

Plate 1 and Plate 18 from "Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam"



Plate 1 and Plate 18 from "Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam," 1719

A Bug's Life

Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717) devoted herself to observing creatures in their natural habitats. At 52, she embarked for Suriname, a Dutch colony in South America. For two years, she recorded flora and fauna populating its gardens, fields, and formidable rainforest.

Take a closer look

These engravings created from Merian's watercolors portray insects and arachnids arrayed on their host plants. Teeming with color, texture, pattern, and minute details, the images marry science and art. Her groundbreaking publication warranted several posthumous editions.

Who knew?

Merian's depictions of metamorphosis helped debunk the belief that bugs generated spontaneously: flies from rotting meat, moths from wool. Before seeing evidence of insects' developmental stages—egg, larva, pupa, and adult—people did not perceive the link between caterpillar and butterfly.

Maria Sibylla Merian, *Plate 1 and Plate 18* from "Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam," second edition, 1719; Hand-colored engravings on paper, Both: 20½ x 14½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gifts of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photographs by Lee Stalsworth



The Bath



Mother Louise Nursing Her Child



The Bath, 1891

Mother Louise Nursing Her Child, 1899

Baby Boom

Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) explored the nuanced relationships between mothers and children. While she objected to being stereotyped as a “lady” painter, Cassatt created an expansive body of work that illustrates her commitment to representing experiences of modern women.

Take a closer look

A prolific printmaker, Cassatt expertly evoked affectionate moments. Her prints are distinguished by their radical economy of line. Note the simple shapes and limited detail. Through these minimal means, the artist maximized the visual and emotional impact of such scenes.

Who knew?

Though associated with domesticity and maternity, Cassatt never married or had children. She believed that single life proved more conducive to a successful artistic career. Cassatt prioritized her independence but remained close to family, frequently using them as subjects.

Mary Cassatt, *The Bath*, 1891; Soft-ground etching with aquatint and drypoint on paper, 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Mary Cassatt, *Mother Louise Nursing Her Child*, 1899; Etching with drypoint on paper, 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches (overall); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Marie Antoinette from The Great Ladies Series



Test Plate for Virginia Woolf from The Dinner Party



Marie Antoinette from The Great Ladies Series, 1973/2016

Test Plate for Virginia Woolf from The Dinner Party, 1978

Core Values

In her early work, feminist artist **Judy Chicago (b. 1939)** sought to express the experiences of women through abstract forms that refer to an anatomical center. These pieces illustrate such “central-core imagery.”

Take a closer look

Circular, ovular, floral, and butterfly shapes recur throughout Chicago's work. While her techniques have changed over time, those foundational forms remain. Compare the implied dimensionality in the print *Marie Antoinette* with the curvilinear layers of *Test Plate for Virginia Woolf*.

In her own words

“I am trying to make art that relates to the deepest and most mythic concerns of humankind, and I believe that, at this moment of history, feminism is humanism.”

Judy Chicago, *Marie Antoinette* from *The Great Ladies Series*, 1973/2016; Four color stone lithograph on cotton paper, 25 x 25 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase; Members' Acquisition Fund; © Judy Chicago. Courtesy the artist and Art+Culture Projects, New York; © Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society, New York; Photo by Cary Whittier

Judy Chicago, *Test Plate for Virginia Woolf* from *The Dinner Party*, 1978; Glazed porcelain, 10 x 14 x 14 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Elizabeth A. Sackler in honor of Wilhelmina Cole Holladay and the twentieth anniversary of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; © 1978 Judy Chicago; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth





Jardin du Luxembourg



Bacchus #3



Jardin du Luxembourg, 1977

Bacchus #3, 1978

Raucous Bacchus

Elaine de Kooning (1918–1989) often worked in series, single-mindedly attending to one theme. This print and painting both reference Bacchus, the Roman god of wine and agriculture. It is one of more than 60 works she created in response to a 19th-century sculpture in Paris's Luxembourg Gardens.

Take a closer look

These pieces appear abstract, but upon closer inspection the lithograph's gray silhouette and painting's energetic black lines reveal figures. De Kooning frames a recumbent, inebriated deity with greens, yellows, and blues. Find his limp limbs and bloated belly at the top of each composition.

Something to talk about

The artist often combined abstraction and figuration. What do her stylistic choices add to your interpretation of her work?

In her own words

"My whole approach to painting, whether it's abstract painting or portraits, is that I place a value on ideas that are difficult to put into words."

Elaine De Kooning, *Jardin du Luxembourg*, 1977; Color lithograph on paper, 30 x 22 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James E. Foster; © Elaine de Kooning

Elaine de Kooning, *Bacchus #3*, 1978; Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 78 x 50 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Elaine de Kooning; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Two Generations



Two Generations, 1979

Artful Activism

The granddaughter of former slaves, **Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012)** was born and raised in Washington, D.C. At Howard University, she studied design with Loïs Mailou Jones (1905–1998). Later, she turned to sculpture and printmaking through which she advocated for social change.

Take a closer look

Two Generations illustrates Catlett's skill as a printmaker. The dramatic play of light and shadow reveals her subjects' physical features and psychological complexity. Here, the artist invites us to consider the relationship and life experiences of these individuals.

In her own words

"I learned that art is not something that people learn to do individually, that who does it is not important, but its use and its effects on people are what is most important."

Elizabeth Catlett, *Two Generations*, 1979; Lithograph on paper, 17 x 20¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Dorothy Stauffer Lyddon; Art © Elizabeth Catlett/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



Shedding Eden



Rain Forest



Shedding Eden, 1994

Rain Forest, 1996

Glass Menagerie

Maggie Foskett (1919–2014) described herself as a “rag picker of small cosmologies in nature.” She transformed fragments of insect wings, snake skins, and assorted flora into images that reveal intricacies that are normally overlooked or invisible to the naked eye.

Take a closer look

Foskett used *cliché-verre* (French for “glass negative”), a precursor to photography. Arranging specimens between glass squares, often postage-stamp sized, she exposed them on light-sensitive paper in an enlarger. Magnifying such minutiae underscores nature's beauty and fragility.

In her own words

The artist credits her childhood in Brazil with her attention to the natural world: “It was second nature to be wary, to shake out our shoes in the morning and to look closely at what lay underfoot.”

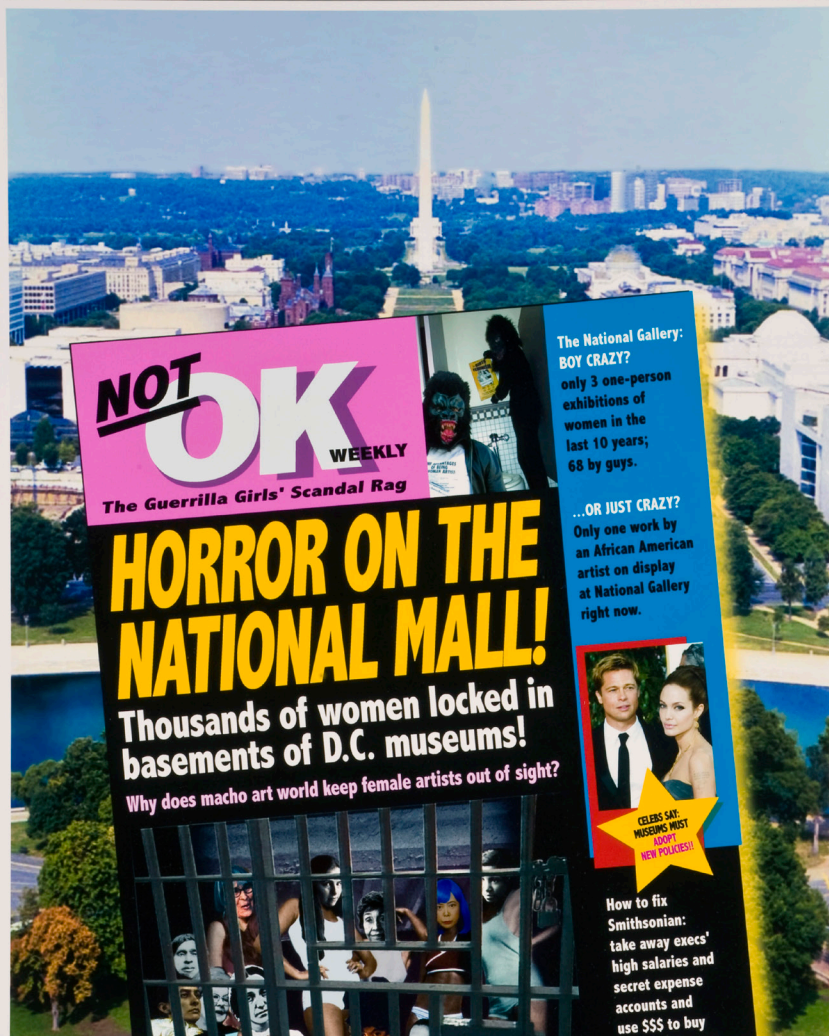
Maggie Foskett, *Shedding Eden*, 1994; Cliché-verre, 20 x 16 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Maggie Foskett, *Rain Forest*, 1996; Cliché-verre, 20 x 15¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 2007

THE WASHINGTON POST



MORE DIRT ON MUSEUMS:

OUR NATIONAL MUSEUMS HAVE PALTRY COLLECTIONS OF ART BY WOMEN, AND ALMOST ALL OF IT IS KEPT IN STORAGE, NOT DISPLAY.

WHICH MUSEUM HAS THE LEAST ART BY WOMEN AND ARTISTS OF COLOR ON VIEW?

National Gallery of Art	98% male	99.9% white
National Portrait Gallery	93% male	99% white
Hirshhorn Museum women & contemporary art	95% male	94% white
American Art Museum & Renwick Gallery	88% male	91% white

EVER WONDER WHY BILLIE HOLLADAY STARTED THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS? NOW YOU KNOW!

IF YOU'RE SHOCKED BY THESE STATS, JOIN US!

DEMAND THAT MUSEUMS USE OUR TAX DOLLARS TO TELL THE WHOLE STORY OF OUR CULTURE.

Statistics are based on information supplied by the museums or found on their websites.

WHO ARE THE GUERRILLA GIRLS AND WHY ARE THEY SAYING THESE THINGS?

FOR THIS SPECIAL SECTION ON FEMINISM AND ART, THE WASHINGTON POST ASKED THE ART WORLD'S MASKED AVENGERS (AND CREATIVE COMPLAINTERS) TO PUT TOGETHER A PAGE ABOUT THE STATE OF ART IN D.C. THE GGS ARE AN ANONYMOUS GROUP OF ARTISTS WHO USE FACTS, HUMOR AND OUTRAGEOUS VISUALS TO EXPOSE DISCRIMINATION IN POLITICS, ART, FILM AND POP CULTURE. THEY WEAR GUERRILLA MASKS IN PUBLIC AND TAKE THE NAMES OF DEAD WOMEN ARTISTS AS PSEUDONYMS. THEY HAVE PRODUCED MORE THAN 100 POSTERS, STICKERS, BILLBOARDS AND BOOKS, AS WELL AS LARGE-SCALE INSTALLATIONS FOR THE VENICE BIENNALE, MEXICO CITY, LONDON, BILBAO AND ISTANBUL. THEIR WORK HAS BEEN PASSED AROUND THE WORLD BY THEIR TIRELESS SUPPORTERS. THEY COULD BE ANYONE, THEY ARE EVERYWHERE.

www.guerrillagirls.com



Horror on the National Mall!, 2007

Masked Avengers

The **Guerrilla Girls (established 1985)** use advertising and street art techniques to emphasize gender and racial inequities in art institutions around the world. This all-female activist collective challenges museums and galleries to feature more works by women and people of color.

Take a closer look

This piece parodies tabloid magazine covers and exposes the underrepresentation of women artists in Washington, D.C., museums. Calling out offending organizations, it declares, "Ever wonder why Billie Holladay started the National Museum of Women in the Arts? Now you know!"

In their own words

"How can you really tell the story of a culture when you don't include all the voices within the culture?"

Who knew?

The Guerrilla Girls don gorilla masks and adopt the names of historical women artists. The woman behind this idea adopted the pseudonym Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757). Work by Carriera, an Italian artist renowned for portraits and allegorical subjects, is in the museum's collection.

Guerrilla Girls, *Horror on the National Mall!, 2007*; Color photolithograph on paper; 23 x 13 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Susan Fisher Sterling in honor of Steven Scott; © Guerrilla Girls, Courtesy www.guerrillagirls.com; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Litchi chinensis



Citrus aurantifolia



Litchi chinensis, 2007

Citrus aurantifolia, 2008

Artistic (By) Nature

Monika E. de Vries Gohlke (b. 1940) grew up within walking distance of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, which she and her family often visited. Gohlke credits the site's natural beauty with inspiring her art (and her mother's embroidery).

Take a closer look

Gohlke incorporates earth tones into her ink to achieve subtle gradations. She hand-colors select details and experiments with varied papers for contrast.

Something to talk about

Historically, botanical illustrators depicted specimens in the center of a white page, demonstrating a certain control over nature. In what ways do Gohlke's works depart from this tradition? What might that suggest about contemporary views of the natural world?

Who knew?

Gohlke has created designs for fabrics, rugs, wallpaper, and dinnerware for Polo/Ralph Lauren, Spode, and Williams-Sonoma.

Monika E. de Vries Gohlke, *Litchi chinensis*, 2007; Etching and aquatint with hand coloring in acrylic paint on paper; 12 x 8¹⁵/₁₆ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Monika E. de Vries Gohlke; © Monika E. de Vries Gohlke; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Monika E. de Vries Gohlke, *Citrus aurantifolia*, 2008; Etching and aquatint with hand coloring in acrylic paint on paper; 10⁷/₈ x 9 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Monika E. de Vries Gohlke; © Monika E. de Vries Gohlke; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

