

CHECKLIST

All works are in the collection of the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum

George Wesley Bellows

(American, 1882–1925)

Portrait of Geraldine Lee, No. 1, 1914
Oil on panel, 22 ³/₈ x 18 ⁵/₁₆"
University purchase, Bixby Fund, 1966

Jacob G. Cuyp

(Dutch, 1594–1651)

Portrait of a Lady, c. 1640–50
Oil on cradled panel, 35 x 27 ⁵/₈"
University purchase, Parsons Fund, 1924

Gilles Demarteau

(French, 1722–1776)

after Jean-Baptiste Huet

(French, 1745–1811)

Une liseuse (Woman Reading), c. 1773
Une musicienne (Woman Musician),
c. 1773
Soft ground etching, 16 ¹⁵/₁₆ x 13 ⁷/₈"
and 16 x 13"
Gift of J. Harold Pettus, 1965

William Fett

(American, 1918–2006)

Eve, 1989

Oil on paper, 30 x 22 ¹/₈"
Gift of the artist in memory of his
mother, Sarah E. Marshall Fett, 1990

Harriet Hosmer

(American, 1830–1908)

Daphne, 1854

Marble, 26 ¹/₂ x 19 ¹/₂ x 13 ¹/₂"
Gift of Wayman Crow, Sr., 1880

Copy after Lucas van Leyden

(Dutch, 1494–1533)

The Temptation of Adam and Eve, n.d.
Engraving, 4 ¹³/₁₆ x 3 ⁹/₁₆"
Gift of Professor and Mrs. Thomas Hall,
1986

Edvard Munch

(Norwegian, 1863–1944)

Portrait of Irmgard Steinbart, 1913

Oil on canvas, 69 ³/₄ x 34 ⁵/₈"
Gift of Morton J. May, 1968

Vincente Palmaroli y Gonzales

(Spanish, 1834–1896)

The Interrupted Reading, c. 1865–75
Oil on panel, 19 ⁵/₈ x 24 ¹/₈"
Bequest of Charles Parsons, 1905

Elizabeth Peyton

(American, b. 1965)

Georgia (After Stieglitz, 1918), 2006
Etching, 10 / 40, 30 x 22"
University purchase, Bixby Fund, 2009

Martha Rosler

(American, b. 1943)

Semiotics of the Kitchen, 1975
Black-and-white video with sound,
transferred to DVD, 6:09 min.
University purchase, Bixby Fund, 2013

Martin Schongauer

(German, c. 1445–1491)

The Virgin Seated in a Courtyard,
c. 1474–79
Engraving, 6 ⁹/₁₆ x 4 ³/₄"
Gift of Dr. Malvern B. Clopton, 1930

Katharina Sieverding

(German, b. Prague, 1944)

Maton, 1969 / 96
Color photograph and mirror,
74 ³/₄ x 49 ¹/₄" (each)
University purchase, Art Acquisition
Fund, 2002

TEACHING GALLERY

Spring 2014

Wanting Women: Expressions of Desire and Difference in Images of Women from the 15th Century to Today

“Women in every age by Nature were
With sound judgment and brave hearts endowed,
And no less fit to demonstrate with zeal
Men’s wisdom, care, and worth, were born,
And why then, if they bear a common stamp,
If their substances be not different,
If they have one food, one speech alike,
Should they then differ in good sense and courage?”

Moderata Fonte (1555–1592), *The Worth of Women*, 1600

“Between my fingers I seem to hold the weariness of the
whole world.
I am nothing more than a look, a lost look, and veins.”

Sibilla Aleramo (1876–1960), “I Am So Good,” 1947

This Teaching Gallery exhibition—on view January 31 through April 14, 2014—is curated by Rebecca Messbarger, professor of Italian and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, in conjunction with the course “Divergent Voices: Italian Women Writers” in Arts & Sciences in spring 2014.

Wanting Women: Expressions of Desire and Difference in Images of Women from the 15th Century to Today

Mythic, idealized, religious, sexualized, romantic, misogynist, even feminist—images of women are inevitably laden with the freight of cultural and visual conventions surrounding the feminine, some as ancient as artistic representation itself. *Wanting Women* draws together a wide selection of Western depictions of women in a variety of media over seven centuries, culled from the Kemper Art Museum's collection, with the aim of interrogating historical and cultural constructions of femininity as well as counterreactions and responses. The exhibition is designed to present a visual counterpart to the literary texts explored in the course "Divergent Voices: Italian Women Writers" (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures), which juxtaposes iconic images of femininity with the idiosyncratic words deployed by Italian women poets and novelists over nine centuries to portray their own and other women's actual lives.

**This world I'd wish to leave and God to serve
And myself to sever from all vanity,
Because the growth and increase I observe
Of falsehood, foolishness, and villainy.**

La Compiuta Donzella (13th century), "To Leave the World and God to Serve," n.d.

Among a diverse range of aesthetic practices and gendered manifestations of virtue and vice, beauty and corruption, are such works as the engraving of *The Virgin Seated in a Courtyard* (c. 1474–79) by the German painter and printmaker **Martin Schongauer** (c. 1445–1491). Widely disseminated throughout Europe, his engravings were admired and imitated by such leading artists as Michelangelo and Dürer. Here we see the quintessential paragon of female goodness, the pious Virgin cradling the Christ child, her noble humility marked according to aesthetic convention by a clear, high forehead and modest, downcast gaze. Mary's placement in the unembellished enclosed churchyard evokes her virginal purity and

exceptionality among women even as the shadow and light of the ornate folds of her dress signal the Gothic style and the exquisite craftsmanship of the artist.

**Truly the devil stands for the male, who from now on
will cast on to you the blame for his failings and will
have no other purpose than deceiving you, betraying
you, and removing all your rights of dominion granted
by my omnipotence.**

Sister Arcangela Tarabotti (1604–1652), writing in the voice of God to Eve, *Paternal Tyranny*, 1654

For millennia, philosophers, theologians, writers, and artists have cast Eve in the role of Mary's perfect foil: the wanton temptress in the Garden and first mother of fallen humanity. A print after the sixteenth-century Dutch printmaker, draughtsman, and painter **Lucas van Leyden** (1494–1533) captures in a conventional rhetorical style the climactic moment when, in the dense Edenic forest, Eve sensually cocks her head and extends the forbidden apple to a reluctant Adam. In his series of engravings known as *The Power of Women*, Leyden depicted stock cautionary tales from the Bible of women's ridicule and ruin of men.

**And when the creature picked up the mirror, she
gazed with infinite stupor at her snout and her little
green body. She was all green and ugly, nothing but a
serpent.... She did understand how greatly dissimilar
she was to him and that going to paradise in a state
like this was entirely out of the question.**

Anna Maria Ortese (1914–1998), *The Iguana: A Novel*, 1965

Leyden's archetypal embodiment of female difference, whose wretched legacy is human sin and suffering, is radically remade in American artist **William Fett**'s (1918–2006) brilliantly colored surrealist painting of Eve from 1989. Fett's energetic configuration and vibrant coloring of the parts of Eve's body accentuate and link ruby nipples and lips, painted nails and toes, to the tantalizing apple she is about to bite, provoking a literal re-vision of this agent of the Fall.

**Now tell me—and Heaven help you, Gentlemen—
shouldn't a woman be able to communicate her own
ideas? Is she not endowed with a mind and capacity
for reason as is Man? Is she utterly excluded from
human discourse? Certainly not!**

Diamante Medaglia Faini (1724–1770), "Oration on Which Studies Are Fitting for Women," 1763

This exhibition provides the opportunity to consider a range of alternative interpretations of femininity across time and Western cultures, as well as cultural, social, and political obstacles to female agency, from the nineteenth-century Spanish painter **Vincente Palmaroli y Gonzales**'s vision of a young girl hiding her book from the reproving eyes of a priest in *The Interrupted Reading* (c. 1865–75), to *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), a six-minute video by **Martha Rosler** (b. 1943) that enacts a form of radical defiance against women's domestic oppression characteristic of 1970s American feminism. In the latter work, the internationally recognized photographer and video and performance artist exemplifies an anti-Julia Childs in a mock TV cooking demonstration; her dour expression and monotonous voice present a jarring contrast to her methodical stabbing and smashing of the cooking utensils she uses in her demonstration.

**-You think you love him, because you submit to him.
You look after him, you take care of him, you put up
with him, but that isn't love.
-What is it then?
-It's duty, you're in love with your sense of duty.**

Dacia Maraini (b. 1936), *A Woman at War*, 1988

"What do women want?" Sigmund Freud famously asked. A play on words, the title of this exhibition is meant not only to evoke the whole field of inquiry engendered by Freud's question but also to underscore the ambiguity at the core of the representation of women. Signifying both lack and desire, the double meaning of "wanting" plays on the notion of absence—what is represented reflects not "real" women as much

as products of the (male) imagination—and the notion of (woman's) desire in relation to social and cultural conventions of authority and agency. The various works on view offer new ways of considering recurrent themes throughout the history of the representation of women, including birth and motherhood; feminine beauty, virtue, and corruption; the female body; and the relation of the object to the owner of the gaze. Equally important, the exhibition necessitates a deep consideration of the formidable, age-old process of reiteration and materialization of female otherness that women writers and artists through history to the present moment have struggled not only to defy but also to reclaim and recreate anew.

**Slowly
my bier opened
My death
Stopped traveling
And I have emerged
From a larger and heavier
New placenta
The historic placenta
And have begun to scream
With the redness of my rage**

Livia Candiani (b. 1952), "The Death of Poetry," 1978

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