



Jacomijn den Engelsen, *Woman*, 1999 (detail). Collectie Rijksmuseum © Jacomijn den Engelsen

Women in the museum.
Best practices

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
March 8, 2022

Conference Program

Time	Event
9.30	Arrival, coffee and tea
10.00-10.10	Welcome Taco Dibbits, General Director Rijksmuseum Introduction by Jenny Reynaerts, curator and chair of Women of the Rijksmuseum
10.10-10.30	Keynote 1 Jolande Withuis, writer, feminist and sociologist: <i>The courage to skip femininity. Being a female artist in a gendered world. The life and works of Jeanne Bieruma Oosting (1898-1994)</i>
10.30-10.40	Discussion
10.40-11.30	<p style="text-align: center;">1. Living Apart Together (moderator Jenny Reynaerts, Rijksmuseum)</p> <p>How to be most effective in creating more visibility of women in the museum? Do we show their work and tell their stories separately in an exhibition, a book, a room of their own? Or do we rather opt for an integrated approach? Or both? When do we present women's position as the exception to the rule? And what about the use of terminology and tags in our registration system: female, male or 'neutral'?</p> <p>Hans Roseboom, curator photography Rijksmuseum: <i>Between the devil and the deep blue sea. A curator's dilemma.</i></p> <p>Wieteke van Zeil, journalist and writer on art: <i>The dilemmas of grouping women artists in exhibitions and publications.</i></p> <p>Denise Campbell, Working Group Terminology Rijksmuseum: <i>Artist or female artist? Painter or paintress? Gender and the terminology of professions in the arts</i></p>
11.30-12.00	Coffee break
12.00-12.50	<p style="text-align: center;">2. The Other Woman (moderator: Jenny Reynaerts, Rijksmuseum)</p> <p>Next to being an artist, women in the museum world fulfill many other parts: they are model, collector, dealer, critic, curators, museum builders and directors. What are the possibilities and drawbacks while researching these roles?</p> <p>Stephanie Archangel, curator Dept. History Rijksmuseum: <i>The presence of Female Africans in 16th- and 17th-century European Art.</i></p> <p>Judith Noorman, Early Modern Art History, Director of the Amsterdam Centre for Studies in Early Modernity, University of Amsterdam: <i>The right to buy art. An enquiry into women's participation in the 17th c. art market.</i></p> <p>Mayken Jonkman, curator RKD/Netherlands Institute for Art History: <i>The Other Half. A collaborative research project on women in the Dutch art world 1780-1980</i></p>
12.50-14.00	Lunch break. Chance to see the show <i>Revolusi!</i> and the possibility to follow a tour about female artists in the Rijksmuseum permanent collection
14.00-14.20	Keynote 2 Denise Murrell, ass. curator for 19th and 20th century art, The Metropolitan Museum New York: <i>Retrieving Histories: Black Women Artists and Models (1860-1950)</i>
14.20-14.30	Discussion
14.30-15.20	<p style="text-align: center;">3. Her museum story (moderator: Maria Holtrop, Rijksmuseum)</p> <p>In museums the balance between male and female stories is still far from equal and too often confirms to the subject-object paradigm. Which female stories are lacking and how do we present them? What does a female perspective actually mean?</p> <p>Anna Maria Forssberg, Researcher, Vasa Museum Stockholm, Senior Lecturer: <i>Gendered interpretations: working with object biographies as a way of making women seen at the Vasa museum.</i></p> <p>Virginia Treanor, ass. curator National Museum of Women in the Arts Washington: <i>A museum of her own.</i></p> <p>Agnes Cremers and Mark Bergsma, public historians and founders of Van Gisteren and Platform F-site, www.f-site.nu: <i>Images of an overlooked history.</i></p>
15.20-15.50	Coffee and tea break

15.50-16.40	<p style="text-align: center;">4. Blind spots (moderator Sheila Reda, Rijksmuseum)</p> <p>Since Nochlin's groundbreaking essay on women artists in 1971, feminist (art) history has been conducted mainly from a Eurocentric perspective. The recent wish for more diversity must lead to new insights. But it also means a new obstacle race.</p> <p>Danielle van den Heuvel, Dept History, University of Amsterdam: <i>Making the invisible visible: gendered spaces in the premodern world.</i></p> <p>Anne van Lierop; former junior director of Villa Mondriaan and founder of The Pink Cube, platform for Queer Art and Culture: <i>The Lavender Scare: The evasion of queerness in art history.</i></p> <p>Marion Anker, junior curator Dept History, Rijksmuseum: <i>Blind spots in the archive: the story of freedom fighter Tanja Dezentjé.</i></p>
16.40-17.15	<p>Discussion (moderator Jenny Reynaerts)</p> <p>Closing remarks by Hendrikje Crebolder, director Development and Media, Rijksmuseum</p>
17.15-18.00	Drinks in the Foyer

Keynote 1



Jolande Withuis, *The courage to skip femininity. Being a female artist in a gendered world. The life and works of Jeanne Bieruma Oosting (1898-1994)*

In her keynote speech *The Courage to be Unfeminine* Jolande Withuis argues that to do biographical research on female artists the researcher has to be well-versed in the general historical circumstances as well as in the gender ideologies and practices of the contemporary period.

Painter Jeanne Bieruma Oosting distanced herself from the conservative attitudes toward women of her parental milieu: Dutch landed nobility from around 1900. She also stood up against the coercive culture of femininity that defined women's lives in 20th century Western culture.

Withuis shows that a biographical approach, seeing individuals as shaping their own lives, is contrary to identity politics, that regrettably is gaining ground in the museum sector. Identity thinking reduces individuals to a sociological category. A biographer doesn't just establish what someone's roots were, but how their unique subject handled them.

Dr Jolande Withuis (1949) is a laurelled Dutch feminist, historical sociologist and writer. She published books and articles on women's history, the politics of war trauma, communist women in the Cold War, women in nazi concentration camps, and wrote highly-praised biographies of resistance hero Pim Boellaard, Queen Juliana and, recently, artist Jeanne Bieruma Oosting.

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Session 1 Living Apart Together (moderator Wieneke 't Hoen, Rijksmuseum)

How to be most effective in creating more visibility of women in the museum? Do we show their work and tell their stories separately in an exhibition, a book, a room of their own? Or do we rather opt for an integrated approach? Or both? When do we present women's position as the exception to the rule? And what about the use of terminology and tags in our registration system: female, male or 'neutral'?



Hans Rooseboom, *Between the devil and the deep blue sea. A curator's dilemma*

The Rijksmuseum's curators of photography often say they collect everything from 19th to 21st-century photographs, made by amateurs and professionals, executed in color and black-and-white, Dutch and non-Dutch, from purely artistic to utterly functional. But how did they deal with acquiring and exhibiting photographs made by women? Did they give special attention to photographs made by women or didn't they think the maker's sex or gender to be important? What did they take into consideration? What are the possibilities to do justice to the part women play(ed) in photography? How to enlarge their presence and visibility?

Hans Rooseboom is curator of photography at the Rijksmuseum and has been building its photography collection together with Mattie Boom since 1994. They jointly made quite a few exhibitions and books, including *Modern Times* and *New Realities*, on 20th- and 19th-century photographs from the Rijksmuseum collections, respectively. In 2008 he published the commercial edition of his PhD *De schaduw van de fotograaf* (The shadow of the photographer) on the socio-economic position of Dutch professional photographers up till 1889. His thematically organized history of photography, entitled *Lichtjaren* (Light Years), came out in 2019.

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Dress by Giuseppe du Crocq

Wieteke van Zeil, *The dilemmas of grouping women artists in exhibitions and publications*

In recent years museums and the academic world have shown a renewed interest in women artists. This has led to many female artists being celebrated in solo exhibitions, though sometimes long overdue. With this new interest came a revived trend of grouping women artists, in exhibitions and in books. Several museums have recently exhibited different female artists together, sometimes artists that never knew each other or that worked in different times and cultures. This creates a dilemma for art professionals and for viewers; how to value and understand their work? Should we look at women's art because it is female? Do women artists share some sort of 'feminine' perspective or style? Van Zeil will speak about the risks and the advantages of grouping women's art in the museum and in publications.

Wieteke van Zeil is a culture journalist and writer. She has been writing about old masters and today's culture in the Dutch national newspaper *Volkskrant* since 2003. For the newspaper's Saturday Magazine, she pens a weekly series about details of art entitled *Oog voor detail* (Eye for detail). In the articles she describes art with a sharp and associative eye, and marvels on how artists often see what we still regularly seem to miss: essential details about how people live and love, struggle and suffer. In 2020, her book *Altijd iets te vinden, de kunst van het oordelen* (Always Something to Find, the Art of Judgment) was published by Atlas Contact. Previously, she wrote *Goed kijken begint met negeren, de kunst van opmerkzaamheid*, 2018 (Seeing is Ignoring: the Art of Attentiveness) and *Dichterbij, kunst in details*, 2015 (Art in Details), also published by Atlas Contact. In 2021 Wieteke van Zeil created and presented a television series about art and emotion on Dutch television NTR, *Kijken op gevoel*. The Eye for Detail-series was recognized with a European Newspaper Award in 2015.

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Denise Campbell, Artist or female artist? Painter or paintress? Gender and the terminology of professions in the arts

Female, male, neutral. Discussion regarding gender marking in professions has flared up in recent years, also in the arts. The research project Women of the Rijksmuseum aims to increase the visibility of women in (art)history and the history of the institution. It is important to think about the terms we use to describe the roles of women and their accomplishments in the arts. With what intent do we use this terminology and how is it perceived by the person or group it addresses? What practical obstacles considering terminology do we face when trying to increase the visibility of women in the museum? The talk will discuss the issues surrounding this topic and offer a short case-study into the previous and current efforts of the Rijksmuseum.

Denise Campbell (MA) is the curatorial assistant of the department Fine and Decorative Arts at the Rijksmuseum. She studied Art and Cultural Sciences – Museum Curator at the University of Groningen, and specialises in Asian ceramics. Denise is a member of the working group Women of the Rijksmuseum as well as the working group Terminology.

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Session 2. The Other Woman (moderator: Jenny Reynaerts, Rijksmuseum)

Next to being an artist, women in the museum world fulfill many other parts: they are model, collector, dealer, critic, curators, museum builders and directors. What are the possibilities and drawbacks while researching these roles?



Stephanie Archangel, *The presence of Female Africans in 16th- and 17th-century European Art*

The presence of Africans in 16th- and 17th-century European art has been regularly published in recent decades. African figures were assigned different roles such as that of servants alongside wealthy white Europeans and the African king in the Adoration of the Kings or in allegories such as the representation of the continent of Africa. However, the focus of all these publications was primarily on the depiction of Black males in prints and paintings. This presentation is a field exploration of the underexposed role that Black women have been given in Northern European art. It will try to shed light on the problems we encounter when researching those that have been invisible in history, and how art in collaboration with archival research may be able to reveal more about their presence than we initially thought.

Stephanie Archangel studied sociology (Msc) at the University of Amsterdam and has been a curator at the History Department of the Rijksmuseum since 2016. She is co-author and co-creator of the exhibition *Slavery* (2021), *The 80 Years of War* (2018) and *Here. Black in Rembrandt's Time* (2020), on the depiction of Black people in art in the 17th century. She is also working on a terminology project, in which the Rijksmuseum takes a critical look at existing titles and descriptions of its collection.

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Judith Noorman, *The right to buy art. An enquiry into women's participation in the 17th c. art market*

In the Dutch Republic, inequality was laid down in the law. Not everyone had the right to buy art, but who did and why? Were all women allowed to spend large sums of money on paintings? This paper explains how laws and social customs predetermined a woman's participation in the art market. Based on her age and marital status, amongst others, she could be an independent collector, a partner in patronage, or a casual shopper. The paper is illustrated with the recently discovered and uniquely well-documented art purchases of two sisters.

Judith Noorman is Assistant Professor in Early Modern Art History at the University of Amsterdam and Director of the Amsterdam Centre for Studies in Early Modernity. Her NWO VIDI-project 'The Female Impact', which started in September 2021, maps, measures and analyzes the impact of women on the art market in the Dutch Republic (1580-1720). With her students, she published *Gouden Vrouwen van de zeventiende eeuw. Van kunstenaars tot verzamelaars* (Golden Women of the 17th Century. Artists to Collectors). One of the first copies was presented by the students to Rijksmuseum director Hendrikje Crebolder.

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<https://www.uva.nl/profiel/n/o/j.f.j.noorman/j.f.j.noorman.html>

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Mayken Jonkman, *The Other Half*. A collaborative research project on women in the Dutch art world 1780-1980

With the inventory and research project 'The Other Half. The Proportion of Women in the Dutch Art World 1780-1980', the Rijksmuseum, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam and the RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History aim to generate more insight, awareness and visibility with regards to the role of women mediators in the museum field as well as in the formation of Dutch cultural heritage. By seeking partnerships with as many museums, universities and cultural institutions as possible, it is our goal to permanently embed the attention for women in the art world within art history. Women mediators include collectors, art dealers, critics and museum staff.

Mayken Jonkman is senior curator of nineteenth-century art at the RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History. She studied Art History at the University of Amsterdam, specializing in Dutch nineteenth-century art in an international context. She also studied law at the University of Utrecht, writing her master thesis on the use of copyright laws and museum practice. She has published on wide-ranging subjects such as nineteenth-century collectors, art dealers, the image of the artist and studio practice. She is writing her PhD on Dutch artists travelling to Paris in the nineteenth century which she aims to finalize in the Spring of 2023. Mayken is one of the initiators, together with Rachel Esner, University of Amsterdam, Jenny Reynaerts, Rijksmuseum, and Beatrice von Bormann from the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, of the project 'The Other Half. Women in the Dutch Art World 1780-1980'.

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Keynote 2



Denise Murrell, *Retrieving Histories: Black Women Artists and Models (1860-1950)*

Recent research has brought forth revelatory new perspectives on the work of Black women artists and models in early modern art across the Atlantic world. From the models who posed for iconic European artists in the late nineteenth century to the women artists of early twentieth century avant-gardes, the Black female presence within this artistic milieu has often been marginalized or obliterated in the histories of art. Dr. Murrell will set forth emerging narratives that restore the centrality of these figures to the aesthetic and thematic development of international modernism. She will offer insights about curatorial practices for exhibitions and collections with which museums can be inclusive of the multiple Black female subject positions that are necessary to the representation of interests and values that define today's increasingly diverse societies.

Denise Murrell (PhD) is an Associate Curator, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. She was the curator of the 2018 exhibition *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* at Columbia University's Wallach Art Gallery in New York. She was a co-curator of the exhibition's 2019 expansion at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, as *Le Modèle Noir de Géricault à Matisse* and a guest lecturer for its final tour as *Le Modèle Noir de Géricault à Picasso* at the Memorial ACTe in Guadeloupe.

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Session 3. Her museum story (moderator: Maria Holtrop, Rijksmuseum)

In museums the balance between male and female stories is still far from equal and too often confirms to the subject-object paradigm. Which female stories are lacking and how do we present them? What does a female perspective actually mean?



Anna Maria Forssberg, *Gendered interpretations: working with object biographies as a way of making women seen at the Vasa museum*

In 2017 the Vasa museum entered a collaborative project with Victoria & Albert museum and the universities of Lund and Plymouth. The aim was to provide new narratives to museum collections by “gendered interpretations”. A method was developed within the group to write object biographies. An important part of the project was to involve many different people at the museums: curators, cataloguers, conservators, education and public outreach practitioners in order to make the new knowledge accessible to the public. As a result, ten objects from the Vasa museum are presented in a new book: *Föremålens Hemliga Liv* (The secret life of objects).

We claim that object biographies are well suited to bring to life what is hidden and forgotten in museum collections. When the entire lifespan of an object is put under a gendered lens – from raw material and production to being sold or bought, used and exposed, and finally becoming part of a museum collection – new information on power relations in the past is brought to our attention.

Anna Maria Forssberg is an associate professor of history, working as researcher at the Vasa museum in Stockholm. She is specialized in the 17th century, and more specifically war propaganda. Forssberg has been working within the museum sector for many years as curator and researcher. She has recently edited a book on Vasa’s sculptures and is currently conducting research on the people that were on board Vasa when the ship sank in 1628 and on everyday life in the Swedish navy at that time.

Forssberg is interested in material culture and in elaborating methods for studying museum objects and has co-edited a handbook on the study of museum objects. At the conference she will give a short lecture about the project ‘Gendered interpretations’ a co-operation between the universities of Lund and Plymouth and Victoria & Albert museum and the Vasa museum. The aim was to bring out new stories from the museum collections by the way of gendered object biographies.

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Virginia Treanor, *A museum of her own*

This presentation will highlight the origins of the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA), the first museum dedicated to showcasing art by women from the sixteenth century to today. It will also explain the museum’s mission to “champion women through the arts”, and demonstrate how and why a museum dedicated to women artists is still necessary. Through currently available statistics, a persistent gender imbalance throughout the art world is revealed and this presentation outlines how NMWA is actively working to correct that imbalance. Currently closed for major renovations and slated to re-open in late 2023, NMWA’s plans to continue and expand its advocacy efforts for all women through the arts well into the future will also be discussed.

Treanor holds a Ph.D. in seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish art, which she earned at the University of Maryland under the direction of Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., former curator of Dutch and Flemish painting at the National Gallery of Art. She has worked at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Gallery of Art, among other institutions. Committed to scholarship that both elucidates and contextualizes the contributions of historical women, Treanor has curated exhibitions on seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century art. She is a member of CODART, Historians of Netherlandish Art, Society for the Study of Early Modern Women and Gender, and the Association of Art Museum Curators. Treanor also serves on the editorial board for Lund Humphries’ Illuminating Women Artists book series. Currently, she is planning a major exhibition on Dutch and Flemish women artists of the (long) seventeenth century to open in late 2025.

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Agnes Cremers, *Images of an overlooked history*

As a woman, how do you earn a place on the honorary stage of history? The Canon of Dutch history has recently been reassessed in the Netherlands. More women than before have now been included, but it is still an unequal historical competition. There are Dutch icons such as Aletta Jacobs that can't be ignored. However, would such an icon also be shown at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam? Not everyone will agree about what makes someone an icon. Yet sometimes the historical treasure is closer than you think. A good example of this are the drawings by Aat Breur. They highlight an overlooked part of women's history.

Agnes Cremers is co-owner of research company Van Gisteren (Yesterday's). As a public historian, she focuses on stories in history that have either been forgotten or are less widely told. She turns these stories into exhibitions, events and other projects at Van Gisteren. What's more, she initiated the project F-site: an educational platform about women in history. With her colleague Mark Bergsma, she is currently working on a book about Dutch women in the Resistance during the Second World War.

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Session 4. Blind spots (moderator Sheila Reda, Rijksmuseum)

Since Nochlin's groundbreaking essay on women artists in 1971, feminist (art) history has been conducted mainly from a Eurocentric perspective. The recent wish for more diversity must lead to new insights. But it also means a new obstacle race.



Danielle van den Heuvel, *Making the invisible visible: gendered spaces in the premodern world*

A longstanding but widely debated idea in the global history of cities is that with the advent of modernity women would have disappeared from the streets and withdrawn into the home. This talk will introduce the Freedom of the Streets project at the University of Amsterdam that uses a newly developed method to extract everyday practices of street use from textual and visual sources. This method allows us to put anecdotal evidence at the forefront and as such rewrite the history of women in premodern cities such as Amsterdam and Edo/Tokyo.

Danielle van den Heuvel is an Associate Professor in Early Modern History at the University of Amsterdam and Director of the Amsterdam Centre for Urban History. She is the author of the prize-winning *Women and Entrepreneurship. Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands c.1580-1815* (Amsterdam 2007). Since 2016 she directs the VIDI project 'Freedom of the Streets. Gender and Urban Space in Eurasia (1600-1850)', funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research which investigates the relationship between gender and urban space in premodern Eurasia.

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Anne van Lierop, *The Lavender Scare: The evasion of queerness in art history*

When we speak of blind spots in (feminist) art history, it's safe to say the LGBTQ community is a huge one. Either purposefully omitted from the canon due to homo- and transphobia, staying underground out of self-protection, or literally succumbing to AIDS in unspeakable numbers, the queer community and the queer experience is missing from our collective consciousness. And while we are making strides, the active erasure of queerness in art history has now turned into a hesitating evasion of queer topics, either because we are afraid to do it wrong or we simply believe it doesn't matter. As well-intentioned as that is, there is, in fact, a lot we could learn by seeking out the queer community and inviting them into the canon.

Anne van Lierop (they/them) is a queer art historian, curator and researcher based in Groningen, the Netherlands. They hold a BA in graphic design from Academie Minerva and a MA in art history and curatorial studies from the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. They are interested in exploring curatorial possibilities outside of the context of an institution, informed by queer theory and decolonization, and questioning power structures and distribution of wealth in the arts. They are the founder of the Pink Cube, a platform dedicated to the visibility and appreciation of queer art and culture.

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Marion Anker, *Blind spots in the archive: the story of freedom fighter Tanja Dezentjé*

How can you rightfully reconstruct and present a woman's life when the only archival source was written by male opponents? For the exhibition *Revolusi! Indonesia independent* the curatorial team did research on the life of revolutionary Tanja Dezentjé. While born in The Hague, Dezentjé chose the side of the Indonesian Republic during their struggle for independence and propagated their case internationally. She was followed closely by Dutch intelligence officers, whose biased reports are the only written source left. Through critical reflection on the archival materials and by complementing this with oral history, the curatorial team has tried to present a balanced picture of this intriguing woman's life.

Marion Anker is junior curator at the History Department of the Rijksmuseum since 2019. She is one of the compilers of the *Revolusi! Indonesia independent* exhibition on the Indonesian struggle for independence (1945-1949). Her research interests include socio-cultural and colonial history of the 19th and 20th century. She studied History at Leiden University and at the University of Amsterdam and holds a Research Master's degree in modern history.

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