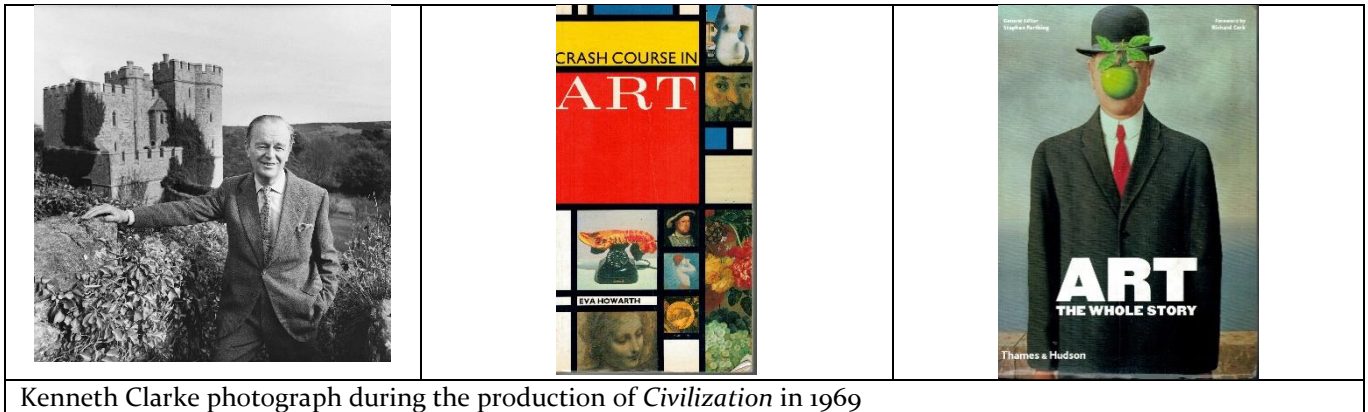


Overlooked Female and Over-promoted Male Artists Colin Lomas



Kenneth Clarke photograph during the production of *Civilization* in 1969

- *Pablo Picasso compared with Remedios Varo and Dorothy Tanning*
- *Gabriel Munter and Wassily Kandinsky*
- *Leonardo da Vinci and Artemisia Gentileschi*

PABLO PICASSO

Picasso (1881-1973) was born in Málaga Spain, first child of Ruiz y Blasco who was a painter who specialised in wildlife paintings. For most of his life Ruiz was a professor of art at various art schools. His ancestors were minor aristocrats. Picasso showed a passion and a skill for drawing from an early age. According to his mother, his first words were "lapiz, lapiz", the Spanish word for "pencil".

Early Works

Picasso's early paintings show a striking maturity, such as *The Old Fisherman* done when he was 14 years old!

1902 *Femme au café (Absinthe Drinker)*.



Around 1900 African artworks were being brought to Paris museums in consequence of the expansion of the French empire into Sub-Saharan Africa. The press was abuzz with exaggerated stories and exotic tales about the African kingdoms. It was natural in this climate of African interest that Picasso would look towards African artworks as inspiration for some of his work; his interest was sparked by Henri Matisse who showed him a mask from the Ivory Coast.

Original African masks were freely available in Paris and masks would appear in his paintings.

Female (study for Les Femmes d'Alger) 1906.







Les Femmes d'Alger 1907. Here Picasso was reacting against the mainstream art trade. Before this picture, Picasso did "society" portraits of elegant women but the French restraint irritated him so much that he would call upon the totems of Africa and a brothel in Barcelona to paint the *Femmes d'Alger*. The shallowness of impressionism (as he perceived it) became Picasso's battle cry and until his dying day Picasso would attack even the great Monet.

Les Femmes d'Alger 1907 was the culmination of the "Black period". His subject matter was a brothel and the five prostitutes (in the Avignon red-light district in Barcelona). The three women on the left based on stone age carvings from Iberia (i.e. Spain and Portugal) which a friend had stolen from the Louvre. The two on the right are based on African masks.


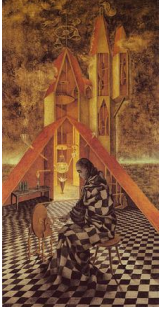


The contrast between the sexuality and femininity on the one hand and the ancient African/Iberian masks on the other hand would shock even Picasso's avant-garde friends, who actually avoided him for a time.

Many writers argue that *Les Femmes d'Alger* was the most influential artwork of the 20th century! (e.g. BBC arts editor Will Gompertz in *What Are You Looking At* 2012). Essentially the case is that the work was of such dynamic originality it influenced artists even if they didn't like it or understand it and it is usually cited as the starting gun for Cubism, which was indeed taken up by many artists before WW1. This argument is weakened by some observations. Firstly, it does not have the multiple views found in all the earlier Cubist works by Picasso himself, Braques, Gris etc. Secondly, Cubism itself did not itself have any obvious influence after WW1. Thirdly, there is no evidence anywhere from artists themselves that they were influenced by the painting.

			
<i>Paysage aux deux figures</i> (Landscape with two figures) Picasso 1907	<i>Card Player</i> 1914 Picasso	<i>Three Dancers</i> 1925 Picasso Tate	<i>Crucifixion</i> 1930 Picasso
<p><i>Three Dancers</i> 1925 - the common view is that it concerns lost artist friends - Carlos Casagemas and Ramon Pichot and a woman Germaine Gargallo who was loved by both. Carlos killed himself in 1903 after she rejected him. She later married Ramon Pichot who died suddenly 1925. She is on the left. The figure in the middle is Carlos (despite the womanly body) in a crucifixion pose. Pichot is on the right but there is also a mysterious face in a dark profile.</p> <p><i>Crucifixion</i> 1930 is possibly the only overtly religious picture done by Picasso. The images anticipate <i>Guernica</i> 1937. Many commentators argue (unconvincingly) that figures in the painting are people in his life at the time - including his wife Olga following their bitter separation and his lover at the time Marie-Thérèse Walter.</p>			



In 1930s many European artists (left wing or Jewish) crossed the Atlantic to find safety and some found it in Mexico. One such artist was Spanish artist **REMEDIOS VARO** (1908-1963)

VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT4aHxl-s5k> Remedios Varo: Rising high from the shadow of Dali

			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Useless Science or the Alchemist</i> 1955 • <i>Roulotte</i> 1956 • <i>La Huida - The Flight</i> 1961 - this the desperate flight from Paris to Mexico when they realised that they were in danger of being arrested by the Nazis 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remedios Varo was raised in a well-educated family. Her father, a hydraulics engineer, taught her technical drawing when she was young. His job required frequent travel, and the family traveled throughout Spain and North Africa before settling in Madrid in 1917. In Madrid she attended Catholic school and then pursued art at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid, graduating in 1930 with a degree to teach drawing. • In the mid-1930s, while living in Barcelona, Varo began to involve herself in Surrealism and joined the avant-garde artists' group Logicophobista. In 1936 she met Surrealist poet Benjamin Péret, with whom she fled Spain for Paris and whom she married in 1937. They were soon absorbed into the activities of the Surrealist movement there, and Varo exhibited with the group and published drawings in Surrealist publications. 			

- In late 1941 the couple fled again, this time to Mexico to escape Nazi-occupied France. In Mexico City they connected with locals, such as writer Octavio Paz, as well as other exiled artists and writers, among them Wolfgang Paalen, Gordon Onslow Ford, and Leonora Carrington, who became Varo's closest friend. Varo's first pursuits in Mexico City were in commercial art, interior and costume design, and restoration of pre-Columbian pottery. She began to devote her time entirely to painting only in 1953.
- In large part, her paintings are populated with strange humans engaged in mystical and alchemical activity in dreamlike atmospheres. Her compositions also include architectural features that make direct reference to medieval art and show her expert draftsmanship. She was an admirer of Hiëronymus Bosch, whose mysterious compositions undoubtedly influenced her. She had a well-received first solo exhibition in Mexico City in 1956 and continued to exhibit thereafter. Varo created the bulk of her work in the last 10 years of her life. She died of a heart attack at age 54.

VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVmmPgt-3Mk>
 The life of Remedios Varos – Spanish commentary, English subtitles

				
<i>The Meeting</i> Remedios Varo	<i>The Juggler</i> 1956 Remedios Varo	<i>The Phenomenon of Weightlessness</i> Remedios Varo	<i>Garden of Love</i> Remedios Varo	<i>Light Emerging</i> Remedios Varo





The Juggler. In this painting the juggler/magician stands on the platform of a carnivalesque cart filled with fantastical objects and animals.

DOROTHEA TANNING (1910-2012) was an American painter, printmaker, sculptor, writer, and poet. Her early work was influenced by Surrealism. Here she is photographed by her work *Quiet-Willow Walk* 1998. Tanning wrote stories and poems throughout her life. Her poems were published regularly in literary reviews and magazines such as *The Yale Review*, *Poetry*, *The Paris Review*, and *The New Yorker*.



VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YrohEulNOW> Dorothea Tanning at Tate Modern

Paintings by **Dorothea Tanning**

			
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1. *Portrait of Muriel Levy* 1943
2. *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* 1943. "It's about confrontation. Everyone believes he/she is his/her drama. While they don't always have giant sunflowers (most aggressive of flowers) to contend with, there are always stairways, hallways, even very private theatres where the suffocations and the finalities are being played out, the blood red carpet or cruel yellows, the attacker, the delighted victim". DT

3. *A Mrs. Radcliffe Called Today* 1944 (The title refers to the author Ann Radcliffe who was a pioneer of the Gothic novel c. 1800). "In the studio, you are in a cocoon. Moods change constantly. In the 1940s I was in a kind of gothic mood. The mood of longing for a displacement, of another time, another place. I had read gothic novels at that time. They were permeated with this mist of mysterious and unpredictable atmospheres of places that I didn't know about". DT.
4. *The Truth About Comets* 1945

Ann Radcliffe (1764 - 1823) was an English author and pioneer of Gothic fiction. Her technique of explaining apparently supernatural elements in her novels has been credited with gaining Gothic fiction respectability in the 1790s.



1. *The Philosophers* 1952
2. *Death and the Maiden* 1953. "The temporality of life is the thing we have to forget. It is the one mistake in creation, that we have to die. I don't know why it wasn't done a little better. But then, it wasn't. So the best thing is not to give it credence. Don't accept it. Don't accept it. If you tailor all your actions and your words to that non-acceptance, it will be as if it doesn't exist". DT
3. *Birthday* (self-portrait) 1942

WASSILY KANDINSKY and GABRIELE MÜNTER

Gabriele Münter (1877 - 1962) was a German "expressionist" painter who was at the forefront of the Munich avant-garde. She studied and lived with the painter Wassily Kandinsky and was a founding member of the expressionist group *Der Blaue Reiter* – *the Blue Rider*.

Her parents died when she was 21 and she inherited a large amount which left her free to pursue art without the need to sell. She lived all her adult life in Murnau.

Photo 1924



VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iU8pijJ-10> Gabriele Münter paintings Bach-double violin concerto

Gabriele Münter was born in Berlin. She came from a very political family. Her father's political activities in Germany before the 1848 socialist revolution made him unwelcome in Germany so he emigrated to Tennessee USA. There he married Münter's mother (also a German immigrant). Being an anti-slavery liberal, he again found himself out-of-step in Tennessee, in the pre-civil war South. The young couple returned to Germany, where their four children were born and grew up.

Gabrielle and her sister travelled to the US in 1898, to visit relatives. She was a 21-year-old orphan with a substantial inheritance, plenty of time, and a Kodak box camera.

Though she had no artistic ambitions, she kept a detailed account of prairie life recorded in two years' worth of photographs that sparked her career.



Gabriele Münter - *Three Women in their Sunday Best in Texas* 1899

- In her art work, she was a risk-taker, game to try new things and willing to fail. The glitches set her successes into relief. However, her eagerness to experiment and grow didn't help her reputation since versatility in a man is a mark of heroic imagination but in a woman it a sign of lack of direction. Picasso's perpetually evolving style is considered his great strength, while Münter's openness remained a liability.
- She was intimately linked with Wassily Kandinsky. They lived and painted together (in the house she bought) and jointly helped founded Der Blaue Reiter – the Blue Rider group – see below. But Kandinsky was adept at claiming sole credit. She deferred to him, despite having great ideas herself.
- Although a risk-taker, she hesitated to take the plunge into abstraction which at the time when it becoming the dominant theory. Kandinsky was not so hesitant and dived into the abstraction wave.



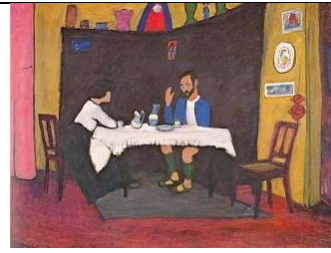

Kandinsky painted by Gabriel Munter 1906

Like Gabriele Munter, Kandinsky is labelled as an “Expressionist”, along with many other artists in that period.


VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FamjB5soPmU> Review of Gabriele Munter’s work



Paintings by Gabriele Munter

				
<i>The Yellow House 1908</i>	<i>Frau Signe Hallberg 1916</i>	<i>Kandinsky and Erma Bossi in Murnau house 1910</i>	<i>Staffelsee 1934</i>	

Paintings by Gabriele Munter

			
<i>Anna Roslund 1917</i>	<i>Meditation 1917</i>	<i>Paar in Interieur 1917</i>	

From about 1908 Munich artist Gabriele Münter and her fiancé Wassily Kandinsky were central people in the Munich avant garde. In 1912, their artistic circle formed the Der Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) group. Among their artistic principles were simplified forms and a heightened color palette, as seen here. In the picture, Kandinsky gesticulates as he speaks with the artist **Erma Bossi** at the dinner table in Münter’s country house in Murnau, suggesting both the programmatic nature of the group’s beliefs and Kandinsky’s importance as a teacher and theorist.

Gabriele Munter travelled to Scandinavia during the First World War with Kandinsky but in 1917 he returned to Russia where he married Nina Andrewskey. During this period, Munter created paintings focusing on women and interiors, many suggesting a mood of thoughtful contemplation. She painted this portrait in 1917 of author and musician **Anna Roslund-Agaard** (1891–1941)

WASSILY KANDINSKY was a Russian lawyer-turned-painter, he founded an art school in Munich around 1900. Gabriele Munter (1877-1962) was his student and lover. She painted the *Kandinsky at the Tea Table* in 1910. Notice the romantic imagery – the tea service. Gabriele Münter said “German painters refused to believe that a woman could have real talent, and I was even denied access, as a student, to the Munich Academy”



Between 1908 and 1910 they lived in a house in Murnau in Bavaria where Kandinsky painted the half-abstract *Church at Murnau* 1909 which relied heavily on shape and colour. Before then he had studied and taught the modern movements – Impressionism and Symbolism – but Bavaria he deliberately learned the folk art and strove to take art “back to its roots”



Improvisation III 1909 by Kandinsky demonstrates the free, almost unnatural use of colour that characterises Expressionist works. He was essentially a mystic and he believed that all colours hold a “psycho-spiritual” meaning. He wrote *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* 1912. Colour, like music, is gateway to the soul.



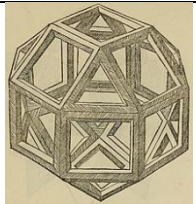


He connected colours with instruments – light blue – flute, dark blue – cello. The horse and rider is possibly St George who features prominently in the Russian Orthodox Church and would have resonated with Kandinsky from an early age. The horse and rider feature in many works and have a spiritual significance. The two green people on left are a mystery. They may be just having a chat. *Red Square in Moscow* 1916.





LEONARDO DA VINCI and ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

If you open any popular book or web site on Leonardo da Vinci you will find him described as a leading person in many fields – painting, architecture, sculpture, engineering, mathematics, literature - and many others.

Could Leonardo be accurately described as a sculptor or an architect or a mathematician or a man of literature? Leonardo’s notebooks show his incredible appetite for learning. He produced many astonishing and original ideas but whether he deserves these labels is highly questionable.


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nearest Leonardo ever came to being a sculptor was to produce drawings for a proposed horse statue. He didn't ever produce a single sculpture. • The nearest he ever came to being an architect was to produce drawings. No building ever appeared from his designs. • The nearest he ever came to being a mathematician was to do illustrations for the books of a mathematician Luca Pacioli. • And there is nothing he produced that could be described as “literature”. 			
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Leonardo produced between a dozen and twenty pictures. Here is a selection.

				
<p>Ginevra de' Benci 1478</p>	<p>Portrait of a Musician 1487</p>	<p>The Adoration of the Magi 1481</p>	<p>Cecilia Gallerani (The Lady with an Ermine) 1490</p>	


				
<i>The Last Supper</i> 1498	<i>The Virgin of the Rocks</i> version 2 1508	<i>Saint John the Baptist</i> 1500	<i>The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Saint John the Baptist</i> 1508	<i>The Mona Lisa</i> 1503

ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1656) is the most celebrated female painter of the 17th century, working in many countries for the highest echelons of European society, including royalty. • She was the daughter of Orazio Gentileschi, himself a successful artist. • Her first major work was <i>Susanna and the Elders</i> was 1610. A year later Artemisia was raped by the painter Agostino Tassi, an acquaintance and collaborator of her father. There followed a trial an infamous trial - during which she was tortured. Tassi was found guilty and banished from Rome, though his punishment was never enforced. • She had a successful career in Rome, Florence and then Naples. She was the first woman to gain membership to the <i>Academy of the Arts of Drawing</i> in 1616. • From 1630 she settled in Naples, where she ran a successful studio. She stayed in London from 1639 until the start of the Civil War in 1642. She and her father produced the ceiling painting of the Queen's House in Greenwich (now at Marlborough House in London). See below. 	
Recently the National Gallery has acquired the <i>self-portrait of Artemisia Gentileschi as Catherine of Alexandria</i> , described in the video by the NG curator	
VIDEO https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eM3KLNOV-Q NG Curator	

More than anyone else, Germaine Greer “rescued” Artemisia Gentileschi from oblivion in 1970s. She promoted Artemisia in the book *The Obstacle Race*

Artemisia Gentileschi is linked with famous names of the period.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Allegory of Inclination</i> by Artemisia Gentileschi is a 1617 painting on a ceiling in <i>Casa Buonarroti</i> in Florence, the house of the family of Michelangelo (1475 - 1564). His grand-nephew Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger (1568–1646) turned the building into a museum to glorify the life of Michelangelo. • The painting depicts a nude female figure representing <i>Inclination</i> or inborn creative ability. Seated on a cloud, she holds a mariner's compass and is guided by a star above. The woman's features are similar to those in self-portraits in Gentileschi's oeuvre. • Both Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger and Artemisia were well acquainted with scientist Galileo (1564-1642). 	
Scientist Galileo (1564-1642) and Artemisia Gentileschi were both members of the prestigious Accademia del Disegno in Florence and were well acquainted.	
Artemisia's father Orazio Gentileschi was in prison with the most famous Baroque artist of them all, Caravaggio . In 1603 a wealthy man brought a libel lawsuit against the pair for writing derogatory verses about an altarpiece he owned and incredibly, they both imprisoned.	
Artemisia was also a friend of another female painter who should be more famous – Sofonisba Anguissola	

Florentine period (1612–1620)

She was the first woman ever admitted into the *Academy of Art and Design in Florence* and as a woman she could paint live nude female models. This gave her an advantage over male painters, who were prevented from using live female nude models.

Artemisia's abilities as a painter had been recognized in Florence and she enjoyed the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici, the grand duke of Tuscany and even King Philip IV of Spain and Charles I of England.

***Susanna and the Elders* 1638 – second version**

In Florence, her husband Stiattesi became unfaithful and they separated. Artemisia realized that she had already proved that she could do what most women have been told that they cannot do, make their own way in a "man's world". As she began to work on her second version of *Susanna and the Elders* she depicts Susanna not as a frightened young girl but an aged experienced woman.

It has been said that the Elders are representative of Tassi (the rapist) and her unfaithful husband Stiattesi. Artemisia portrays "Susanna in a commercial pose as a beautiful seductress, she also conveys the image of herself as a successful artist at the top of her career". She was more successful than any man in her life up to this time had been.



Other than her illustrations of Susanna, Rome was not as lucrative as she had hoped and she moved on to Naples in search of more lucrative commissions. In Naples, she completed works for cathedrals and courts. She adapted to the artwork in Naples form her usual subjects that she was famous for. She traveled to London at the request of Charles I of England.

***Clio, the Muse of History* 1632**

The book on the table contains an inscription that bears Artemisia's signature and the date 1632, along with a dedication.

In the past, the figure has been interpreted as an allegory of Fame whose attributes include the trumpet, depicted in the figure's hand. However, the trumpet is also the "attribute" of Clio.



1. Artemisia Gentileschi self-portrait as the *Allegory of Painting* 1639
2. *Judith Beheading Holofernes* by Artemisia 1620.
3. *Judith Beheading Holofernes* by Caravaggio 1602.



VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNbjnwBZl44> Artemisia Gentileschi in 60 seconds

VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8KDCjbBqgE> Artemisia Gentileschi: "The Spirit of Caesar in the soul of a woman!"

VIDEO https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLa62r54_yA Artemisia Gentileschi, the most celebrated female artist of the 17th century

AG's first major work was *Susanna and the Elders* – a popular subject

Susanna and the Elders: Artemisia Gentileschi 1610 and Guido Reni (1575-1642)

Susanna was bathing in the garden one day for a bath and during that time Susanna's housekeeper let in the two "elders" and they found Susanna. The elders then demanded sexual favours from her and threatened to ruin her reputation if she did not. The two elders tried to ruin Susanna's reputation until a young man named Daniel* intervened. He suggested that the two men be questioned separately. When they were questioned separately, their stories did not coincide with each and so Susanna's name was cleared.

*Of lions den fame, and the writing on the wall.



AG and her father worked in London

Van Dyck (1599-1641) worked for king Charles I (including portraits of the king) and he hoped the king would employ him to do a massive art work in one of the palaces, something like Rubens' ceiling canvases in the Banqueting House. Instead, Charles invited Orazio Gentileschi and his daughter Artemisia to do ceiling of the Queen's House, Greenwich. Charles I was a fanatical collector, willing to ruin public finances to follow his artistic wishes. The fame of Artemisia probably intrigued him and he bought many of her paintings including the *Allegory* self-portrait.

- *An Allegory of Peace and the Arts under the English Crown* 1638 for Central Hall, Queen's House.



"Her characters intentionally lack the stereotypical feminine traits—sensitivity, timidity and weakness—and are courageous, rebellious, and powerful personalities" – Art Critic Roberto Longhi 1916



- *Bathsheba*. The story of David's seduction of Bathsheba is in 2 Samuel 11. David, while walking on the roof of his palace, saw Bathsheba bathing. She was the wife of Uriah, a military man. He immediately desired her and later made her pregnant. In an effort to conceal his sin, David summoned Uriah from the army in the hope that Uriah would re-consummate his marriage and think that the child was his. Uriah was unwilling to violate the ancient rule applying to warriors in active service and rather than go home to his own bed, he preferred to remain with the palace troops. King David then gave the orders that Uriah should be placed in the front lines of the battle, where it was the most dangerous, and Uriah was subsequently killed in battle. David made the now widowed Bathsheba his wife who gave birth to Solomon, the next king.

- *Self Portrait - playing a lute*

VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNbjnwBZl44> 60 second summary of AG