

⁶⁴ Audience member, “Manchester After Hours.”

⁶⁵ Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 11,.

⁶⁶ Manchester Art Gallery, “Presenting the Female Body.”

⁶⁷ Jones, “Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed from a Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?.”

⁶⁸ Lovell, “Manchester Art Gallery removes naked nymphs painting because of the way it portrays women.”

focus of the event back to a discussion about Feminism, not censorship, Manchester Art Gallery held a public debate on 17th May 2018 in order to provide the public with a space to air their grievances, but also to shift the emphasis away from the media's portrayal of the situation back to a platform where the artist's ideas could be faithfully transmitted.⁶⁹

The snowball effect of the increasingly negative media coverage and distortion of the event suggests that the removal of the painting hit a societal nerve, sparking anger over a much broader issue of political polarisation. The removal became, for the public, a symbol of left-wing politics gone too far, tapping into fears over current events involving political correctness and the blacklisting or 'cancelling' of anything deemed by the social media masses as unacceptable. It was a pushback against the sharp cultural change that had occurred through the #MeToo movement, where many public figures had fallen from grace due to sexual abuse allegations, and the public feared that their beloved art, imbued with civic pride, would now fall too. The fact that the removal was temporary, and according to the curators had nothing to do with the work being 'too erotic', was lost.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has established the political, societal, and historical context of the 2018 Takeover. Externally, there were three primary factors that come to bear on the 2018 Takeover: the woman's vote Centenary, the #MeToo movement and the identity of Manchester as a city of historical feminist action. The city-wide celebrations of the anniversary of women gaining the right to vote, and of Suffrage in general, were particularly focused on cultural spaces, Manchester Art Gallery included. The present-day identity of the city as the historic centre of Suffrage and feminist action, marked with commemorations and artworks and in the make-up of the cultural sites available, bolstered the intensity of the Centenary celebrations. The #MeToo movement had put further pressure on cultural institutions to display pro-feminist agendas in the face of increased scrutiny. This was combined with more specific contemporary controversies concerning the artistic representation of women, the prism through which Waterhouse's and the nineteenth century collection were viewed. These all resulted in an external environment pushing curators and artists towards feminist action within the gallery.

There are factors within Manchester Art Gallery itself that may have also influenced the gallery's decisions during and after the Takeover. The foundation of the gallery as a site

⁶⁹ Manchester Art Gallery "Manchester After Hours" ; Manchester Art Gallery, "Presenting the Female Body."

of civic and social experimentation with regards to art and curation is built into the gallery's ethos. It could therefore be said that the gallery had a responsibility to hold such an event in order to challenge the public and status-quo. However, the general conception of the role of a public gallery as a caretaker of historic works is fundamentally different to the current ethos of Manchester Art Gallery, which is to challenge and educate their visitors, an issue which the un-consulted action of the removal of the painting brought to the fore.

Finally, there were certain factors within the promotion and dissemination of the Takeover itself that became problematised. The heavy involvement of social media led to Manchester Art Gallery losing control of the narrative of the Takeover, and subsequent media outlets changing the focus of the event towards censorship. The lack of consultation and ineffective explanation of the reasoning behind the Takeover's action quickly led to public outrage. In summary, the 2018 Takeover of Manchester Art Gallery tapped into a number of political and ideological issues present in contemporary society and curatorial practice.

Chapter 2: The Politics of Looking

“This gallery presents the female body as either a ‘passive decorative form’ or a ‘femme fatale’. Let’s challenge this Victorian fantasy!”⁷⁰

This extract is from the information board placed on the wall where *Hylas and the Nymphs* was removed by Manchester Art Gallery (Fig 9). It clearly states the issue taken with the late nineteenth century gallery display: the presentation of the female body. However, what exactly is this Victorian fantasy that the gallery is challenging? This aspect of the Takeover touches upon a much larger issue within curation and museum display, that is, the tendency of humans to judge the past by the standards of the present. Alison Smith uses the term the ‘politics of looking’ to describe this phenomenon.⁷¹ In the late twentieth century, critical analysis of art became de-aestheticised, instead being re-interpreted through the lens of contemporary concerns and ideas. This is demonstrated by both sides of the Takeover. Clare Gannaway comments that it is the gallery context that the organisers of the Takeover wish to question: “It’s about challenging the outdated and damaging stories this whole part of the gallery is still telling through the contextualising and interpretation of collection displays.”⁷² Meanwhile, members of the public argued that the historical context of the works explains the mode of representation: “we should analyse the past as it was, and interpret it.”⁷³ The ‘politics of looking’ addresses the difficulties of analysis when questioning historical works. Not only does the context of the artwork need to be weighed, but the context of our own perception of a period as well.

This chapter will contextualise the targeted works in the gallery Takeover, but also examine current day perceptions of the late nineteenth century, from both the organisers of the Takeover as well as members of the public. While it does not seek to find the answer to the much-debated topic of whether or not a historical work can, or should, be judged on modern values, it will highlight how the Takeover exemplifies multiple aspects of the issue. This will take place in three parts: the current stereotype of the Victorian artworld contrasting with the historical context; the specific feminist arguments against Victorian representation of women; and the modern perception of John William Waterhouse versus his contemporary reception. The nude as a particular subject matter has been chosen due to sexuality being the

⁷⁰ Notice board hung in Manchester Art Gallery in replacement of *Hylas and the Nymphs*. See Fig 10.

⁷¹ Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 7.

⁷² ‘Clare Gannaway’, comment no. 11 on Manchester Art Gallery. “Presenting the female body.”

⁷³ ‘Karl Drinkwater’, comment no. 53 on Manchester Art Gallery. “Presenting the female body.”

focus of much Victorian stereotyping, along with it also being the specific issue taken up by the 2018 Takeover.

2.1 ‘In Pursuit of Beauty’: Room 10

In 1994 Manchester Art Gallery underwent an expansion and refurbishment.⁷⁴ As commented by Clare Gannaway, the result of this refurbishment, which opened in 2002, was to create an image of the gallery that was closer to its original Victorian design:

“It is a pseudo-Victorian stage-set type of feeling. There is even quite a lot of nostalgia, I’m not sure that is the right word, but a sort of attempt to design the gallery as it would have been in a Victorian era, which is quite interesting.”⁷⁵

A brief comparison between a post-2002 renovation photograph and an original design by Charles Barry confirms this intention (Fig 28 a & b). It was gallery room 10, where J.W. Waterhouse’s *Hylas and the Nymphs* is housed, that was the focus of the intervention (Fig 11). The room’s title, ‘In Pursuit of Beauty’, summarises the traditional approach to such representations, where ‘Beauty’ is the idealised female form by male artists. This was one of the issues taken by the curators in light of #MeToo; as put by Clare Gannaway into the relevant question: “Who is doing the pursuing and who is being pursued?”⁷⁶

It is beneficial to have a brief assessment of the original display of room 10 in order to outline the curatorial decisions Gannaway wished to target. The room contains a number of painters associated with the Pre-Raphaelite style (Fig 12, 13, 15, 17) with the remaining classified as neo-classical (Fig 14, 16, 18, 19, 21).⁷⁷ The gallery makes no claim to having a full representation of the late nineteenth century, and in fact the order of the rooms suggests a grouping of works purely on a chronological basis.⁷⁸ Of the ten painted works on display, seven feature a sole female figure; the remaining three contain groups of women. *The Captive*

⁷⁴ Manchester Art Gallery, “Manchester Art Gallery Expansion Project.”

⁷⁵ Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 7.

⁷⁶ Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 10.

⁷⁷ The distinction between Pre-Raphaelite style and Pre-Raphaelites is to separate the artists who worked directly with the Brotherhood and a wider range of artists who were influenced by the brotherhood: John Roddam Spencer Stanhope (1829-1908), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), Annie Louisa Swynnerton (1844-1933), Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) and John William Waterhouse (1849-1917). The works labelled as classical in style are by Sir Frederic Leighton (1833-1896), Francis Derwent Wood (1871-1926), Arthur Hacker (1858-1919) and Charles August Mengin (1853-1933).

⁷⁸ The question of why the collections late 19th century works feature so many women is to do with original collection policies of the gallery. The formation of the collection of what became Manchester City Gallery is deeply connected to the image the city wished to portray of itself, in particular in eschewing the reputation of poverty. In fact, the somewhat biased nature of the original collection policy towards narrative-based academic artworks was bemoaned even by contemporaries, for example by Charles Rowley. See Woodson-Boulton, “Collecting for Art as Experience, or Why Millais Trumps Rembrandt” in *Transformative Beauty*, 83-107.

Andromache (1888) (Fig 21) by Frederick Leighton, features the only male figures in the room, and they are a minority within the composition. Five of the eleven works are female nudes, almost half of the works in the room, including the sculpture *Atlanta* (1907) (Fig 16). While the nude had certainly increased in popularity by the end of the century, they are disproportionately represented here. Room 10 contains two works by female artists, *Montagna Mia* (1923) by Annie Swynnerton (Fig 15) and *Italian Women at Church* by Susan Isabel Dacre (Fig 20).⁷⁹ This is an important inclusion, as female artists were working and exhibiting with success by the end of the century. Two characters in the room, Hylas and Sappho, are ones associated with homosexual romances, the latter being a queer icon.⁸⁰ Overall, the composition of the room curatorially reflects a more inclusive display, with the incorporation of female artists and subjects with ambiguous sexuality, but at the same time an over-representation of femme fatales and female nudes.

2.2 Terminology

Before continuing the discussion there are two terms here that must be clarified. First, ‘Victorian’ has been used in general to describe nineteenth century Britain under the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901. It is important to take into account when considering the term’s use, however, that the nineteenth century was a period of pronounced societal change, and British art of the 1850s, such as Ford Madox Brown’s *Work* (1852-1865) (Fig 29), is fundamentally different to that produced in the 1890s, such as Arthur Hacker’s *Syrinx* (1892) (Fig 19).⁸¹ A major pitfall in the critique of room 10 and its environs is the application of generalised ideas of ‘Victorian values’ from earlier decades that no longer applied to the period of the 1880s and 1890s. This chapter will therefore focus on the context of late nineteenth century Britain rather than the art world of the entire century.

The second term, ‘nude’, is one that is used rather indiscriminately today with regards to art. There is a large scholarly tradition of research on the nude to draw from, but this chapter will be limited to the distinction made by Kenneth Clarke, as his is one that most

⁷⁹ Note that *Montagna Mia* is a female nude by a female artist, something that will be explored further in section 3.3.

⁸⁰ Sappho was not seen this way when Mengin’s work was created, and the work in fact focuses on her relationship with a man. The adoption of Sappho as such an icon by the LGBTQ+ community is another example of the interpretation of an historical character through the lens of contemporary values; Boyce. “Our Removal of Waterhouse’s Naked Nymphs Painting was Art in Action”; Darling. “Sappho: the poetess; Mendelson, “Girl, Interrupted: Who was Sappho?”

⁸¹ Brown’s *Work* is a piece depicting contemporary people with heavy moral and religious implications, that eschews the standard principles of Beauty, whereas Hacker’s *Syrinx* is a piece of pure aesthetic purpose, no moral or religious undertones, and is entirely focused on the perfect rendition of Beauty within a classical and mythological setting.

closely summarises the concept that is in line with that of the nineteenth century.⁸² Therefore, the ‘naked’ will denote the deprivation of clothing with the overtones of shame in the body’s exposure, such as that seen in sexually explicit imagery like pornography. The ‘nude’ will denote imagery specific to high art that does not hold the tone of shame, instead presenting a balanced and confident body in keeping with artistic and aesthetic standards.⁸³

2.3 Prudish Victorians

The Victorian period is a time that is very alive in the modern British consciousness, and rife with misconceptions, particularly when it comes to sexuality. Martin Myrone’s essay in the *Exposed* exhibition catalogue explores the origin of this conception of the ‘pervy’ Victorian.⁸⁴ He, like a number of other historians such as Smith and Jenkyns, agrees that this began with a re-characterisation of the period in the Edwardian era in order to provide a foil to their newly-perceived modernity and liberalism.⁸⁵ By the 1930s the term ‘Victorian’ was already established as: “signifying ‘prudish, strict; old-fashioned, out-dated’.”⁸⁶ Using a *Viz* comic strip titled ‘Victorian Dad’ as a jumping point, he goes on to outline how the stereotype was manipulated for political purposes in the 1980s where ‘Victorian values’ were advocated under Margaret Thatcher’s Tory party.⁸⁷ This aligned the term with political conservatism. Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* questioned the idea of prudery in the Victorian period and instead hypothesised that the increased discourse on describing and defining sexuality conversely demonstrated an accelerated interest in sexuality.⁸⁸ Popular media has built upon this perception, particularly in movies and tv shows, where Victorian conservatism was a façade, a prudish exterior hiding a seething underbelly of repressed sexuality and perverse predilections (Fig 24).⁸⁹

Therefore, the term ‘Victorian nude’ may at first appear a paradox, nudity being incompatible with the idea of morally strict Victorians. Influential writings on the nude in art, such as Kenneth Clarke’s *The Nude* (1956) and later feminist studies such as Linda Nead’s

⁸² It must be noted that this distinction applies primarily to the English-speaking contexts, including Britain, Ireland, and America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This linguistic distinction between ‘nude’ and ‘naked’ does not always occur in non-English speaking languages including Italian, French, Dutch and Spanish.

⁸³ Clarke, *The Nude*, 1.

⁸⁴ Myrone, “Prudery, Pornography and the Victorian Nude (or, what do we think the butler saw?)” in Smith, *Exposed*, 23-35.

⁸⁵ Smith, *Exposed*, 11, 23, 25; Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence*, 31-32; Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 2.

⁸⁶ Myrone, “Prudery, Pornography and the Victorian Nude (or, what do we think the butler saw?)” in Smith, *Exposed*, 25.

⁸⁷ Smith, *Exposed*, 23.

⁸⁸ Foucault, “We ‘other Victorians’” in *A History of Sexuality*, 1 -14.

⁸⁹ Some examples of popular TV shows and literature: BBC’s *Desperate Romantics*; BBC’s *Tipping the Velvet*; Nicols, *Silken Chains*; Hughes, *Victorians Undone*; Marcus, *The Other Victorians*.

The Female Nude (2002), largely disregarded the Victorian period as unenlightened when it came to female nudity, and in the case of the latter, a visual demonstration of male hegemony.⁹⁰ Building on the stereotype already outlined, the result is a modern viewer often regarding a nineteenth century nude artwork as hypocritical pornography disguised as art.⁹¹ This is particularly present in popular discourse on Victorians. For example, the well cited myth of the covered table legs being deemed as shocking to the nineteenth century onlooker, as cited by one Takeover commenter: “Victorians had covered piano legs, and ‘exposed ankle’ photos as porn.”⁹² In the current public consciousness, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, although regarded as beautiful, is also considered a highly sexual work hiding as high art.⁹³ This view was also shared by some of the organisers. Clare Gannaway, in describing a poster featuring a close up image of one of the Nymphs present in the staff entrance, compared it to a pin up girl: “would you really want to go to work and be confronted by a page three girl when you open the door.”⁹⁴ Even those decrying the removal of the work believed in this stereotype, as displayed by Jonathan Jones’ comment: “Even a kinky old Victorian perv has his right to paint soft porn nymphs.”⁹⁵

2.4 The English Nude

Now that the current-day conception of the Victorian nude has been addressed, the perception of the nude within the late nineteenth century context must be examined. While the nude was a thriving subject on the continent, the popular discourses on morality and art meant that its production in Britain was slow to take.⁹⁶ However, by the end of century, the nude as an art subject had gone from a rare taboo in English galleries to a well-established scene in the academy exhibition.⁹⁷

The growing acceptance of the subject was down to a new definition and theorisation of the nude ratified for a specifically Victorian context. This ‘English nude’ was a carefully

⁹⁰ Clarke, Kenneth. *The Nude*; Nead, Lynda. *The Female Nude*.

⁹¹ Myrone, “Prudery, Pornography and the Victorian Nude (or, what do we think the butler saw?)” in Smith, *Exposed*, 25.

⁹² ‘Eric D’, reply to comment no. 52, in Manchester Art Gallery. “Presenting the female body.”

⁹³ This can be shown in the language used in the following articles: BBC News, “Victorian nymphs painting back on display after censorship row”; Tawadros, “Removing Nymphs From a Gallery is Provocative – But Does Not Merit Contempt”; Pidd, “Pre-Raphaelite ‘Soft-Porn’ Painting Back on View After Outcry”; Jones, “Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed from a Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?”

⁹⁴ Manchester Art Gallery “Manchester After Hours.”

⁹⁵ Jones. “Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed from a Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?”

⁹⁶ See section 1.3 on discourse on morality and art; Howard, “William Blake: The Antique, Nudity, and Nakedness.” 117; Thomas, “Icons of Desire”, 24.

⁹⁷ This refers to British produced nudes. There were of course nudes imported from the continent in historical collections, that were held to different standards; Edwards, “Edmond Gosse and the Victorian Nude”, 29.

delineated category, treading the line between beauty and vulgarity, worked out through theoretical discourse and debate by influential art world figures.⁹⁸ Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) and other classicists' critical framework for considering the female nude was based on concepts of Platonic ideal body and Kantian 'ideal form', where seeking perfection in art transcends the material to create high art. As Reynolds states:

“His [the artist's] eye being enabled to distinguish the accidental deficiencies [...] he makes out an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original; [...] This idea of the perfect state of nature, which the artist calls the ideal beauty, is the great leading principle by which works of genius are conducted.”⁹⁹

By the mid-nineteenth century however, John Ruskin proposed that art, aesthetics, and morality were connected and informed each other. According to Ruskin, certain types of art, those which sought for 'Truth', could improve the moral core of a viewer, and conversely art that was flamboyant and excessive led to a degradation in values.¹⁰⁰ Ruskin believed the nude in particular was at risk of such excessiveness, stating in his *Modern Painters*, volume II: “from the very fear and doubt with which we approach the nude, it becomes expressive of evil; [...] out of which, I believe, nothing can come but moral enervation and mental paralysis.”¹⁰¹ However, by the late nineteenth century, Ruskin's aesthetic framework fell out of popularity in favour of an approach to art that denied any meaning or moral implication beyond its aesthetic appeal, what was now called Aestheticism. This new academic attitude towards the nude was demonstrated in Edward Poynter's *Ten Lectures*, 1879, where he states that beauty was purely an aesthetic, not a moral, issue:

“if we insist too much upon the moral character of the impressions of beauty, we should have to admit that the man in whom they excite the most rapturous moral enthusiasm is of necessity the greatest artist, rather than he who is distinguished by his perceptive and discriminatory gift.”¹⁰²

Whilst the 'English Nude' had been legitimised in the eyes of the Academicians, the debate still continued amongst members of the public. This occurred most notably in what has now been labelled the “British Matron” letters of 1885 to *The Times* which featured many of the

⁹⁸ Smith, *The Victorian Nude*. 3-6.

⁹⁹ Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art*, III; Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*. 4-9. Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 186.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, *The Victorian Nude*. 112.

¹⁰¹ Ruskin, “Modern Painters, II”, 198

¹⁰² Poynter, *Ten Lectures*. 79-80 quoted in Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 165.

theories of the distinction between the naked and the nude discussed earlier in this chapter.¹⁰³ Thus, the English nude became an amalgamation of a century of theory and debate, largely embracing its aesthetic value while also containing a restrained manner aimed at preserving a sense of morality in contrast to more risqué nudes of the continent.¹⁰⁴

To comply with theoretics justifying the nudes display, an artwork had to follow a certain set of standards. The nude could not be shown as a subject in itself, but instead was facilitated by a classical setting, which could counteract the potential moral ambiguity of the exposed body with the example of the higher values the ancients were believed to have possessed.¹⁰⁵ As Jane Thomas explains, the result was that academic painters did not wish to emulate the contemporary human form, but rather bring life to the perfected classical one. Thus, nudes were deliberately likened to antique statuary, as exemplified by Arthur Hacker's work in room 10, *Syrinx* (Fig 19). Classical sculpture and their plaster casts were the first introduction academic art students had to studying the human body, long before they were introduced to life studies, and so it is logical to see how when moving to the live human form this mode of representation would carry forward.¹⁰⁶

To add to this conception, it is interesting to note that upon a larger survey of nineteenth century paintings, those chosen to be presented in the full nude are drawn from limited subject matter. This occurrence can be explained by the nude being used as a costume for specific roles in literary and mythological subjects which was influenced by two factors, namely sculpture and theatre. The relationship between neo-classicist painting, theatre, specifically the tableaux vivant, and the nude is explored by Rosemary Barrow in her study "Toga Plays and Tableaux Vivant", which grants a unique insight into the Victorian assessment of the nude and the naked.¹⁰⁷ An internal logic was applied to this theatrical setting to explain the nude costume: what need would a mythological creature, beyond human

¹⁰³ This dialogue highlights how the concept of the nude was representative of issues of class and education. British Matron's objections were seen as the result of a deep misunderstanding of the basis of artistic truth and beauty. The British Matron, "Letter to the Editor", *The Times* (20 May 1885); Common Sense, "Letter to the Editor", *The Times* (21 May 1885); O'Neill, "The Painting of Nudes and Evolutionary Theory", 541-550; Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *Exposed*, 19.

¹⁰⁵ The connection to antiquity, specifically Ancient Greece, was more than an aesthetic of replication of surviving sculpture but was ideologically based on ideas of Greek artistic production. As one writer stated in *The Art Journal* in 1874: "[t]he aim of the great sculptors of Greece and Rome was to impress upon their works mind, dignity, and perfect anatomy; and the nude subject was secondary to the mental fascination and dignified repose of the figure"; Anonymous, 'Review of the society of painters in watercolours'. *The Spectator*, (8 May 1880): 593, quoted in Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 186; W.M., "Letter to the Editor", *The Art Journal* (March, 1874): 190.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 34; Smith, *Exposed*, 17.

¹⁰⁷ Barrow, "Toga Plays and Tableaux Vivants", 209-226.

shame, have of clothing?¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the nude as a costume worked on two levels: it evoked the same ideas of high art as seen in painting or sculpture, and it was a visual feature that assisted in the identification of the role of the character, much like a crown for a king or halo for an angel.

From this brief outline it becomes apparent the variety of narratives, theories and interpretations of the female nude subject that existed in the late nineteenth century which no longer exists in the mind of a present day audience. The next section will take a more specific look at the existence of a female presence in the nineteenth century which has often been omitted in feminist critique.

2.5 The Femme Fatale

The first point of discussion raised by the curators in the noticeboard replacing *Hylas and the Nymphs* display stated that some of the works in gallery 10 presented the femme fatale figure, a subject they wished to challenge (Fig 9).¹⁰⁹ Room 10's introductory label (App 2), highlights furthermore the idea of the femme fatale figure as an expression of male anxiety over women's rights. Sonia Boyce felt similarly about the femme fatale subjects visible in room 10: "There seemed to be two roles played by women: femmes fatales, driving men to their deaths, or figures of beauty in quiet contemplation, but without being active agents."¹¹⁰ The femme fatale became a particular target for Feminism in analysis of the character's appearance in early twentieth century cinema, such as in Mary Ann Doane's publication *Femmes Fatales* (1991).¹¹¹ This perception of the femme fatale, however, is now being challenged, particularly in light of third and fourth wave Feminism's focus on female empowerment, with more nuanced interpretations of her representation being suggested.¹¹²

The femme fatale figure can be defined as a beautiful but ultimately dangerous woman. She became an extremely popular subject in art at the end of the nineteenth century, featured as characters from literature such as Circe, Cleopatra, and Salome and more general mythological figures such as sirens, lamias, and nymphs.¹¹³ The connection between women's rights and the femme fatale is based on the correlation between the growth of the

¹⁰⁸ Exemplified in an anecdote included in the Art Journal "two young girls the other morning were looking at a very beautiful engraving of an undraped form[...] said one 'it should have a frock on'. 'A frock' repeated the other indignantly, 'why she is an angel – a pure holy angel – what can she want of clothes'; Shaw, "The Nude in Statuary", 227.

¹⁰⁹ Notice board hung in Manchester Art Gallery in replacement of *Hylas and the Nymphs* (Fig 9).

¹¹⁰ Boyce in Higgin's interview, "The Vitriol was Really Unhealthy."

¹¹¹ Doane, *Femmes Fatales*.

¹¹² See introduction "Feminist Waves."

¹¹³ Weidmann, "Die doppelte Salome", 158-159.

women's rights movement and the popularity of the dangerous women in pictorial imagery. This interpretation of the subject is a common one, largely based on the writings of Bram Dijkstra, who believes the subject came about in response to the proximity of lower classes, the increase of prostitution, foreign invasion and the rise of Feminism.¹¹⁴ Indeed, there was much anxiety at the turn of the century over the 'woman question', which was seen as a challenge to fundamental institutes such as marriage and work.¹¹⁵ Male fear of female sexual appetite was wide spread since the later Middle-Ages, and, as industrialisation had brought the visibility of women to the fore along with increasing demands for female rights, this lead to a spike in misogyny.¹¹⁶ As debate on gender roles increased, so too did the figurative subject on the walls of the academy. These figures became increasingly polarised representations of gender, the femme fatale being only one side of this divergence, countered by the equally popular image of the woman bound, such as Millais's notorious *Knight Errant* (1870).¹¹⁷

There is reason to believe, however, that the femme fatale subject may not be as black and white as Dijkstra makes out, the first being that not all femme fatales' typology is the same. There is a significant difference in the representation of non-human creatures such as nymphs and lamias than dangerous human women such as Circe and Clytaemnestra. The former's figure is always close to the ground, sitting, kneeling, or even crawling while gazing upward at their victim with an innocent face and no sense of the violence to come. Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* (Fig 4) and *La Belle Dame sans Merci* (Fig 27) are examples of this type. The latter are women of authority and agency, calm, confident, elevated in composition and often holding a symbol or object suggesting their use of violence, such as Waterhouse's *Circe Offering the Cup to Odysseus* (Fig 26) and John Collier's *Clytaemnestra* (Fig 25).

Furthermore, the nineteenth century conception of such painted figures was closely linked to aesthetic concepts such as the Beautiful and the Sublime. First crystalised by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century, these concepts were heavily

¹¹⁴ Dijkstra, "Preface" in *Idols of Perversity*.

¹¹⁵ The ideology surrounding gender roles in the period revolved largely around the concept of separate spheres, where the professional world of work and business were male and the domestic, private sphere was female. Ideals, however, did not equate to practice and within the working class most women worked, and even within the middle class art was often seen as an area where these spheres could overlap. Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 26, 167, 199; Montfort, "Louise Jopling," 30; Cherry, *Painting Women*:. 8-10, 121.

¹¹⁶ Mattick, "Beautiful and Sublime", 298

¹¹⁷ Male imagery saw an equal spike in popularity and polarisation, with the muscular, heroic nude associated with classicism and the androgynous, effeminate male characters so often associated with the *fin de siècle*; Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 167, 173.

gendered: the characteristics of the Beautiful – delicacy, smallness and quietness – suggests femininity; the characteristics of the Sublime – loudness, hardness and vastness, awe and fear – being nineteenth century male characteristics.¹¹⁸ From this brief review of ideals alone, one can see that many femme fatales, particularly the human ones, reflect more of the masculine rather than feminine characteristics. The femme fatale, therefore, is a synthesis of characteristics of both the Sublime and the Beautiful, a paradoxical creature who represents the blurring definitions of gender norms in the late nineteenth century.¹¹⁹

This mix of admirable and undesirable characteristics in a woman suggests that the late nineteenth century femme fatale cannot be simply conceived as a negative representation of fear in the face of increased women's rights, but a highly complex and nuanced subject. This more modern concept of the femme fatale as a potentially empowering figure was cited by a number of responses to the Takeover: "it also demonstrates a recognition of the power of women and suggests certainly fear and maybe awe. I quite like that."¹²⁰ Another commenter noted the lack of nuance in this interpretation: "An extraordinary and baffling misreading of Victorian art to assert without evidence that passive decoration and femme fatale were the only alternatives in the depiction of women."¹²¹

In summary, gallery 10's theme of display, "in Pursuit of Beauty" is outdated in terms of the narrative it presents. Yet, judged from the public response, the feminist reading for the targeting of the subject matter within the paintings is also potentially dated and struggles to empathise with contemporary forms of Feminism. This resulted in the audience being unable to sympathise with the original display, as well as the Takeover's interpretation.

¹¹⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.; Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*; Mattick, "Beautiful and Sublime", 293-303; Fjelkestam, "En-Gendering the Sublime", 20-30; Guyer, *Immanuel Kant*, 16

¹¹⁹ Note that the Sublime femme fatale is conceptually different to the feminine sublime, which Burke described as 'vile' and 'swinish'. This further suggests the femme fatale is not a wholly negative image, due to their idealised physical appearance; Mattick, "Beautiful and Sublime." 299; Fjelkestam, "En-Gendering the Sublime", 22.

¹²⁰ 'Ali Northover', comment no. 199, Manchester Art Gallery, "Presenting the Female Body."

¹²¹ 'Loan and Cynthia', comment no. 220, Manchester Art Gallery, "Presenting the Female Body."

2.6 John William Waterhouse

Now that the broader conceptions of the Victorians and their representation of the female form have been explored, it is necessary to address Waterhouse's current reputation in contrast to his historical one. While Waterhouse's work was specifically chosen from Room 10 due to its popularity, the Takeover gave rise to much discussion over the artist's work and style. John William Waterhouse had an artistic career that met with success, a quick Academicianship and a swift decline into posthumous obscurity in favour of more modern artists of the early nineteenth century.¹²² His current reputation is, as put by Simon Goldhill, of a "chocolate box" artist: a producer of pretty and somewhat vapid imagery whose content is largely decorative.¹²³ This places him firmly outside the cultural excitement of modernism that was occurring at the *fin-de-siècle*. Those writing on the Takeover often described Waterhouse's work in unflattering terms: Gilane Tawadros called *Hylas and the Nymphs* "mediocre" and Jonathan Jones says it "is no masterpiece."¹²⁴ This is reflected not only within the response to the Takeover, but in reviews of other exhibitions of Waterhouse's work. Cian O'Neill, in his review of *A Modern Pre-Raphaelite* exhibit of Waterhouse in the Royal Academy, denies the titular claim of 'modern' describing Waterhouse's works as "frothy, pretty, academic painting."¹²⁵ Julian Treuherz, in his review of the same exhibit, summarised: "he could make memorable images, but he made them too pretty."¹²⁶

While deemed unexciting by those more interested in the avant-garde, his work remains exceedingly popular among the general public and of high value, with the sale of his *Cecelia* at £6.6 million having set a record for the highest-selling Victorian work.¹²⁷ *The Lady of Shalott* postcard is the bestselling item in the Tate's gift shop, and *Hylas and the Nymphs* postcard is likewise a popular item in Manchester Art Gallery.¹²⁸ The latter's popularity in fact led it to be sold out in the gift shop, sparking the incorrect rumour that the Gallery had removed it from sale as part of the Takeover.¹²⁹ Comments made by the general public are overall filled with a strong love for Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs*, many of which directly related the work to their life or their relationship with Manchester Art Gallery as an

¹²² In an auction of his work in 1926, only 10 years after his death, his *Ophelia* only fetched £450; Prettejohn, *J.W. Waterhouse*, 21.

¹²³ Goldhill, "The Art of Reception", 64.

¹²⁴ Tawadros, "Removing Nymphs From a Gallery is Provocative – But Does Not Merit Contempt". Jones, "Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed from a Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?"

¹²⁵ O'Neill, "Sweet doing nothing", 19.

¹²⁶ Treuherz, *Pre-Raphaelite Paintings from the Manchester City Art Gallery*, 719.

¹²⁷ Prettejohn, *J.W. Waterhouse*, 21.

¹²⁸ Gunzburg, "Interview: John William Waterhouse Beyond the Modern Pre-Raphaelite", 70; Prettejohn, *J.W. Waterhouse*, 21.

¹²⁹ Alistair Hudson and curator Clare Gannaway, "Manchester After Hours"

institution. One, 'Sophia', commented: "During my chemo I came to see 'Hylas and the Nymphs' whenever I could (about once in three weeks, because I was in a lot of pain). It soothed me and helped me through."¹³⁰ Another, 'Kate', proclaimed: "I can't explain how much this painting means to me, one of the only happy memories I have from school was visiting this gallery and seeing this painting."¹³¹ While Waterhouse's academic reviews are lukewarm, these responses indicate that his work is deeply important to the citizens of Manchester.¹³²

When regarding Waterhouse's oeuvre, the predominance of female characters is striking, even compared to other academic artists of the time. Waterhouse's frequent representation of women combined with a lack of primary textual data to explain it, has been interpreted as revealing an innate fear of women. As one reviewer of his monographic show *Enchanted by Women* stated: "a part of Waterhouse deified women while another part of him was terrified of their spiritual and sexual potency."¹³³ Yet, despite the critique regularly laid against him as obsessed with the female form, the only time a character appears unclothed is under the title of nymph or lamia.¹³⁴ As already discussed, this nudity can largely be attributed to costume rather than male voyeurism. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain to what degree Waterhouse's works were a manifestation of a personal anxiety towards women or merely a reflection of the current artistic practice of the time, or indeed both.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ 'Sophia', comment no. 75 on Manchester Art Gallery. "Presenting the female body."

¹³¹ 'Kate', comment no. 92 on Manchester Art Gallery. "Presenting the female body."

¹³² Ironically, this divided reputation is the exact opposite of how Waterhouse was viewed by his contemporaries, which was as elite, academic painter whose work's often obscure source material made his paintings accessible only to the educated few. Unknown. "Mr J. W. Waterhouse's Painting 'Hylas and the Nymphs,'" 243; Prettejohn, *J.W. Waterhouse*. 19; Unknown. "John William Waterhouse." *American Art News*, 4; Goldhill, "The Art of Reception" In *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity*, 25-26.

¹³³ Peeters. "Enchanted by Women: John William Waterhouse (1849-1917)." 89

¹³⁴ The nude here referring to a fully unclothed figure, not a draped or partially exposed, in order to simplify the definition of where a figure partially draped or in translucent cloth goes from being clothed to unclothed. Figures based on Waterhouse's largest monographic exhibition covering works from the entirety of his career, *The Modern Pre-Raphaelite*, out of fifty-four works featuring the female figure only five appeared in the full nude and in each case the character was that of a nymph, siren or lamia.

¹³⁵ The financial motivation in producing such works can also be taken into consideration. Waterhouse's early works, when the subject matter was more focused on medieval or Renaissance literature, were not met with great success, however when he returned in 1891 with the femme fatale subject he garnered fast and continuous recognition and sales. Furthermore, Jenkyns points to the fact that there is much documentary evidence suggesting that the nude sold at a much higher price than their clothed counterparts. Jenkyns brief survey of the highest priced works of the 19th century came to the conclusion that they were all nude. He estimated having a nude in a painting raised the value almost £50,000; Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence*, 28.; Prettejohn, *J.W. Waterhouse*, 17.

2.7 *Hylas and the Nymphs*

Now that the broader context of Waterhouse's oeuvre has been made clear, the specifically targeted work must be examined. *Hylas and the Nymphs* contains all the elements typical of a Waterhouse work of the 1890s: verisimilitude of botanical detail, a mythological subject, and the homogenised and idealised femme fatale figure. The scene depicted is the myth from *Theocritus* 13.¹³⁶ Hylas, a companion to the Argonauts and young lover of Hercules, is sent to find water. On his search he comes across a group of Naiads (water nymphs) bathing. Entranced by their beauty, he is lured into the pond and subsequently drowned, his body never to be found by his distraught lover.¹³⁷ Waterhouse, as with many of his depictions of femme fatales, displays the moment of enrapture, before the violence. Seven nymphs gaze at Hylas, some even grasping the cloth of his robe or his hand, gestures which visualise the clear magnetic pull of the water which fills the composition. There is no sense of the violence to come: the creatures' faces are almost inhumanly innocent, a calm before the storm. The subject was a popular one, also painted by William Etty and Henrietta Rae (Fig 22, 23). These other versions demonstrate a specific visual language used to convey the scene, its repetition leaving the subject immediately identifiable to its audience.

The conception of the nymphs, their lack of clothing, youthful features and idealised proportions were a main focus of criticism for the feminist theory behind the Takeovers organisation.¹³⁸ Their bodies are those of the classical statuesque ideal seen throughout room 10: slim, hairless, and colourless. The youth of the women was a particular point of contention for modern critics, some describing the nymphs and other Waterhouse women as: "pubescent girls dreamily exposing themselves."¹³⁹ Charlotte Higgins, in her article interviewing Sonia Boyce about the Takeover, comments that the nymphs were: "objects of titillation for the implied heterosexual male viewer [...] presumably modelled by some rather young girl, or girls."¹⁴⁰ Here again we see the influence of current events impacting the

¹³⁶ Goldhill, "The Art of Reception" 52.

¹³⁷ Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, 158-159.

¹³⁸ The feminist theory behind this targeting will be explored further in chapter three.

¹³⁹ Goldhill, "The Art of Reception" 25.

¹⁴⁰ This article is particularly interesting as in the same paragraph that such generalisations of the Victorian attitudes occur, Higgins provides a note on the painting of Sappho to contextualise the existence of such a work and how it came about. This demonstrate a clear biased towards fleshing out figures deemed progressive, such as Sappho, but condemning those perceived as traditional and conservative such as Waterhouse. Higgins, "The Vitriol Was Really Unhealthy."

perception of a historical work, specifically the discourse around the Balthus exhibit as discussed in chapter one.¹⁴¹

Many members of the public were confused by the choice of *Hylas and the Nymphs* as the work to be removed. As stated by Gannaway, the work was selected for two reasons: it was the most popular work in the room, and so the most recognisable one to take down, and the enlarged version featured in the staff entrance had the alleged sexualisation within the work fresh in the mind of the staff when considering their choice.¹⁴² However, the themes and characters presented were ones that in many ways contradicted the feminist agenda, in the form of a homosexual protagonist and the potential empowering message of the potent agency and sexuality of the nymphs. These multiple interpretations of the work, beyond its objectification of women, were expressed on the post-it notes, in the media and online. Professor Matthew Leigh, of Oxford College, referencing the title of the room, points out that it is in fact Hylas who is being objectified in the painting: “the youthful Hylas is about to be drawn to his death by the sexually predatory nymphs. The pursued and objectified body is male.”¹⁴³ Another commenter, ‘James Guernsey’, was also left confused due to the story upon which the work is based: “Isn’t it more accurate to regard the painting as an image of female power? [...] They are hardly a ‘passive decorative form’ but rather forceful enough to abduct one of the favourites of Heracles.”¹⁴⁴ This empowered interpretation was shared by many, including one commenter, who stated: “I can understand the historical context of the subjugation of women for the male gaze, but in today’s context of women shaking off gendered exceptions, a whole exhibition of murderesses in classic artwork would be badass.”¹⁴⁵

Ultimately, such discourse on the display, and alternative meanings for the works was precisely what curator Clare Gannaway originally wanted the Takeover to spark. Although the responses rarely aligned with the critique of the organisers of the Takeover, and almost unanimously condemned the removal of the work, the event revealed the public’s level of interaction beyond the information provided to them with the works on display.

¹⁴¹ Waterhouse’s preferred model, is known only by a name on a 1905 preparatory sketch of a Lamia, “Ms Foster.” Ms Foster was not an adolescent when she modelled for Waterhouse, instead she provided a base upon which the artist formed his own idealised form of beauty. Miss Foster’s face has been identified by leading scholar Elizabeth Prettejohn to be in sixty of Waterhouse’s works over the span of twenty eight years. This resulted in a Waterhouse style of woman that, no matter the model, had a unified appearance and typology; Prettejohn, *J.W. Waterhouse*, 20; Baker, “The “lamia” in the art of JW Waterhouse”, 19, 20.

¹⁴² Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 10 and 11.

¹⁴³ The Guardian, “Banning Artworks Such As *Hylas and the Nymphs* Is A Long, Slippery Slope.”

¹⁴⁴ ‘James Guernsey’, comment no. 122, on Manchester Art Gallery. “Presenting the female body.”

¹⁴⁵ ‘Surrealistic’, comment no. 84, on Manchester Art Gallery. “Presenting the female body.”

2.8 Conclusion:

In the press release page, one of the best sources for public opinions and responses to the Takeover, 101 comments out of 902 posts mention the term ‘context’. Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, the interpretation of this context varies widely, by the organisers of the Takeover, the art critics, the media and the general public. These ‘politics of looking’, the context of the present informing one’s interpretation of the past, has been examined in relation to three issues: the ‘English’ nude, the femme fatale and John William Waterhouse.

The current-day stereotype of prudish or hypocritical Victorian attitude when it comes to sexuality is a product of retrospective re-characterisations of the period in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries carried out largely for political reasons. This chapter, with only a brief overlook of the breadth and variety of concepts that fed into a late nineteenth century viewing of a nude artwork, demonstrated how such a characterisation generalises and misinterprets what was a subject of contention and complexity at the time. The targeting of the late century representation of women being as a ‘decorative form’ or hypocritical pornography also serves to gloss over the potential variety of readings of the subject. Waterhouse’s current reputation as un-avant-garde and a ‘chocolate box’ artist often leads to a dismissal of the potential depth of themes his work presents.

Overall, the Takeover highlighted the presence of a certain idea of ‘Victorian’, be it positive or negative, in the public consciousness, including that of the Takeover organisers. It further demonstrated the potential for an audience to form multiple nuanced interpretations of a display no matter the form such display takes, be it a linear, traditional narrative or a radical feminist interpretation. Clare Gannaway has repeatedly expressed the desire to democratise the curation of Manchester Art Gallery and the narratives it expresses to create greater involvement with the display and to strengthen the relationship between the public and the collection. The breadth of interaction with the event of the Takeover, while exhibiting some potential issues with the Gallery taking a political stance on the collection, successfully demonstrates the public craving for involvement and expression within the public gallery.

Chapter 3: Feminism and Censorship

“Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed from Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?”, such was the title of Jonathan Jones’ article that was identified by the curators as the starting point for the media outcry over censorship that continued for weeks after the event.¹⁴⁶ Jones, whose piece was based on another article written in the Guardian, did not contact the gallery for details of the event. The resulting piece was sensationalist in language, clearly intended to cause a stir: “My, what a utopia these new puritans have in mind – a world that backtracks 60 years or more into an era of repression and hypocrisy.”¹⁴⁷ The news that Manchester Art Gallery had taken a work down from display in response to #MeToo soon became international news. Sonia Boyce and the Gallery unequivocally denied these accusations, stating that the action had been taken out of context, and that the removal was purely for the creation of an artwork.¹⁴⁸ Rather than being a discussion on patriarchal structures of display, the Takeover as an event became entirely consumed by the label of censorship.

The specific labelling and separation of ‘women’s studies’ or ‘feminist art theory’, is symbolic of the way the concepts are treated with regards to larger discourses on art.¹⁴⁹ The devotion of special meetings, issues of journals or chapter sub-headings to feminist interpretations implies that it is a marginalised subgroup of study.¹⁵⁰ One can address the feminist ‘issue’ without fully synthesising its criticisms into the overall framework. Thus, much of the literature from the 1970s is still being used as the basis of feminist art criticism fifty years later, although the social situations that produced this literature have changed dramatically in that time. Therefore, there must be something innate about feminist art theory that keeps it marginalised as opposed to feminist action in other areas of society.¹⁵¹ Griselda Pollock, a founder of feminist theory, tackled this issue in her 2016 paper, ‘Is Feminism a Trauma, a Bad Memory, or a Virtual Future?’ Drawing on her retrospective view of forty

¹⁴⁶ Clare Gannaway and Alistair Hudson “Manchester After Hours”; A recent study tracking and analysing the growth of the Takeover mentions on Twitter also demonstrates how Jones’s article was a instigating factor; Arias, “From takeover to debacle: An analysis of the Nymphgate network using Twitter data”, 132-150.

¹⁴⁷ Jones, “Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed from a Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?”

¹⁴⁸ Higgins, “The Vitriol Was Really Unhealthy”.

¹⁴⁹ These fields of study originated in the second wave feminist movement begun in the 1980s. See Introduction “Feminist Waves”

¹⁵⁰ Waugh, “Analytic Aesthetics and Feminist Aesthetics: Neither/Nor?”, 317.

¹⁵¹ This is in reference to political feminist activism which has had success in creating societal change since the late nineteenth century. #MeToo bringing justice to survivors of sexual abuse is just one example this success.

years of feminist writing, she describes how feminist theory is innately traumatic to the subject to which it is applied, as it contests the order on which that subject stands.¹⁵² This makes it difficult to be absorbed by said subject in the long term: “those to whom trauma happens have no mechanism through which to digest or metabolise the excessive event.”¹⁵³ This is perfectly exemplified through the actions and reactions of the 2018 Takeover. The feminist basis of the Takeover questions the foundation of thought the collection had stood upon for the previous twenty years, including standard ideas concerning Victorian art, such as the acceptance of the female figure as a demonstration of concepts of Beauty. When the Takeover quite literally removed this, the fierce and personal reactions from the public demonstrate the resulting trauma from such action.

Thus, this chapter will be divided into two parts. First it will discuss theory and literature behind the feminist criticism of historic works and its potential pitfalls. This will outline what can make the application of feminist theory so traumatic to the subject, thus resulting in strong reactions, in this case the cry of censorship. Then, the differing definitions of censorship shall be outlined as well as their relation to the Takeover. The link between art, pornography and Feminism will also be explored in light of the language used to discuss Waterhouse’s works. In conclusion the concepts and reactions to the Takeover will be assessed in order to demonstrate the difficulties in generating discourse on the basis of removal rather than augmentation.

3.1 Feminist Art Criticism

Feminist art criticism has always had an eye on the historical art world and its canon, which was and still remains overwhelmingly full of male artists. Feminist art history is agreed to have begun with Linda Nochlin’s now canonical 1971 essay, “Why have there been no great women artists?”, which questioned the art historical canon’s exclusion of female artists.¹⁵⁴ This began a feminist investigation into the historical power structures which prevented or limited women’s entrance into the artworld. However, the solution to a patriarchal canon was not the mere insertion of female artists into the historic record. As argued by Griselda Pollock’s *Vision and Difference*, the conceptual, patriarchal basis of art history must be re-evaluated in order to set new, equal terms for artistic discussion.¹⁵⁵ Yet,

¹⁵² Pollock, “Is Feminism a Trauma, a Bad Memory, or a Virtual Future?”, 27.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Fields, “Frontiers in Feminist Art History”, 4.

¹⁵⁵ Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, 1.

there is a fine line to be tread between questioning the structures producing historical art and entirely dismissing them, as described by Pollock:

“The same social system which produced this ideology of domesticity embraced and made vivid by millions of women, also generated the feminist revolt with a different set of definitions of women’s possibilities and ambitions.”¹⁵⁶

This theoretical flaw is exemplified by Deborah Cherry’s analysis of her own feminist intervention essay, “Women as a sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature.”¹⁵⁷ The essay proposes the separation of the historical person Elizabeth Siddal, and the pre-Raphaelite sign ‘Siddal’, the muse of many of the brotherhood in the 1860s. ‘Siddal’ is memorialised as a symbol and muse of masculine creativity, while the woman as a historical figure is forgotten outside of this. Cherry points out that this approach omits the potential of ‘Siddal’, when conceived by a woman, as a feminist symbol, “a powerful and seductive signifier in another order of pleasure and desire which then spoke from the margins.”¹⁵⁸ The potential for such a reading by a female audience can be seen in the sudden popularity of Pre-Raphaelite dress, a looser-fitting style than the vogue fashion, which could act as a demonstration of counter-culture or alternative lifestyle for women. The Pre-Raphaelite High Art Maiden, such as ‘Siddal’, had considerable impact on contemporary fashion of the mid-1870s, as related by Justin McCarthy in the *Galaxy* of 1876:

“We have now in London pre-Raphaelite painters, pre-Raphaelite poets, pre-Raphaelite novelists, pre-Raphaelite young ladies, pre-Raphaelite hair, eyes, complexion, dress, decorations, window curtains, chairs, tables, knives, forks and coal-scuttles.”¹⁵⁹

Anderson makes clear that these Pre-Raphaelite women were individualistic, independent, alternative and self-seeking in their femininity as opposed to the typical ‘angel in the house’ who was purely nurturing, selfless and dedicated to caring for others.¹⁶⁰ This example demonstrates how woman consumed culture in a way that was specific and separate to men, despite the patriarchal structure in which they existed.

¹⁵⁶ Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, 10.

¹⁵⁷ Cherry and Pollock, “Woman as a sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: a study of the representation of Elizabeth Siddall”, 206-27; Cherry, *Painting Women*, 14.

¹⁵⁸ Cherry, Deborah, *Painting Women*, 14

¹⁵⁹ Anderson. “Life into art and art into life.” 442.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 446.

3.2 Feminist Aesthetics

To fully assess feminist approaches to painting, the theoretical aesthetic basis must first be outlined. Feminist art historical criticism is based upon feminist aesthetics, that is, the philosophical basis upon which art is evaluated. Feminist aesthetics fundamentally relies on the link of aesthetics to everyday beliefs in life.¹⁶¹ Thus, a representation of a woman cannot be divorced from the ideas of the artist, nor the wider societal system in which the work was created. This has been termed by Alison Smith as the ‘principle of worldly attachment’.¹⁶² By arguing for a ‘worldly’ basis to all aesthetics, feminists challenge the neutrality of the objective and universal statements on beauty.¹⁶³ Under feminist aesthetics, one cannot admire the beauty of the works without also having consideration for any real-world implications they may carry for the status of women. Sonia Boyce’s discussion about the relationship between historic and contemporary art suggests that she also holds this connection, stating: “In my mind, the past never sits still and contemporary art’s job is increasingly about exploring how art intersects with civic life.”¹⁶⁴ This leaves the feminist approach to the works in room 10 as fundamentally different to the concept of art with which the late nineteenth century works were created, based on aestheticism’s separation of art and ethics as discussed in chapter two.

A contentious issue within feminist aesthetics is the portrayal of the nude body, and fears that its sexualisation re-affirms male authority over women, thus making the work anti-feminist.¹⁶⁵ The targeting of this subject in particular has been a destructive one to canonical art history, as the nude, as put by Bernard Berenson: “[...] has through all the ages in our world [...] been the chief concern of the art of visual representation.”¹⁶⁶ Lynda Nead’s *The Female Nude* (1992) was created as a feminist answer to the cornerstone treatise on the aesthetics and the nude by Kenneth Clarke.¹⁶⁷ The aim of Nead’s work is to demonstrate how the female nude’s primary goal is: “the containment and regulation of the female sexual body.”¹⁶⁸ Nead uses the ‘principle of worldly attachment’ to argue that the forms of the female nude cannot be separated from social and cultural implications, using the specifics of the representation of the female body to make a broader critique on patriarchal structures

¹⁶¹ Leibowitz, “A Note on Feminist Theories of Representation”, 361; Millner, “Art and Feminism”, 143.

¹⁶² Leibowitz, “A Note on Feminist Theories of Representation”, 361.

¹⁶³ Brand, “Beauty Matters”, 4

¹⁶⁴ Boyce, “Our Removal of Waterhouse’s Naked Nymphs was Art in Action.”

¹⁶⁵ Wentrack, “What’s So Feminist about the Feministische Kunst Internationaal?”, 92-95.

¹⁶⁶ Berenson, *Aesthetics and History in the Visual Arts*, 86.

¹⁶⁷ Nead, *The Female Nude*; Clarke, *The Nude*..

¹⁶⁸ Nead, *The Female Nude*, 6.

throughout history.¹⁶⁹ Importantly, Nead does not abide by the rule of the nude and the naked, as outlined in chapter two, instead stating that the “body is always in representation” and thus always subject to the containment of the male viewer.¹⁷⁰ The perception that art is produced by male artists for the consumption of the male viewer is central to feminist art criticism, in the form of the idea of the ‘male gaze’.

3.3 The Theory of the ‘Gaze’

One cannot read feminist art treatises without coming across the concept of the ‘male gaze’. It is the primary basis of most feminist critique against historical art.¹⁷¹ The idea of gender-separated gazes originally comes from Laura Mulvey’s 1975 discussion on the emotional effect of film.¹⁷² Her psychoanalytical approach, relying heavily on the writings of Freud, suggested that a viewer’s experience of film depended on their gender, as their sex is the root of their unconscious desires and attachments.¹⁷³ Her argument of the ‘male gaze’ was an expansion of the ideas put forth by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), where Berger makes a distinction between the psyche of the male viewer, which is that of the constant surveyor, and the female viewer which must always conceived itself as both the surveyor and the surveyed.¹⁷⁴ Mulvey coined the term ‘male gaze’ in order to signify how the default view of the camera in cinema, and thus the audience, was that of the male point of view.¹⁷⁵ This idea of gendered gazes, particularly that of the default male gaze, was taken by feminist art critics and applied to a wide range of historical art to demonstrate the patriarchal societal structure in which it originated.

Its prevalence as an idea, however, does not mean that it is not problematic in some respects. Mulvey, six years later, wrote a response to her original essay in which, upon further reflection, she decided that her original argument was too exclusionary of the female experience.¹⁷⁶ She goes on to outline how the existence of the ‘female gaze’ can also be a

¹⁶⁹ Nead, *The Female Nude*, 7.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹⁷¹ Millner, “Art and Feminism”, 142.

¹⁷² Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 59-67.

¹⁷³ Leibowitz, “A Note on Feminist Theories of Representation”, 361.

¹⁷⁴ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 44-64.

¹⁷⁵ She suggested that the agency and ability of the viewer was equitable to the male experience, something that was essential to its appeal as a medium as it is made engaging for men and provided access to social power and agency for women that they could not access in her daily life; Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 62-66.

¹⁷⁶ Mulvey, “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ inspired by ‘Duel in the Sun’ (King Vidor, 1946)”, 12-15

driving force in cinema, and furthermore how the idea of the 'look' in general is only one aspect of a much larger system of constructions:

“For the female spectator the situation is more complex and goes beyond a simple mourning for a lost phantasy of omnipotence [...] this metaphor becomes a straitjacket, becoming itself an indicator, a litmus paper, of the problems inevitably activated by any attempt to represent the feminine in a patriarchal society.”¹⁷⁷

Mary Ann Doane, another feminist film theorist, tackled Mulvey's 'gaze' theory in *The Desire to Desire* (1987).¹⁷⁸ Doane discusses the ease of conceiving the male gaze in art but how that of the female gaze is regularly overlooked by both feminist and traditional theorists.¹⁷⁹ She attributes this to the inherent contradictions to the social constructions of female spectatorship, in that their gaze contains the awareness of both the looker and the looked upon.¹⁸⁰ Moore, in *The Female Gaze*, similarly addressed the subject: “if a female gaze exists it does not simply replicate a monolithic and masculine stare, but instead involves a whole variety of looks and glances – an interplay of possibilities.”¹⁸¹

The idea of the gaze in relation to late nineteenth century art, and specifically that of Waterhouse, can best be explored with a comparison to another contemporary artist, Henrietta Rae. Rae is one of a number of female artists in the late nineteenth century who was finding success working in an academic mode similar to that of Waterhouse.¹⁸² By 1897, one-fifth of all exhibitors were female, and many, including Rae, were favourably hung.¹⁸³ Rae's work is particularly notable for her insistence on painting nude figures, despite the taboo on women attending life drawing classes.¹⁸⁴ In fact, her ability to provide life and soul to subjects based on archaeological and mythological figures was thought to have been of higher skill than some of her male counterparts, including Leighton.¹⁸⁵ Henrietta Rae's work provides an interesting foil to the idea of the male gaze, and reveals the potential complexity of the female gaze as suggested by Mulvey. A brief examination of her version of *Hylas and the Water Nymphs* (1909) can demonstrate this. Jo Devereaux compares Rae's painting (Fig

¹⁷⁷ Mulvey. “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ inspired by ‘Duel in the Sun’ (King Vidor, 1946).” 15.

¹⁷⁸ Doane. *The Desire to Desire*. 1987.

¹⁷⁹ Doane. *The Desire to Desire*. 179-183.

¹⁸⁰ This is the same concept of the female gaze proposed by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing*; Doane, *The Desire to Desire*. 29-38; Cherry, *Painting Women*. 114.

¹⁸¹ Suzanne. “Here's looking art you kid” in *The Female Gaze*, 59; Cherry. *Painting Women*. 115.

¹⁸² Kate Greenaway and Evelyn de Morgan are just some other examples.

¹⁸³ Quirk. *Women, Art and Money in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. 81.

¹⁸⁴ Devereux. *The Making of Women Artists in Victorian England*. 213.

¹⁸⁵ Devereux. *The Making of Women Artists in Victorian England*. 215.

23) to Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* (Fig 4) and suggests that Rae's work more directly addresses the fear of female sexuality due to the fleshiness of her figures. Devereaux argues: "Rae's painting both emphasizes the vulnerability of the male figure and reveals its similarities to the female ones [...] in other words, the fear of female sexuality is much more apparent in her painting than in Waterhouse."¹⁸⁶ This again returns to the idea of the female gaze and the sublime femme fatale as discussed in chapter two, and its potential appeal to female viewers. Such an example shows the distinct weakness in the theory of the gaze that Mulvey, Doane and Moore all highlighted. As contemporary Feminism comes to encompass the experiences of class difference, race, sexual and gender identities, the concept of male versus female becomes increasingly complex.¹⁸⁷

Feminist art history and aesthetics all provide the theoretical background when it comes to assessing whether a work of art, contemporary or historical, is problematic from a feminist perspective. While there are nuances, these theories are all based on a set of critical perspectives on art and women in art that reflect a challenge to traditional assessments of female representation.¹⁸⁸ The language of the Takeover boards and that expressed by Sonia Boyce and Clare Gannaway subsequent to the Takeover is drawn from the idea of the male gaze. It is in deciding how to proceed once this critical assessment is complete, however, where avenues of feminist action begin to diverge. The decision to remove works altogether is one of the more radical paths of action that can lead to censorship.

3.4 Defining Censorship

The newspaper headlines covering the removal of *Hylas and the Nymphs* from display all had one accusation: censorship.¹⁸⁹ It was implied by some, outright branded by others, but always present.¹⁹⁰ This reaction was to the bewilderment of the organisers who, although wishing to prompt discussion, did not aim for censorship to be the focus.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Devereux, *The Making of Women Artists in Victorian England*, 221.

¹⁸⁷ An outline of the 'waves' of Feminism and its development to encompass broader definitions of womanhood is outlined in the introduction.

¹⁸⁸ Garber, "Feminist Art Criticism", 13.

¹⁸⁹ Censorship as defined in the introduction: "the suppression or prohibition of any part of books, films, news, etc that are considered politically unacceptable or a threat to society". *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2000.

¹⁹⁰ Lovell, "Manchester Art Gallery Removes Naked Nymphs Painting Because of the Way It Portrays Women"; Brown, "Gallery Removes Naked Nymphs Painting to 'Prompt Conversation'"; *The Guardian*, "Banning Artworks Such As *Hylas and the Nymphs* Is A Long, Slippery Slope"; Pidd, "Pre-Raphaelite 'Soft-Porn' Painting Back on View After Outcry"; Mayer, "Out Of The Picture: Victorian Masterpiece Of Naked Goddesses Is Pulled From Manchester Art Gallery In Wake Of Time's Up Movement."

¹⁹¹ Manchester Art Gallery. "Presenting the female body."

Censorship has, when specifically referring to art, become a dirty word associated with ecclesiastically based obscenity laws or totalitarian and fascist regimes. Radical feminist action which has advocated for enforced societal change has therefore been likened to such historical precedents. This association has become more commonplace, birthing the slur ‘feminazi’, and can be seen in several responses to the 2018 Takeover, such as the likening to the event to Nazi Germany.¹⁹² Katrin Kohl, a professor of German in Oxford University, had her statement making the comparison published in *The Guardian*: “Nazi curators, too, challenged us by removing art from public view because it conflicted with their political aims and puritanical taste.”¹⁹³ Particularly aggressive comments left under the press release made similar connections: “This smacks of the Nazis removing art they considered debauched”;¹⁹⁴ “Can we next expect the Manchester Art Gallery to mount a “Degenerate Art” exhibit like the one the Nazis presented in 1937?.”¹⁹⁵

However, when it comes to curation of an historical collection, censorship becomes a more complex issue, involving heritage management, the creation of narrative, and curatorial responsibility. Therefore, an alternative, more nuanced concept of censorship must be explored. It must be noted, as by Helen Freshwater in *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*, that the academic investigations of censorship are predominantly produced by persons of a liberal standpoint and thus their discussions are predisposed toward critique, and the standpoint that all freedom of speech is good.¹⁹⁶

Michel Levine discusses more subtle forms of censorship, such as self-censorship, in *Writing Through Repression*.¹⁹⁷ Authors that anticipate outrage and censorship will automatically change language in order to avoid such obstacles. Another form of this covert censorship is the pieces that are never published, collected, or displayed in the first place. Carol Jacobsen proposes that: “the automatic lockout of women and artists of colour by art-world systems of education, funding, publication, criticism, hiring and tenure, and the construction of history itself” has enacted a form of censorship.¹⁹⁸ Tirza True Latimer also discusses how to tackle this type of censorship in specific relation to the lack of material on

¹⁹² The comparison is a misunderstanding of Nazi’s censorship of avant-garde works, what they labelled ‘degenerate art’, which was based on different ideological ideas of aesthetics than those proposed by Feminism. The Third Reich highly approved neo-classicism and the nude form in particular; Nelis, “Modernist Neo-classicism and Antiquity in the Political Religion of Nazism.” 475-490; On the Third Reich and Censorship see Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art”, 84-92.

¹⁹³ The Guardian, “Banning Artworks Such As Hylas and the Nymphs Is A Long, Slippery Slope”

¹⁹⁴ ‘Liz Foster’, comment no. 71; Manchester Art Gallery. “Presenting the female body.”

¹⁹⁵ ‘Robert Morris’ comment no. 515; Manchester Art Gallery. “Presenting the female body.”

¹⁹⁶ Müller, *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*. 237

¹⁹⁷ Levine, *Writing through Repression*. 2.

¹⁹⁸ Jacobsen, “Redefining Censorship”, 42-43.

historical female and queer figures, which as a result forces historians to view gaps in documentation as historically consequential: “What if there are no documents, or the documents have been expurgated, sealed, or destroyed? Contending with historical erasure places special demands on feminist and queer researchers.”¹⁹⁹ This form of censorship is a powerful one that prevents the undesired works from being created in the first place, leaving no choice in the curation but to display an exclusionary narrative. Interestingly, Jacobsen also suggests that the assumption of a male white audience is also part of this censorship, silencing female voices.²⁰⁰ In terms of historical display, the potential female artists have been censored long before a collection is established.

Stanley Fish, in *There is No Such Thing as Free Speech*, argues that all texts are generated by a process of selection and exclusion, and thus censorship is a structural necessity.²⁰¹ While Fish was referring to linguistics, this can equally be applied to the act of curation, which also must make choices between what will and will not be displayed in order to create exhibits. A similar point was made by both Clare Gannaway and Alistair Hudson when discussing the labelling of the Takeover as censorship: “when you take the painting down in order to loan it, is that censorship?”.²⁰² The choice of what to display, and thus what not to display, is the basis of curatorship. According to this very literal notion of censorship, all museums are technically censoring what they choose not to put on display.

However, the *Index on Censorship*, an award-winning organisation battling circumstances of censorship globally, states the following:

“Free expression is vital to humanity and the foundation of a free society. It creates the space for the exchange of ideas in the arts, literature, religion, academia, politics, and science, and is essential for other rights like freedom of conscience. Without free expression, ideas cannot be tested. Without free expression, individuals cannot make informed decisions.”²⁰³

This mission statement is a convincing argument against any form of censorship. It suggests a curatorial approach that presents multiple narratives, allowing the viewer to come to their own conclusions. This brings us to the larger question: what stories do museums choose to tell, and how do they make that choice? Exhibitions are inevitably expressions of the values

¹⁹⁹ Latimer, “Improper Objects: performing queer/feminist art/history” in *Otherwise*.

²⁰⁰ Jacobsen, “Redefining Censorship.” 42-43.

²⁰¹ Fish, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech, and It's a Good Thing, Too*, 103-105.

²⁰² Alistair Hudson, “Manchester After Hours.”

²⁰³ Index on Censorship, “About Free Expression.”

of those tasked with the responsibility of curatorial choice. In the case of the Takeover, this is artist and group of staff who organised the event.²⁰⁴ However, it must be remembered that Clare Gannaway wished the Takeover to be a form of democratised curatorship in providing a platform, via the post-it notes, for the public to express their views on the display.²⁰⁵ Indeed, while removing one work, the Takeover event brought public opinion to the fore, in a sense opening up multiple dialogues.

Each of these proposed concepts of censorship leave the 2018 Takeover in an ambiguous position. As a curator, a decision must be made to display certain works over others. The presentation of every interpretation and multiple narratives is often not practical nor desirable when creating a display. However, when it comes to feminist interventions, there is a history of the removal of works deemed unacceptable to their ideology that goes beyond a regular change of display.

3.5 Feminism's History of Censorship

To understand the context around the feminist actions of the Takeover and the reaction to such feminist actions, Feminism's specific history of censorship must also be examined. This history is intertwined with the feminist conception of pornography. This in turn relates to the discussion around *Hylas and the Nymphs* and the works in room 10, whose language of discussion suggests a relation between nude art and pornography in the public psyche. This equation of the artistic nude to porn was made not just by the organisers of the Takeover, but by the public and media who assessed Waterhouse's work.²⁰⁶ Language such as 'naked adolescent girls', 'semi-pornographic', and 'erotic', was used to describe *Hylas and the Nymphs*.²⁰⁷ As already stated, Clare Gannaway compared viewing a poster of *Hylas and the Nymphs* as being confronted with a page three girl.²⁰⁸ This all reveals an equation to modern imagery of women used for sex appeal as seen in advertising, media and pornography.

As already outlined, feminist aesthetics reject the idea of the high art nude being separate to other, less desirable forms of female representation such as pornography. For the purpose of this chapter, pornography will be defined as explicit visual material containing the display of sexual organs or activity for the primary purpose of stimulating sexual

²⁰⁴ Rose, "Shared Journeys Curriculum Theory and Museum Education", 86.

²⁰⁵ Clare Gannaway, appendix 3, interview question 10.

²⁰⁶ Tawadros, "Removing Nymphs From a Gallery is Provocative – But Does Not Merit Contempt."

²⁰⁷ BBC News, "Victorian nymphs painting back on display after censorship row"; Tawadros, "Removing Nymphs From a Gallery is Provocative – But Does Not Merit Contempt"; Pidd, "Pre-Raphaelite 'Soft-Porn' Painting Back on View After Outcry"; Jones, "Why Have Mildly Erotic Nymphs Been Removed from a Manchester Gallery? Is Picasso Next?"

²⁰⁸ Clare Gannaway. "Manchester After Hours"

excitement.²⁰⁹ The purpose of the material is key in this particular case, as it draws the line between a page three image, which contains explicit display of sexual organs for the primary purpose of sexual excitement, and nude artwork such as that found in room 10, which had the primary purpose of exemplifying aesthetic excellence, although was no doubt titillating. By this definition, no single element of a visual work can define it as pornographic or non-pornographic.

Feminism has a history of denouncing pornography since its popularisation in the 1980s through the use of the VCR.²¹⁰ There have even been attempts to ban its production: Catherine McKinnon proposed that pornography should not count as legally protected speech, an approach also put forth by Melinda Vadas, on the basis that all pornography is the ritual humiliation of women.²¹¹ By this logic, it cannot be censorship of art as pornography is non-art. Flo Leibowitz makes a point against such interpretation: for pornography to have such a strong effect on societal values of women, it would require high social standing, which it does not have.²¹² However, thirty years later, while remaining on low social standing, the ubiquitous access to pornography that technology provides has been shown in many studies to affect both male and female ideas of sexual interaction.²¹³

Even a brief historical analysis as presented in chapter two makes clear that the primary purpose of Waterhouse's work is not simply that of sexual gratification. The nude at the time represented a range of theatrical and aesthetic ideas. However, in the modern psyche, the distinction between the naked and the nude, and thus art and pornography, is heavily blurred. This is exemplified by the 1989 Helms Amendment in the United States in response to Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibit. Mapplethorpe's work drew heavily from pornography, and in 1989 Senator Jesse Helm used examples of the artist's work in his proposal to forbid federal funding of 'obscene' art, which was approved that same year.²¹⁴ Thus, when abiding by feminist aesthetics, thereby rejecting the division of art and ethics, the problem of separating art and pornography becomes even more complex. A number of feminists, therefore, have made suggestions as to alternate definitions. The term 'obscene' has been

²⁰⁹ This definition is based on the findings within the article "An Interdisciplinary Definition of Pornography: Results from a Global Delphi Panel." The authors identified the definition "sexually explicit materials intended to arouse", however the key point of the research was the suggestion that due to the cultural relativity of pornography it has no innate characteristics. The authors therefore suggest that researchers can self-reflectively choose any definition depending on the needs of the project as long as it is explicit and justified; McKee, "An Interdisciplinary Definition of Pornography."

²¹⁰ Jacobsen, "Redefining Censorship", 46; Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 311-313.

²¹¹ Leibowitz, "A Note on Feminist Theories of Representation", 362.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Siyot, & Dwianggimawaiti, "The Effect of Pornography Accessity to Influence Sexual Behavior", 14-77.

²¹⁴ Kastor, "Obscenity Measure Approved"; Meyer, "The Jesse Helms Theory of Art", 131-148.

used as a classifier in this regard.²¹⁵ An ‘obscenity test’ was developed under the American court case *Miller vs. California*, which defined an obscene work as: “[...] to lack serious value, appeal to prurient – that is shameful or morbid – interest in sex, and depict sex in a patently offensive way.”²¹⁶ Similarly, Suzanne Keppeler, in *The Pornography of Representation* (1986) creates a system of assessment, grouping images not based on medium or genre but instead on whether or not their representation is demeaning of women.²¹⁷ Thus ‘demeaning’, the causation of someone to lose their respect or dignity, is used as a value term to judge whether a representation is acceptable or not, no matter if it is the historical painted nude or a pornographic image. In 1992 the Canadian Supreme Court case *Butler vs The Queen*, the court ruled obscenity laws as compatible with newer feminist concepts and continued to outlaw material that ‘degrades’ women.²¹⁸ Conservative obscenity laws therefore have much in common with this specific feminist theory.²¹⁹ ‘Degradation’, ‘demeaning’ and ‘obscene’ are all subjective terms, which carry heavy moral implications. It directly links morality to the viewer’s experience of a work, for if one gains pleasure from this degradation, their pleasure is morally suspect.²²⁰

Therefore, when judging *Hylas and the Nymphs* from a feminist perspective, the question is whether the women represented are obscene or are being demeaned. The answer, as explored in chapter two in the variety of interpretations both historical and current, appears to depend on the viewer. Thus, this subjective feminist classifier of pornographic, when exercised in practice, does not result in a beneficial discussion on the representation of women.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the feminist theory behind the Takeover and the nude artwork’s relationship with pornography. Feminist theory denies the separation between aesthetics and ethics, and thus is in opposition to the nineteenth century theoretical framework surrounding the creation of the works in room 10. Such theory is heavily based on ideas of spectatorship, which have been found to be divisive and potentially exclusionary of female agency.

²¹⁵ Beisel, “Morals Versus Art”, 145-162.

²¹⁶ Burns, *Censorship*, 29.

²¹⁷ Suzanne, *The Pornography of Representation*, 1-4.

²¹⁸ Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 330.

²¹⁹ There is also an avenue of feminist theory that believes that pornography, if made correctly, can empower women, and embrace female sexuality. Examples are the Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force established in America to combat the Reagan administration’s anti-pornography movement; Ryberg, “Imagining Safe Space in Feminist Pornography” in *Feminisms*, 79-80; Jacobsen, “Redefining Censorship”, 42.

²²⁰ Leibowitz, “A Note on Feminist Theories of Representation”, 362.

Examples, such as the work of Henrietta Rae, demonstrate the existence of the female gaze and potential for women in the nineteenth century to consume material differently to their male counterparts. This suggests that there can be other twenty-first century interpretations of the works of room 10 beyond those situated in the male gaze. Ultimately, this form of feminist theory is met with difficulty in the period of fourth wave Feminism, whose emphasis is on inclusion and broader definitions of spectatorship.

The relationship between art and pornography has been the reasoning put forth in the past for proposed censorship of other visual material. However, the branding of the Takeover as censorship is a complex one. While the basis of curation is the choice of displaying some works over others, there are several aspects that make the Takeover different to a regular display change. It was a public event, in order to make a statement about a specific set of values. The replacement of the work with the post-it notes was largely deemed by the public as an insufficient substitute for the work itself, thus not fully acting as a change of display. Furthermore, its removal was not treated as a regular change of display by the organisers and curators of the Takeover in the theatrical manner of the removal and language describing the action. Thus, it cannot fully be justified by definitions of censorship based on curatorial choice cited by the organisers. The Takeover, while claiming only to challenge interpretations, made value judgements on which works were and were not acceptable, by targeting paintings within the room and removing a specific work. An exploration of feminist definitions of pornography, and the justifications for censorship, reveals little clarity as to whether *Hylas and the Nymphs* can be judged as demeaning to women. However, the removal was always intended to be temporary and the act was used in the creation of another work of art. The Takeover therefore defies any simple concept of censorship.

This being said, the Takeover's purpose was not to censor a disagreeable artwork, but to start a discussion on the narratives proposed by the curatorial display within the gallery and was, as put by Gannaway: "part of a process."²²¹ The subjective nature of the discussion of the artwork, Feminism and censorship around the Takeover did not reach any definitive conclusions as to the display. Professor Elizabeth Prettejohn, a foremost scholar on Pre-Raphaelitism and the nineteenth century, told BBC News in response to the Takeover:

²²¹ Clare Gannaway, Interview question no. 16, appendix 3.

“Taking it off display is killing any kind of debate that you might be able to have about it in relation to some of the really interesting issues that it might raise about sexuality and gender relationships.”²²²

Ultimately the only conclusion that can be drawn from the removal of *Hylas and the Nymphs*, was that a conversation was indeed prompted, although perhaps not the one Manchester Art Gallery desired. The curators achieved their aim of generating multiple narratives from the removal; however, the focus of these narratives was not that which was originally sought, suggesting that curation by removal does not necessarily generate a balanced discourse on a subject.

²²² BBC News, “Victorian Nymphs Painting Back on Display After Censorship Row.”

Conclusion: Prompting Discussion

“I view it as a kind of experiment. Sometimes experiments work in lots of different ways, positively and negatively. You might say that it is a success, you might say that it didn’t work. But you learn from that.”²²³

Alistair Hudson’s comment, quoted in the introduction of this thesis, has provided the mode of thought in approaching the Takeover as an ‘experiment’. This thesis analysed the results of this ‘experiment’ by problematising it in terms of curatorial practice. The Takeover’s stated aim in the pinned notice board was as an effort to democratise the display: “[...] to prompt conversation about how we display and interpret artworks in Manchester’s public collection.”²²⁴ The event can be said to have succeeded in generating discourse on a number of issues central to current day curatorship. The following conclusion will synthesise the information discussed throughout this thesis into three primary themes, as mentioned in the introduction: the role of a public gallery and cultural gatekeeping; the politics of looking; and the current state and perception of Feminism.

A prevailing perspective throughout the responses to the Takeover is that the role of a public gallery is that of preservation. This can be seen in the post-it notes, queries at the public panel, online comments and social media posts as discussed in chapter one. Members of the public expressed the belief that the Takeover was a demonstration of the personal interests of the curators rather than public interest. However, the founding principles of Manchester Art Gallery and its current ethos aim not to preserve but instead to challenge and inspire social change, something also discussed in chapter one. It is, therefore, clear that there is a distinction between Manchester Art Gallery’s self-conception and the public perception of it, which fuelled many of the responses.

The accusations against the curators as cultural gatekeepers is also of a further contradictory nature, as the Takeover was part of a larger process within the gallery of democratising the display. This was with the expressed purpose of increasing interaction and involving a greater number of people in the decisions about the display in order to minimise the gatekeeper role of curators. Clare Gannaway talked extensively about her ideas on democratised curatorship in her interview, and it is clear that the Takeover was just one of

²²³ Director Alistair Hudson, “Manchester After Hours.”

²²⁴ Manchester Art Gallery, “Presenting the female body”.

these attempts in a larger process.²²⁵ The idea of opening up the display, however, appears to have been lost on the public. Building upon this, both chapter two and three explored the multiple narratives that were generated by the discussion around the Takeover. A common theme in responses was that the feminist critique which formed the basis of the Takeover was too narrow an interpretation of the works in room 10. Many commentators shared their own interpretations, some based on personal attribution and others on scholarly theories. This reaction was most often a specific response to the femme fatale subject. However, it must be noted that while the organisers only presented one re-interpretation of the work, it was explicitly stated to be a prompt, and opposing points of view were encouraged. From the vitriolic language used in many of the responses, it can be said that this too was lost on much of the public. The wealth of suggestions offered by the public in response to the Takeover does indeed confirm a public desire for interaction and expression within the collection.

The idea of ‘the politics of looking’, that is the tendency to perceive historical works through the lens of current day values, was also re-occurring throughout the Takeover on the part of both the public and the organisers, primarily explored in chapter two. While this thesis did not aim to provide the solution to whether artists, artworks and their context should be separated, it demonstrated yet again how central this phenomenon is to the curation of historical works. The Takeover revealed much about the current perception of the Victorian period and the artworks it produced. Language used in describing the Victorian or ‘English nude’, in particular, showed a misunderstanding of the theory and conception of such works in the nineteenth century. As outlined in chapter two, the ‘English nude’ was a subject containing over a century of theory and a number of nuanced associations. However, the loss of these associations in the current public consciousness, combined with the blurring between art and pornography, as discussed in chapter two and three, has resulted in the public perception of Victorian nude artworks as being ‘pervy’ or hypocritically sexualised. This perception fed into the targeting of room 10 and *Hylas and the Nymphs*, which, combined with the feminist theory explored in chapter three, resulted in immediate conclusions of censorship.

It is not just the stereotyping of the Victorian period that dealt with the concept of the politics of looking, but the application of current day issues concerning the separation of the artist and the artwork, which had most recently been aroused through the #MeToo scandals as outlined in chapter one. This is primarily seen in the choice of Waterhouse as a subject of

²²⁵ Appendix 3, Interview.

removal for issues caused by his historical context rather than the artist himself. Furthermore, organisers and respondents to the Takeover took issue with the modelling of the nymphs in *Hylas and the Nymphs*, quickly identifying the apparent youth of the women as problematic. This was shown in chapter two to be baseless. In addition to comments made by organisers concerning recent controversies such as the Balthus exhibit, it suggests that such current events are impacting public perception of historical artists.

The perception of Feminism itself is the final theme present in the discourse around the Takeover. This was most fully explored in chapter three, although mentioned throughout the thesis. The strong negative reaction to the feminist action of the Takeover can be seen in correlation to the global increase in the polarisation of political issues. The mainstream media in particular were demonstrative of this, manipulating the narrative of events in order to frame the Takeover as a case of censorship in response to the #MeToo movement. Building upon this is the contrast between the values of fourth wave Feminism, which focuses on empowerment and inclusivity, and second wave Feminism which was largely based on critique. This is shown in particular in chapter two and the public response to the negative criticism of the portrayal of the femme fatale. Many responders expressed a desire to see a more empowering interpretation of such works rather than an admonishment of them. Furthermore, as seen in chapter three, much of feminist art historical theory is over twenty years old and therefore dated. Thus, while both commentators and the organisers were expressing feminist views, a lot of the public did not resonate with the feminist critique drawn upon for the Takeover.

In conclusion, the ‘experiment’ of the Takeover succeeded in generating multiple narratives and interpretations of the selected works. It also highlighted a number of areas that could be improved in upon, such as curatorial democratisation drawing on a broader sample group, as well as the need for increased communication and dialogue between the gallery and the public in order to avoid serious misinterpretations. Some of the current projects designed to achieve this were discussed by Gannaway in the interview in appendix three. The involvement of social media in an exhibit that dealt with a polarising subject was demonstrated to have the potential to backfire on organisers as much as to increase an event’s relevancy. Ultimately, the removal, while creating an overall negative image of the event, can be considered an effective, although by no means un-problematic, way of generating discourse. It was only through the resulting anger and controversy that such a large amount of data on public opinion and perception concerning the gallery was created for documentation. Thus, the ‘experiment’ of the Takeover truly lived up to its title and provided a wealth of

information that can be drawn upon in order to further understand and navigate the current curatorial environment with regards to historical collections.

Appendix 1

Transcription of some of the post-it notes responding to the removal of *Hylas and the Nymphs* on Manchester Art Gallery's wall, based on photographs posted on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and by Media Outlets.

“good subject for debate – but please put it back! And analyse the painting in context! [sic]”

“Do not be defined by binary definitions of gender!?! Really. Celebrate women.”

“Why not remove ‘Sirens and Ulysses’ in gallery 6? Based on similar concept of ‘femme fatale’? Was it a bit too heavy to carry?”

“FEMINISM GONE MAD! I’M ASHAMED TO BE A FEMINIST!”

“I was going to leave a comment, but I resent your restrictive, arbitrary, patronising format, a post it [sic] note? Who the hell do you think you are? P.s. This is the most unoriginal exercise since the last Gilbert [sic] & George exhibit”

“This event made the gallery space exciting to move around and socialise with the art”

“Nudity everywhere these days so why take the nymphs away. Crazy”

“I think an art theft has happened. Whom do I report it to?”

“NO MORE BREXIT TALK”

“ ‘Do women have to be naked to get into the (...) museum?’ Guerrilla girls 1989”

“what shit Waterhouse’s Hylas e [sic] nymphs taken down for this nonsense”

“we’ve been told our bodies are not our own. To feel dis-connected from them as others use them for their own purpose. How do we bring the body back to the self?”

“this sets a dangerous precedent”

“OK – you have made your point – now bring the artwork Hylas & the nymphs back where we can see it. Andy Morris”

“male art = political statement”

“I agree”

“a good job _ back before I came otherwise I would have given your director a hard...”

“Women are allowed enjoy their beauty aesthetically”

“New puritanism 😞”

“burn all the institutions down start again”

“just bring the picture back and don’t over academicize”

“this body is not yours”

“dear mr/mrs curator, where did you put my sexy booby woman painting, I loved it, and it was my favourite, you really are shit”

“reclaim paintings of women from male gaze – portrait of Sappho = lesbian + queer icon. Put something in the description about that.”

Appendix 2

Manchester Art Gallery, label text for room 10, *In Pursuit of Beauty*. Available at <https://manchesterartgallery.org/collections/title/?mag-object-1194>

“Late Victorian Art and Design

Improving the quality of British art and design had been a concern since the 1850s. The British Empire had expanded into new continents, but it was the classical ideal of beauty, based on Ancient Greek and Roman culture that was still considered the model for serious art. The pursuit of beauty was a form of escapism from the mass-production of industrial Britain. As well as looking to the ancient world, artists and designers were delighted and inspired by the arts of Renaissance Italy, the Middle and Far East. Many of the paintings here feature a beautiful woman. Sometimes she is a passive, decorative form, but often she is a dark and brooding femme fatale, a symbol of seduction, deception and destruction. The 'fatal woman' may reflect late Victorian male fears as women campaigned for equal rights and new roles. The emphasis on colour, harmony and rhythm and simplifying the form of an object would become major concerns in the 20th century. They can be seen emerging here in the work of late Victorian artists and designers.”

Appendix 3

Interview with Clare Gannaway, curator of contemporary art at Manchester Art Gallery. Conducted by author on 13th November 2020.

1. Manchester has a historic tradition of suffragette and feminist action. The Takeover took place during the centenary of first female voting rights in Britain. Was this on your mind at all when planning the actions of the Takeover?

Clare Gannaway: Yeah it was, I think that it's important to remember that this was a group activity, so I think there was lots of things on different people's minds. I think, we all gathered around together to have a discussion of particular areas and concerns. I mean, yeah, sure, it was on my mind, I am sure it was on a lot of people's minds. Yeah, the history of the gallery and everything for sure. As well as the contemporary context that we were in.

2. Do you think that context of the centenary and feminist events in Manchester, as well as the history of Manchester Art Gallery and suffragettism, meant that you wanted this Takeover to be more radical, in that the work was removed? Basically, did you intend for the event to be as big as it was?

I mean we honestly didn't know that we were going to get this level of response, this reaction. I think that a lot of people said at the time that we did it on purpose to get a massive reaction, but I think the massive reaction came because people reacted to it. We wanted to do something very public, clearly, to make the conversation and the questions that we were exploring together as public as we could, but we had no idea that it was going to be as massive as it turned out to be.

3. Do you think the reception to the Takeover would have been different if social media were not encouraged in the exhibit? Or would it have been picked up anyway?

It's a really good question. I think that the thing that really set the whole reaction off was actually somebody who was directly part of the event that evening who felt really uncomfortable with it all, and spoke to the Guardian newspaper, spoke to a journalist, and used the word censorship because he thought that it was censorship. It really concerned him. And that's what really triggered the whole reaction. So, we could have done all we wanted on social media, but it was actually the reaction of somebody who was talking to somebody else who was in the media that set the whole thing off. And I think another big factor in a lot of

the negative stuff was Jonathan Jones jumping on the bandwagon, in a quite extraordinary way really. He has never really backtracked on it, he didn't bother to speak to us, he didn't speak to anyone at the gallery. He just regurgitated the stuff about censorship, and he wrote a very sensationalist article, click-bate really, about 'what next?!'. Well, the only thing you can kind of think about, when a journalist was asking 'what next?!' is that things are going to get even worse. So it was very, very sensationalist, in terms of what you call the mainstream media handled it in the first place. The first journalist was actually much more balanced and actually wanted to talk to us at the gallery as well. I think when people in positions of power within the media start using the kind of language of censorship, it's a trigger, a massive trigger. And then things are going to kick off. Everything was really about power, really. The power of institutions, and it revealed a huge amount about the media I think, in the way that people operate within it.

4. What do you as a curator feel that the role of a public gallery like Manchester gallery is?

I think it is a constantly shifting thing. I think even in the last two years since things have happened things have changed a lot. I think what happened was a factor that enabled us to kind of push forward as a team thinking about how we use the collection as a gallery. We have done a huge amount since then on re-think of all these bases. Which takes a lot of work and a lot of time. You are right, it did reveal a lot about how people think about institutions, like Manchester Art Gallery, I think traditionally we have played that role as sort of gatekeepers. It has been quite hallowed; we have held that power to make those decisions about the stories that get to be told about collections and displays and the way that collections are used. The way the highlights become highlights because they have been on the walls for so bloody long. I think it is a shifting thing, I think we are on a journey of becoming much more about using the collection and using the gallery a lot more openly, more democratically. Using the collection as a resource rather than just nice things that you look at. I mean that's fine too, but we are developing ways of working more with groups of people with the staff team, with working groups we are working with lots of different areas together to kind of re-think how galleries function and how they relate to society in more relevant ways that perhaps through just having been the same for a long time. It's all a work-in-progress and you don't get there overnight. These are the kinds of things that loads of institutions all over the place are talking about so in a sense we are part of an overall context. I think what happened was really quite useful in revealing a lot, the fact that lots of people have been so interested in

it. The number of students that have interviewed, there really has been incredible interest. I think how we think about the kinds of issues and how things do really need to change, in terms of how we work. So working progress, all a working progress. [laughs] and lots of hard work.

5. In retrospect it is very enlightening, because we have such evidence now of how people are responding to this, with the post-it notes and the comments, it is all archived there, and it is just fascinating to look at how things like this bring people's opinions out into the open and much more useful for working in the future. Because now you know better how people are thinking about these things and taking that into account.

You have said how a large part of the Takeover was critiquing the display and the narrative, that it was outdated. So, just asking some basics, who originally made the display? Who originally wrote the notice boards and who decided upon that narrative?

It was before my time at the gallery. I think it is quite important not to point fingers because I think the way everybody works is shifting and changing all the time. It wasn't an individual decision; it was more a team of people that were tasked with working on it. When the gallery re-opened to the public after a period of refurbishment, a whole new part of the building was added on, and there was a big re-opening. I think at that point there was a much more of a shift towards focusing on temporary exhibitions as a driver for getting people into the city, the role that the gallery played was as an economic tool and a cultural tool for the city, and that was all really relevant as well. And there has been a real focus on the temporary, the blockbuster exhibitions. Those type of projects I guess. We have discussed this quite a bit as a team, and I think those parts of the gallery were about using the collection, but about telling a very particular story. I wasn't around so I wasn't part of those conversations that went on. But yeah, things have moved on hugely since then. I think what we were left with, what we were discussing in the gallery was the remains of that kind of linear narrative which had been punctuated and disrupted at various points by different things that had happened and different activities. Often that activity was quite temporary, often just an evening Takeover, which was the kind of format that Sonia wanted to play with. So, there hadn't been a disruption of that, which was kind of rusting. It was about really spending some time in one of those spaces which we all needed to do, in fact more of the staff team, ideally, should have been involved in it because it was really valuable for us to sit and talk and look around at what this place is

doing. It didn't turn into a kind of negative hatred of the gallery, it was just a positive collective of the kind of stories institutions tell and how they need to keep shifting.

6. I wasn't looking to point fingers of course; it was more just out of curiosity.

Yeah it was a team of curators at the time. As I understand it, that kind of shape the kind of overall story.

7. I think it is Griselda Pollock who said that Feminism is innately traumatic to the subject to which it is applied. I think this demonstrates that resulting trauma. How difficult it can be to apply some of these ideas because it removes the traditional basis on which it stands, and people aren't very comfortable with that.

It's interesting looking at those galleries. We have talked in different ways since then, and at the time, at even the wall colours. It is a pseudo-Victorian stage set type of feeling. There is even a quite a lot of nostalgia, not sure that is the right word but a sort of attempt to design the gallery as it would have been in a Victorian era which is quite interesting.

8. I think the Victorian period is something that is very much alive in the public consciousness, this idea of a glorious past. A time when people would perhaps like to harken back to, and it is interesting that the gallery display is trying to evoke that.

I was curious, what happened to the post-it notes?

They are all kept, they are all in an archive box in the gallery. We had some amazing help from a volunteer who helped us with that. It was a really good project for them. They are all kept for people to look through if they want to. It is probably something we could be more public about. Some of them are in the gallery display itself. Where we have got Sonia's *six acts*, six screens, the artwork. And *Hylas and the Nymphs* are still there so Sonia Boyce's work is still disrupting that space, while we were thinking what can we do with it. But there is a display case that we did put in the middle of the room between the two that has a selection of the post it notes but also some of the other material that we received in response, some of the media articles. And we have tried to change that at various points since just to turn that material over. So some of them have been used in that way. We have had some people come in and arranged to look at the post it notes, and to look at all the media stuff and all the letters the emails, everything has been kept. There is a massive archive, a massive amount of material that, maybe not in lockdown but, people can come and look at. So hopefully we will

continue to make use of that stuff as well. We have been adding stuff to the digital archive as well so we can make sure the record for the artworks have reference to what happened. So people can look back in years' time.

9. That is such a shame, I wish I could look through it.

It would be good to digitise it all as well so access to it is easier.

10. Why was *Hylas and the Nymphs* was chosen? I know a lot of the response was saying it was a publicity stunt, saying that it was just to elicit a reaction, so I would just like to hear what you and the group of people, your reasoning was. Because all the works in that room display similar themes with the representation of women.

It was quite a provocation, really, because it is a very, very popular artwork. So it was actually chosen by the group because of its popularity, because we wanted to do something that really got people thinking. That got people to think about a real highlight of the gallery collection in a very different way. That kind of problematised it. Not tell people how to think and feel. I mean the questions that we left in the gallery, following the evening event, they were questions. They were questioning what was going on in the space. Some people thought we were taking this painting away for ever and we will never see it again. It was really just trying to open up more discussion about it as an interesting object. Very much looking at the kind of issues we had discussed as a group. That the discomfort, not just with that painting but with that whole space. Particularly in terms with what that room is called, 'In pursuit of Beauty'. I remember someone from the team just pointing at that, I will always remember this, one of my colleagues just saying, "look at the title of this gallery." It's incredible that that is there. The power dynamics that that sort of suggests. Who is doing the pursuing and who is being pursued? It was a simple answer really, it was a very popular one. There were lots of things that people wanted to share after that, in terms of their own opinion of the artwork, in terms of their own relationship with it. It's really interesting, actually. Because it is complex. The complexity is what we wanted, really, not the sort of black and white.

11. Did you know from the beginning how long the work was going to be off from display from the start? Did the public know how long?

Yeah we always decided that it was going to be temporary. We didn't want it to be we are taking this away and we are going to put it in store and that's it. It was much more, "we have just temporarily removed it, here are some questions." It was completely explicit with what

we had put on the wall and for anyone at the activity it should have been pretty obvious it was temporary. But there was also people who didn't trust in that. We never said it will be taken down for 'x' amount of time. Because actually we just felt as a group that it should be quite an open ended thing. That it really depended on the reactions and response and what would happen next. It went back on the wall pretty quickly and that decision was taken by more senior people in the council. They just said, "look this is a massive shit storm and we just have got to put it back on the wall" [laughs]. So that was quite interesting in itself, the reactions to that and how open people are within a structure like city council, in dealing with that sort of uncertainty and open ended-ness. The main thing was that the conversations are going on still and that's the main thing. It did open up a lot.

The other reason, just to add something, the other reason for choosing that painting, I should probably point out. In the staff entrance, at the back of the building, there is something we call the airlock. If you are visiting out of hours with a member of the team you can go in that way. There is that little room where you can talk to someone from the front-of-house team that can let you into the rest of the building. There was adhesive wallpaper. So when the door opened one of the first things you saw was this wallpaper. There was this section on *Hylas and the Nymphs*, and it was literally just one of the nymphs, blown up onto this wallpaper. It was kind of beckoning you into the staff entrance. You pass this sort of thing every day, and you might think about them. But its only when you come together with a group of people and you start to think really critically about it, like, "okay, are we comfortable with that?." Some of the stories said by the team, soe quite personal stories that people shared about how that made them feel and how people have come in through that gallery entrance to do various kinds of work and had commented it on the appearance and compared it with the person who was sitting behind the desk. All these things come to the surface. So that was the reason really, it was being used in a different way, in relation to the gallery team. People really had issues with that. So the other thing we did was to take down that wallpaper.

12. That is really interesting. So it is not just that we are going to choose this because it is going to get the most reactions. It clearly had a personal element, or at least you have been made aware of this specific painting in a particular sexual manner, day to day working in the gallery, more that those visiting.

So do you think the reaction to the Takeover would have been different if Manchester Art Gallery wasn't a publicly owned gallery. If it was, for example, a privately owned

collection or a contemporary art gallery. Something that Mancunians didn't have such a sense of personal connection to, a sense of ownership. Do you think the reaction would have been different?

I suppose I honestly don't know. There have been responses to things that happened in different contexts as well. Another thing this drew attention to which is really important, is the idea of the gallery being important. It is not something people have actually been aware of, that the collection is in fact owned by the people of Manchester. So, I am not even sure if, in everybody's minds that distinction was made. I think it goes back to what we were saying, it was about opening up what the gallery is: what is this place? Who opens it? Who is this collection for? Who makes the decisions? What stories are we telling here? What do we want to do with it in the future? It's opening up that, and I think it has only been in the last, well since then really, that we have really been talking a lot more strongly about the public nature of the collection of the gallery. Doing things such as opening up spaces for people to do as they want. Trying to let go of the power of the decision making and involve more people which as we said before is a working process. I don't know, it is an interesting question, I suppose it depends on your level of understanding when do you even know that it is public.

We are still working with people. Just for example we have a working group for climate justice. Somebody in that group said well, you are the gallery staff, you can do what you want with the gallery. Someone else in the group pointed out, "no, it's our gallery!." This is the point of that group; we are all deciding what to do. I just don't think people always know.

13. It is really interesting to hear you point that out. That is vital for me to hear, you being there when it happened and part of the event, and that you think it might not be the case.

I think we have just all witnessed and experienced different levels of knowledge. It is something that since the first lockdown there has been a new introductory gallery that has been displayed. That's really about being more honest, questioning the origins of the gallery. That it does belong to the people of Manchester, and that these are some of the ways we want to look at it in the future. It's opening up all of that. It's good that, since this whole thing has happened that we are just re-thinking those galleries. The real evidence of that now is some of the changes starting to come in.

14. I was going to ask, since the Takeover, has there been any display changes or changes of approach in that room or in the gallery in general?

Yeah, definitely. There are groups of people now that are re-thinking all those spaces that haven't changed over time. So the introductory gallery was really an attempt to work more across the staff team. I think a lot more work needs to be done on that, in terms of democracy and decision making. I think that is a massive area of work that has been made much, much more difficult since covid. It has revealed a lot in terms of power and responsibility in different roles. So, there is lots of more work to do there. We do have working groups looking at a whole range of areas. So, there is the introductory gallery. The one next to that we have got funding as part of an AHRC bid with the University of Manchester and that is to work very, very collaboratively with charity and the university, people from migrant backgrounds and what they think about that space, because it is all about the white Eurocentric idea of travel. To re-think that whole area.

We have a climate justice group working as well. Artists and activists and the gallery team looking to expand upon that as well and re-think the space around that. That group came together largely because of the free bookable spaces that we made available. It was just amazing how many climate emergency groups wanted to get together in the gallery to use it. So, that has been a really positive development. We have also got a group looking at *work*, and re-thinking the space around that. Susan Lacey, the US based artists, she is doing some work with a group of women over fifty in Manchester. So, there is a kind of advisory group working with Susan on shaping that project. Which was going to be all about the pension age, actually, the U.K pension age and women over fifty. But since covid it has really shaped into something else. That has been really incredible really. I think a lot of change will come from that group.

There is a group looking at well-being as well. One of the spaces is currently being used for a project by Jay Montserrat, who is a young black artist working with our trainee curator. That really connected with the whole re-think as well. In terms of care of language, of resistance. Loads of really interesting stuff bringing people together. It's all going on!

15. So there really is a balance, then, in Manchester Art Gallery, between contemporary display and the historical collection. Could you talk about that balance.

Yeah again, I think that is an evolving thing. But all this work is fundamentally about using the collection better. I mean, our budget is going to be slashed. We might not be able to do these blockbuster shows. But we want to think differently. We need to work better with the collection it tells so many interesting stories, and we just have masses of it in store. These highlights that we have on display are only the tip of an iceberg. The more that we work with different people to bring out the stories that this collection tells, the better it is going to be. But that can involve working artists as well. Artists are always in the mix. We have to support artists; we have amazing artists in the city. Bringing in artist's perspectives and actions and work. That's a really interesting thing to explore as well. I think it is just being a bit messier now, mixing the contemporary with the collection. But also to keep the collection in a different way, in terms of mixing that up. It's really eclectic and a bit bonkers. It's not all fine art, there are some really mad stuff in there. We can have fun with it, mixing up the styles and historical periods. But ideas of everyday making, breaking down some of these hierarchies. Perceptions of what art is and what galleries do. There is a real need for people to come together and use this space actively. Not just look at displays on the wall. The collection is massively important, but it is also what people do in the gallery, that it is being used as an active space that we can do things in. We have just seen since lockdown number two is now upon us, the ways that people really do need to come together and explore conversation and making together. I think that is going to be so, so important. It's just mixing everything up together, not trying to separate different forms of art with each other, but to think. How can this stuff be used to help us all make things better? To move away from the more traditional forms of power that we seems to be stuck with.

16. With regards to the response to the Takeover, and the issues around censorship. Do you think the Takeover generated the discussion you wanted or was it swept away by the censorship discourse?

Everything that we do, we do within a certain set of social parameters and context. I think, the question you are asking really, I think the only way I can answer it, is that what happened was just incredibly revealing about the society around what we did. I do think that it is one part of a process. Considering what you said about the context and the polarisation. I don't think this was ever the whole deal, it wasn't, "we are going to do this and it will change everything." Because everyone is going to have the right kind of conversations and it will be great [laughs]. It was always considered as part of a process, not just the process of Sonia and the artwork, but a process of how do we want to talk to each other? How do we want to think

about the process of decision making? How do we want to think about collective decision making and democratising what the gallery is? These are all massive, massive things that you don't deal with in one artwork or one act. I suppose it relates to activism, you don't do a protest or do one thing and it solve the problem. It is a longer process isn't it. I think it was a really, really important thing to do, but only as part of a process. It is not a one-off where it was, "well that was great let's never talk about that again." That would have been a shame and it's is not that at all, it is part of a process. I think it's, like we have been saying all the way through this, even the way that Facebook operates for example, is all about polarisation. The algorithms, the tools are set up that supposedly help us have good conversations and have good friends are not really necessarily doing that. So we are working against all these kind of systems.

Thank you so much for talking to me and answering some of my questions, it has been really insightful.

Illustrations



Fig 1. Front façade of Manchester Art Gallery, photographed in 2018 ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 2. Left to right: Annie Briggs, Lillian Forrester and Evelyn Manestra, 1913, photograph © Manchester Libraries



Fig 3. Sonia Boyce, portrait photograph ©The Guardian



Fig 4. John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, 1899, oil on canvas, 132.1x197.5 cm, Manchester Art Gallery. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 5. (a)(b) & (c). Family Gorgeous performing at Manchester Art Gallery during the 2018 Artist Takeover. ©Andrew Brooks





Fig 6. Sonia Boyce, *Six Acts*, 2018, Film, Manchester Art Gallery ©Neil McInnes



Fig 7. The removal of *Hylas and the Nymphs*, 2018, film still, Manchester Art Gallery ©Manchester Art Gallery

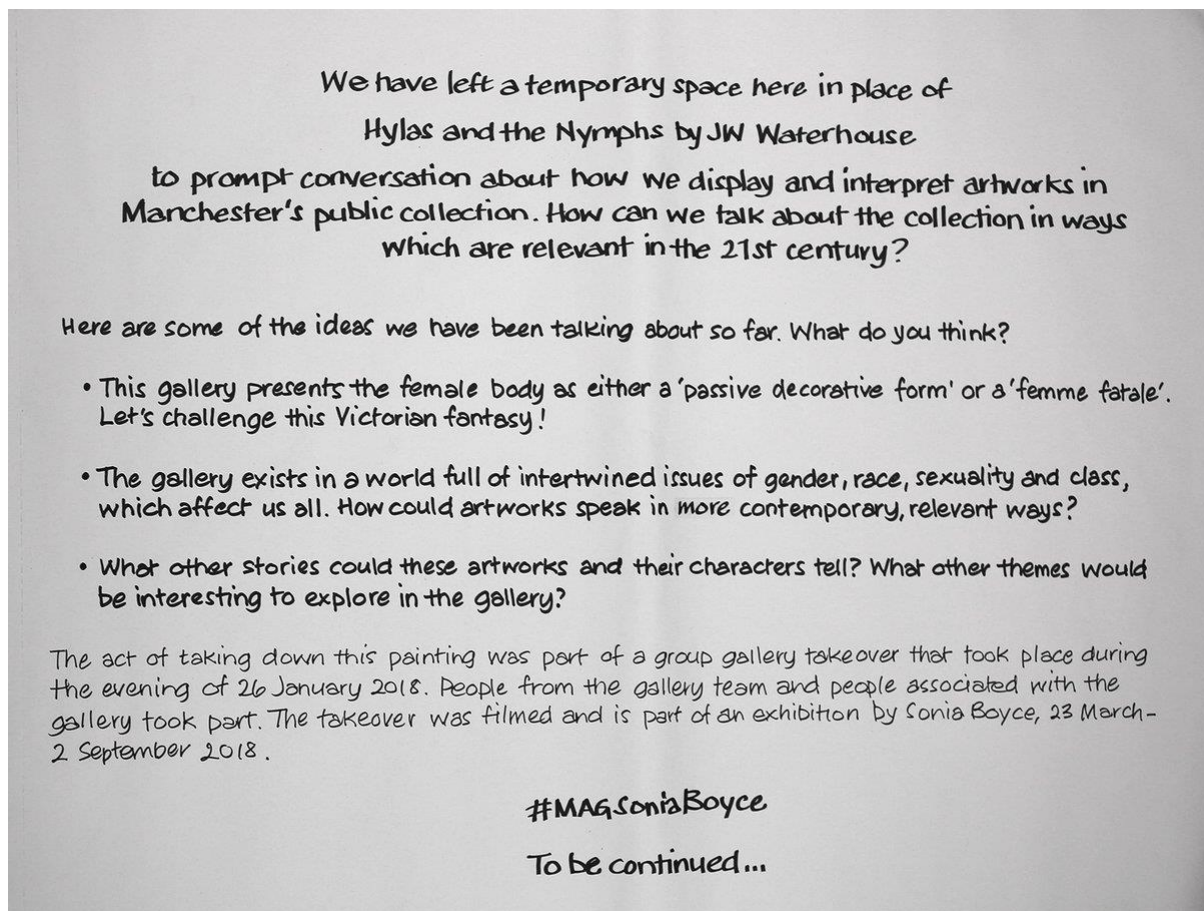
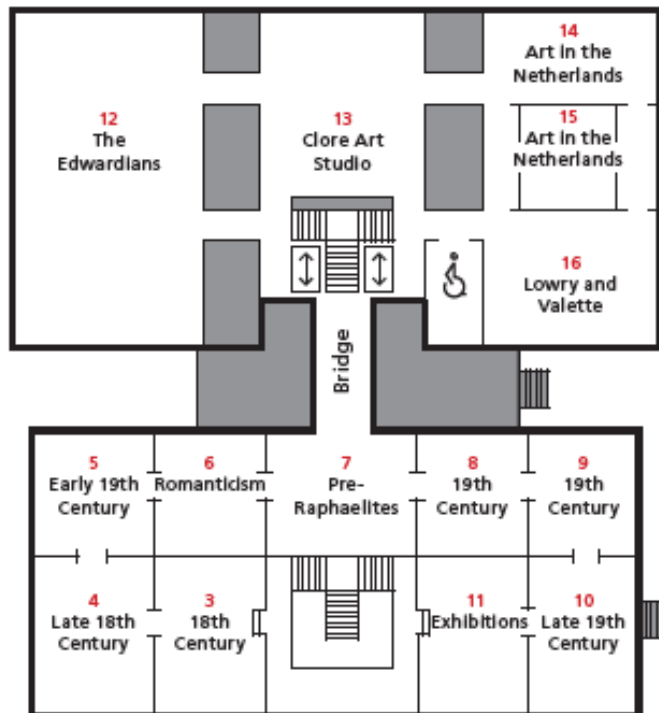


Fig 9. Board left in space previously occupied by *Hylas and the Nymphs* at Manchester Art Gallery in 2018.



Fig 10. Space previously occupied by *Hylas and the Nymphs* in room 10, Manchester Art Gallery, 2018. ©BBC

First floor



- | | | | |
|----|---|-------|--|
| 3 | Face and Place | 12 | The Edwardians |
| 4 | Grand Tour and Grand Style | 13 | Clore Art Studio |
| 5 | A New Market | 14–15 | Home, Land and Sea: Art in the Netherlands 1600–1800 |
| 6 | Natural Forces: Romanticism and Nature | | Joseph Parry 1744–1826 |
| 7 | The Pre-Raphaelites in their Time | | until September 2017 |
| 8 | A Highland Romance: Victorian Views of Scottishness | | Jai Redman: Paradise Lost |
| 9 | Victorian Dramas | | until September 2017 |
| 10 | In Pursuit of Beauty | 16 | LS Lowry and Adolphe Valette: Urban Landscapes |
| 11 | Goodbye To All That | | |
| | until 26 March 2017 | | |
| | To Be Human | | |
| | 1 April–3 September 2017 | | |

Fig 11. Visitor Map of the 1st floor, Manchester Art Gallery Brochure. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 12. Edward Burne-Jones, *Sibylla Delphica*, c1886, oil on panel, 152.8x60.3cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK.
©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 13. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Astarte Syriaca*, 1877, oil on canvas, 185x147cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 14. Lord Frederick Leighton, *The Last Watch of Hero*, 1887, oil on canvas, 242x152cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 15. Annie Louisa Swynnerton, *Montagna Mia*, 1923, oil on canvas, 112x183cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 16. Francis Derwent Wood, *Atalanta*, 1907, marble, 175.3cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 17. John Roddam Spencer Stanhope, *Eve Tempted*, 1877, tempura on panel, 161x17.5cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 18. Auguste Charles Mengin, *Sappho*, 1877, oil on canvas, 230x151cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 19. Arthur Hacker, *Syrinx*, 1892, oil on canvas, 193x61cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 20. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Italian Women in Church*, 1927, oil on canvas, 76x61cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 21. Lord Fredrick Leighton, *Captive Andromache*, 1888, oil on canvas, 197x407cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK. ©Manchester Art Gallery



Fig 22. William Etty, *Hylas and the Water Nymphs*, 1833, oil on canvas, 88x111cm, Angelsey Abbey, Cambridgeshire, UK. ©The National Trust



Fig 23. Henrietta Rae, *Hylas and the Water Nymphs*, 1909, oil on canvas, 142x222cm, private collection ©Christies

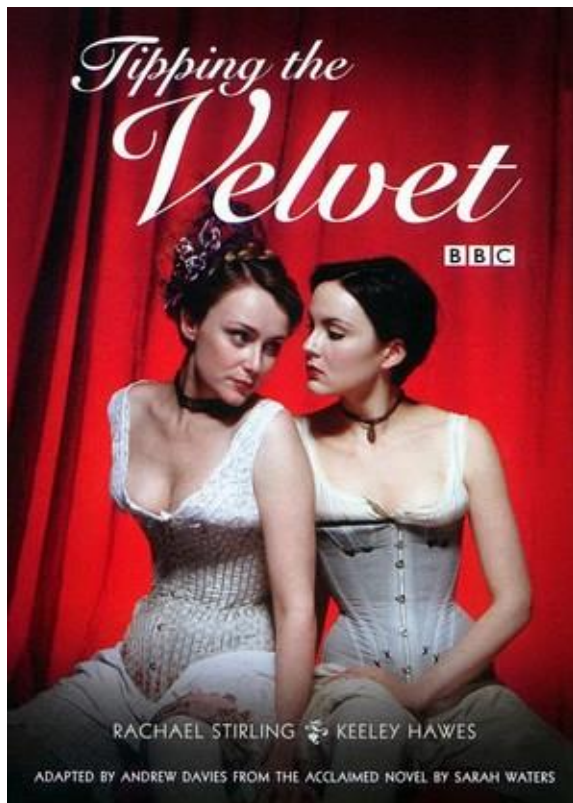


Fig 24. Promotional Poster for *Tipping the Velvet*, BBC mini-series 2002 ©BBC



Fig 25. John Collier, *Clytemnestra after the Murder*, 1882, Guildhall Gallery. ©the Victorian Web



Fig 26. John William Waterhouse, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*, 1891, oil on canvas, 175x92cm, Gallery Oldham.
©Andrew Lloyd Weber Collection



Fig 27. John William Waterhouse, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, 1893, oil on canvas, 110x81cm, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt ©, Hessisches Landesmuseum



Fig 28.

(a) Barry, Charles, *Design for the Entrance Hall of the Royal Manchester Institution*, c1825, watercolour on paper, 41.1x28.4cm, Manchester Art Gallery, UK.

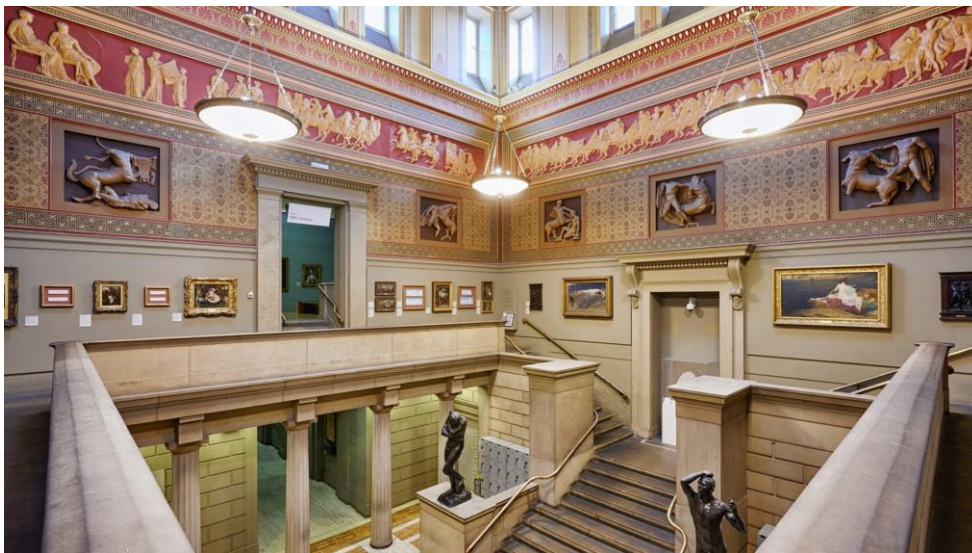


Fig 28 (b) Unknown, *Manchester Art Gallery Entrance Hall*, digital photograph ©hirespace



Fig 29. Ford Madox Brown, *Work*, 1852-1865, oil on canvas, 137x197cm, Manchester Art Gallery ©Manchester Art Gallery

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