

**J.R. MORENO VERA, WOMEN: OBJECT AND SUBJECT IN PORTRAITURE
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In the article the authors analyze the field of portraiture from the point of view of woman, not only her image inside the portraits, which is widely «hypervisible» and well known in the bibliography of this subject, but at the same time from the point of view that women have when they are the painter/creator of the portrait. A gender approach in this field is necessary to highlight that the main narration in art history is always related to the men and the role of women is most of the times invisible.

Key words: women, portraiture, education, gender, invisibility of women artists, art..

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important challenges that education have in the future is to answer in a positive way to society demands, so that the arrival in the last decade of mobile devices connected to internet has caused a fast connection to a great amount of information for citizens, and among all this information the gender studies are one of the new fields in social sciences education. But, educative system is slow and doesn't respond to these novelties, depriving students of an education with the use of these new devices, as well as the search and information processing with them.

Besides that, in the last decade the Social Sciences started to make itself some questions, and new conceptual fields have appeared that were, until the date, invisible. One of the new topics that is emerging in Social Sciences lessons are gender studies. In fact, until 2004, there was not a deep approach to the field of women portraiture in its own right as commented Pearson in her book where analyzed women portraiture in early modern Europe [1. P. 35].

But first of all, we made ourselves some research questions because our hypothesis was that probably the students knew nothing about women artists. How to deal with gender studies in the classroom? And the invisibility of women in art history? Why art historians have never spoken about them? To approach this «problem» of invisibility, the aim of this paper is to analyze the topic of visibility/invisibility of women in the genre of portraiture, because this genre was particularly important for women, in one hand because they were the main character of the portraits, and in the other hand because it was a genre mostly used by women to develop their creations.

As we said before, we started from the hypothesis of the lack of knowledge about the topic, as there's no presence of it in education law or text books and, furthermore, the literature about art history during centuries don't show the importance of portraiture for women artists.

2. WOMEN INVISIBILITY IN ART HISTORY

Women role in visual culture have always been relegated to the background due to the dominant role of men in every aspect of social life, and responsible as well for narrating the history of art. For Alario, using the words of Victoria Sendón, it's *the history narrated by the father* [2. P. 59-78], or what Fernández Valencia comments when she says that it doesn't exist an innocent eye due to the cultural, ideological, educative or religious conditions of the person that narrates history [3. P. 129, 158].

Edholm gives a similar reason so, for her, women in portraiture has always been represented linked to the historical social repression that women suffer in the past:

The life and the face of women don't narrate the same history ... in terms of representation we always observe the beauty –or, at least the grace and modesty– when they're young, and the lack of beauty when they're old [4. P. 78].

The main problem for women in visual culture is (was, and will be) the social condition that women lived during centuries, limited to a domestic context with decorum, dignity and loyalty as only rules of a game in which she was systematically expelled. Women could only live keeping the feminine ideal imposed by morality [5. P. 146-160]. In fact, only a few cases in portraiture show a powerful and dominant woman: the official portraiture or state portraits, where queens, duchesses or marchioness represent their autonomous power linked to the place that they have in the society.

In sum, as Mayayo notices women are «hypervisible» as subject in representations, but is socially invisible in visual culture [6. P. 246]. That is something that Berger commented when he spoke about the educative conditions of women in the history:

From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually (...) and so she comes to consider the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman [7. P. 45].

Most of the works that women painted are portraits, something logical as it fits with the secondary social role that women had during centuries. At this point, coincide authors as

West [8. P. 176] and Rosenthal [9. P. 112] that comment that, paradoxically, portraiture was considered as a secondary genre in painting so it was associated traditionally to women.

The last decades of 19th century and the first of 20th a strong social movement between women started to promote suffrage, to access voting in occidental countries. With the arrival of 20th century and the avant-garde movement, the situation of women seemed to change, and of course the situation of women artists as well, so that, as affirms Pollock, the avant-garde movement valued especially the aesthetic autonomy and the individual non-sexual, so for the movements associated to avant-garde the gender of artists was not important and the most important thing was individual creativity [10. P. 231].

For Alario [11. P. 310] the first women artists to take control of their situation, and to dignify femininity were those artists from the 60's and 70's that focused the problem of building a feminine sexual identity in the field of arts.

Definitely, we observe how women artists were relegated to a secondary position in occidental art history until the second half of 20th century when feminist movements in the arts started to dignify their role in the arts reaching an intellectual and creative status at the same level than men. In spite of this, the situation nowadays is still unequal for women, less represented in museums for example, and women have to knock down many walls to get the goal of equality. As Parker and Pollock [12. P. 10] remark despite the huge increase of women artists during the twentieth century, the perception is still that art is created by men.

3. WOMEN: ONLY A SEXUAL OBJECT IN PORTRAITURE OR A CREATIVE ARTIST AS WELL?

In the educative context of Social Sciences, the works in gender education have risen and now are present due to be crosscutting and, as well, due to the importance to define the civic and democratic education of students in Social Sciences. At this point a feminist look to visual culture is quite important for future teachers (in all stages: Early-childhood, Primary, Secondary and University) as they have to educate the future citizens.

The image of women in visual culture, arts or television advertising for example, has not been always the same, it have developed with art itself and with the feminine status society had.

As visual documents, the images (and sounds, in the case of ads) displayed are not neutral and always reflect, or at least they pretend to, the social image and roles of each society. Images and sounds are extremely persuasive, transform our thoughts, and behaves [13. P. 75].

Woodall thinks that, for example, during the eighteenth century feminine values were opposite with academic art theories. So personal uniqueness, constancy or other virtues were hidden to show only the vision of men, that is: fragility, eroticism or frivolity [14. P. 11].

When an artist creates a certain image of women he is reflecting his own image of women and the ideology that he understand of women based on his cultural values, political ideology, economic situations or religion that is determined by the society in which he lives [15. P. 30-46]. That's why it's important to analyze the perception that women artists have of themselves when painting a portrait.

It's important to remark the vision that, for example, Catarina Van Hemessen has of herself because it's the first independent self-portrait of a woman in the western culture (there were other portraits of women in the middle ages, but always associated to religion) [16. P. 87]. For King Van Hemessen painted herself with a solemn expression, maybe to refuse resemblance to portraits of the young woman seeking a husband [16. P. 61]. This idea is important to understand the self-perception that women artists have of themselves.

Alario remarks that women artists, from the 60's and 70's decade of the twentieth century, represented the own power through 4 ways:

- Painting real women, they create a genealogy of women as gender.
- Questioning the traditional representation of the body (not only the beauty is important)
- Using materials in their portraits that were only associated to domestic labors (clay, cloth, latex, etc.)
- Painting a new model of violent and powerful woman that substitute men in their place of authority [11. P. 189].

As example, contemporary women in advertising representations (to analyze a field where images of women are very common) rather than present women as passive objects are representing women as active or independent, this new approach to modern advertising must be critical and the new empowerment should be explain [17. P. 36-60]. On the other hand, there are many contemporary adverts that keep a sexist look about women, something that is still happening in the field of arts as women are still represented as a sexual object, being the main character of the works but they are not represented as creator in art institutions (something denounced by Guerrilla girls collective, for example).

One of the most pernicious facts shown in visual culture is the western beauty ideals, especially slenderness, that work as idealization [18. P. 1-9] and almost all of these western beauty ideals are shown in contemporary women representations and, as well, in most of the portraits that men make about women as object of representation.

These kind of ideals contributes to the «sexualization» of the young women, as they are used to live with «sexualized» media. Art, advertising or celebrities in television or music show hypersexual performances that help young girls to a premature sexuality under the influence of this kind of images [19. P. 480-498].

For future primary teachers is particularly important to distinguish the models of «sexualization» and gender inequality images in arts as they are an «impossible» [20. P. 1-18] for their future students and contributes to keep a wrong idea about what femininity is.

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ЖЕНЩИНЫ: ОБЪЕКТ И ПРЕДМЕТ В ПОРТРЕТНОЙ ЖИВОПИСИ

В статье авторы анализируют область портретной живописи с точки зрения женщины, имея в виду не только ее портретные изображения, которые весьма широко «обозримы» и хорошо известны в библиографии этого предмета, но и с учетом того подхода, который свойственен женщинам, когда они выступают в роли живописца/создателя портрета. Гендерный подход в этой области необходим для того, чтобы подчеркнуть, что главное повествование в истории искусства всегда связано с мужчинами, а роль женщины в большинстве случаев остается невидимой.

Ключевые слова: женщины, портретная живопись, образование, гендер, «невидимость» женщин-художниц, искусство.