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Femme Enfant

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Fine Art

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Abstract

This exhibition dissertation proposes the curation of an exhibition of a collation of 9 works created by the tight knit trio of Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo and Kati Horna, providing focus on the *Femme Enfant's* and underappreciated women contributors of the Surrealist movement, including investigating and displaying their differing influences and connections which fed into their work. Their works are filled with mystical witchcraft and maternalistic influence. The desire to hold this exhibition came from my anger whilst researching my original proposed dissertation on psychoanalysis within Surrealist art, where I discovered a reoccurring theme of misogyny and bizarre entitlement that came beaming off the main artists within the movement, conveniently all the highlighted members being men. This fed me into moving my subject and dissertation style to focus on the female activities within the movement, becoming absolutely fascinated by the works, practice, and lives of these three female artists. I felt there needed to be a good display and recognition of the themes within the works, as well as highlight their contribution to the movement.

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Introduction

This exhibition that I propose, will comprise of a series of paintings from three different female surrealist artists. These three artists will be spanning from the time of Surrealist foundation, forward through to the contemporary scene. I hope to strengthen a sense of growing recognition for the suppressed feminine figures of the heavily male orientated movement. The exhibition's title *Femme Enfant* hopes to draw attention to the fetishism of women by dominating surrealist leaders such as Salvador Dali and Andre Breton. Established in the year 1924 with the publishing of the manifesto, the Surrealist movement explored the idea of the subconscious in relation to artistic thinking and practice. It gave birth to several modes of thought and practices, the most influential being *automatism*¹. In the Surrealist manifesto, Breton defines the movement as,

‘‘SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express -- verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner -- the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.’’

(Breton, 1924)

However, this is one of many examples of the arrogance portrayed by some of the movement's members. They believed their portrayals of work are a creation from a divine being used by the artist as an instrument for creation. Throughout the manifesto, there is almost no mention of women or their contribution to the unlocking of the subconscious. The surrealists shared the misogynistic views of Freud in that the women's psyche is uncontrollable and manic (Bottinelli,2018,pg22). Even though they idolised Freud and his teachings, they moulded and manipulated his works to suit their own desires, which ended up irritating Freud, leading to him turning down meetings with the Surrealist thinkers even when they begged. Dali however, after many failed attempts, did manage to successfully meet with the father of psychoanalysis through a mutual friend. Dali, joyful in this opportunity to meet his true idol, brought along his painting, ‘The Metamorphosis of Narcissus’ which depicts the Greek anecdote of Narcissus, in where he realises, staring upon his own reflection, that no one will love him the way he vainly adores himself. This is an ironic commentary on the narcissism revolving around the behaviour exhibited by the Surrealist male members. Art critic Rosalind Krauss critiques the Surrealist obsession surround using women as a subject, and object to carry their desired aesthetic. (Krauss,1985,pg95) The men within this movement limited the women’s mind and agency in every right in service of their own narcissistic scramble for true surrealist expression.

¹ Automatism – Surrealist technique of the art of creating from the subconscious.

However, there were many influential female Surrealist artists who powered above the expectation and became established artists in their own right such as Meret Oppenheimer, Leonor Fini as well as the artists in question who will be exhibited within *Femme Enfant* - Leonora Carrington (1917-2011), Remedios Varo (1908-1963) and Kati Horna (1912-2000). These three artists are a band of female surrealists who shared a unified experience in many misogynistic blunders from male surrealists. Be it within artistic practice or life traumas these women all share themes and experience which was solidified when they later lived together in Mexico after escaping the fascist tsunami in Europe.

Through exploring the themes of witchcraft, domesticity and surrealist thinkings, this exhibition will be engaging though into the techniques used by the artists, and their different in practice through their own individual experiences. The viewer will become informed on the hardship's places upon the lives of the artists, and how they conquered them, growing stronger together.

As a curator, I am interested in the idea of expanding outside the traditional White Cube gallery format, and want to work towards an immersive, context-based experience that envelops the viewer in the lives and works of the artists, instead of subjecting the works to a clinical sterilisation of all subject and influence. I also want to create a comfortable and relaxed environment for these works to be viewed, as many of them have small intricacies that I want the viewer to admire without feeling the constraints and intimidations a viewer can feel within a gallery.

Chapter one – Curatorial Thesis

Surrealism was founded on the desire to explore and unveil the subconscious mind. Brought into reality when Andre Breton published the Surrealist manifesto in 1924, outlying the core ideals and thoughts that would establish the movement and its members. The inspiration for this exhibition came from the feelings that were invoked within me whilst reading about the core ideals and fantasies present within the movement, emanating from the misogynistic beliefs held within the minds of the prominent men. Women involved within the movement, most often artists, were reduced to *femme enfants* (Women Children) serving only as a muse to their male counterpart, objectified and fetishised to suit the imaginary visionaries that felt aesthetic and contributing to the movement. This left the female artists situated within the circle of people to lie under the surface and stopped the projections and experiences of women's subconscious psyche to not be appropriately displayed and recognised well throughout the early 20th century. These views were not only shared within the surrealist movement, with a lot of 20th century female artists being primarily know through their male counterpart, as the work was seen as more trivial, just a support to their partner. This exhibition will, whilst displaying the works of the three practicing artists, will also shed light to the dense misogyny and triumphs of the female surrealist artists. A strong display of trauma, bonding and embrace of feminist surrealist thought.

Leonora Carrington

Growing up in the south of England, Carrington expressed an ardent desire to escape the conformed facade of boarding schools and education, being expelled from two schools before escaping her family to move to Paris. She had already become enticed by the Surrealist movement after visiting an exhibition being held in London, where she became fascinated by a piece of work, 'Two Children are threatened by a Nightingale'. (MoMA,2025) In Paris, Carrington got the chance to meet and develop a romantic relationship with the creator of the work that fascinated her, Max Ernst, a primary member of the movement at the time. Together they established a home together where they would host many of the Surrealist minds in the movement, although Carrington's practice remained on the undertow to her male fellows. Carrington's practice at the time focused on her fascination with English anecdotes and fairytales from her childhood. With her use of animals and birds, they spin a web of mystery and fantasy in an illusionistic space (Chadwick,1986) deferring from the work being created by the likes of her partner Ernst. Her combination of childhood stories as well as a feminine perspective on the psyche made her work feel fresh and alluring. Her works often featured many animal-human hybrids, as well as animals that struck strong symbolic presence and made frequent appearances across her work. She often portrayed the image of a white rocking horse within her work, something that could be linked to her time she spent with Ernst. Ernst often portrayed himself through his alter ego of Loplop, a mystical bird-human hybrid, which could reflect upon Carrington's own choice to perceive herself as a White colt, something aligning with the iconography of a Pegasus with the irony of her lack

of freedom. (Hubert, 1991, pg730) With outbreak of war, Carrington and Ernst lived in blissful ignorance in the countryside, until Ernst got detained for being a German national. (Aberth,2004,pg44-45) This shook Carrington strongly and led her to be institutionalised following a nervous breakdown in Spain where she authored her book *Down Below* in 1943. This is what cemented a lot of the themes shown within her later works, drawing upon the abjection of religious constraint, a feeling that also came from her rebel against her catholic upbringings. After being released from the institution, Carrington had to find her best route out of Europe. Securing a marriage to a Mexican national as her safe passage, she sailed off to America and finally landed in Mexico where she would form her lasting relationships.

Remedios Varo

Honing from a much more supportive family, Varo, who was born in Spain, grew up learning drawing and painting skills from her own father before studying painting in Madrid. With a desire to find herself, but unlike Carrington who wanted to escape the family who couldn't understand her, Varo wanted to escape the academic and familiar pressure she felt whilst staying in Madrid. Varo moved to Paris and became actively involved within the Surrealist movement, in which she first met Carrington. Varo collaborated with many of the movements, even collaborating on the automatic drawing express of *cadavre exquis* (exquisite corpse) with artists Estaban Frances, Oscar Dominguez and Marcel Jean. (

With the rise of Fascism in Europe, Varo was forced to flee or face exile, she fled to Mexico, along with her partner. There she established her relationship with Carrington and Horna, and for a period, the works she was making reflected her fear and experience of the war outbreak. Her works featured caricatures of herself experiencing and interacting with different weird and wonderful mystical forces and anecdotes. Varo aimed to deeply understand and unveil hidden metaphysical marvels through using her trained methods and observational techniques. The Mexican poet Octavio Paz comments on her practice as such

‘As if she painted with her eyes rather than with her hands, Remedios sweeps the canvas clean and heaps up clarities on its transparent surface.’

(Tobias,2019)

The themes of witchcraft carried through into her use of medium and preparation of her grounds, with her often scratching into the surface of her works with a collection of crystals she kept next to her easel in studio, leaving the paintings with a subtle glisten when completed. One of her major works, *The Juggler*, which is featured in this exhibition, also had a mother of pearl element inlayed into the board, giving a beautiful glisten to the face of the *Juggler* character. Varos materiality was particularly important to her creative practice and allowed her themes to not only be displayed in

the subject but be moulded and interred in the work itself. Her use of paint was patient and details, using hair thin brush strokes and thin washes of paint to achieve and glowing luminosity within her works.

Varo continued making work until her unfortunate passing in 1963 at the age of 54. Creating a large body of work with beautiful cross explorations of the mystical against the domestic, shabby cottages and creaky hallways oozing with hidden oddities. Faces emerged out of walls, cloaked figures floated though the narrow landscapes and tales of scientific experiment all were embodied within this eclectic body of work that Varo completed.

Kati Horna

Horna, originally Katerine Deutch born in a region in the then Austro-Hungary to a wealthy family, spent a lot of her years moving around Europe, from her birthplace, then to Budapest and to Germany to study at the Free University in Berlin. During her time in Berlin, Horna participated in left wing anti-fascist, pro-Marxist groups, something which she would continue to be involved with in other places she lived in her life. In the years after her time in Berlin she moved back to Budapest to study further, this time in photography where her work began to bloom. Her early works focused on capturing the lives of homeless living and struggling in the streets of Budapest, starting her journey of documentary photography. When Fascism started to creep up on Europe, she moved to Paris and shot fashion Photography, where she engaged with some of the active Surrealists of the time. However, she never became involved in the movement. She also moved again to Spain, in which she spent aligned with another anti-fascist group and created one of her most recognised body of works documenting the experiences of Women in the Spanish Civil War. With the bout of the Second World war, much like Carrington and Varo, Horna fled to Mexico to escape exile, where she ended up settling down and remaining for the rest of her life. Her connections to Carrington and Varo stemmed from her connection to Chiki Weisz, whom she met whilst he was working in Photographer Robert Capa's studio, a childhood friend of Horna. Horna did develop and short-lived fling with Capa, but it was while she was working in Spain that she met her lifelong partner Jose Horna (H. Simpson, 2011). It was Chiki Weiz that cemented the three artists' friendships after Carrington married him in 1946, forming a circle of escapee Europeans living in their new domain of Mexico.

Horna's work continued its documentary style of expression whilst in Mexico where she also started a job as a photography teacher. Horna thought against being an exhibiting artist and instead saw herself as an 'art worker' rather than a photographer (Pantoja, 2024, p-287) which she adopted due to the nature of her work being political and confrontational. Her work provided a nice complement to Varo and Carrington's painterly work, providing documentation to the experiences that fuelled the visual mysticality portrayed in the other's work.

Concluding thoughts

There is a clear and strong connection between these three women, in both their life experiences – romantic tensions and struggles, abjection from family and a strong trauma from the threats of fascism – further onto their artistic practice and inspiration – witchcraft, domesticity and a surrealist mentality. Their work and experience bring forth an interesting collation of works that show off a variety of techniques, as well as a strong bond that was cemented in their new world.

Chapter two – Curatorial Decisions

For my space, I want to create an intimate environment to encapsulate the viewer within the themes present in all three artists' work. Those themes being domesticity, motherhood, and witchcraft which they represented in separate ways through their own mediums. I felt as if a white cube gallery would strip these women of their experiences and would be sterilizing the feminine comfort of the works. I have considered a few different options for my exhibition, those in which I have gone into reason for below but have ended up with choosing to display at Leonora Carrington's home and studio in New Mexico.

Carrington, Varo, and Horna all lived a close distance from each other and spent most of their time with each other in their homes. I want the viewer to feel this connection and homeliness come through when viewing the works, reflecting the environment that fed the works. Carrington's home is full of her works, personal furnishings and lived in touch, which includes her own home studio. I can unfortunately not visit her home, the first reason being that I cannot travel to Mexico at this time, but for also that her home is closed off to the public. Once originally planned to become a tourist attraction, it has now been proposed to become a research centre. However, there is a 360 virtual viewer of her home available online, so I have used that to plan my layout and sketch the blueprint.

Her home consists of the downstairs- entrance hall, kitchen and outdoor courtyard and the upstairs- lounge, bedroom, and home studio. A lot of the space is already filled with works of her own, so in advance of the exhibition, I would clear out as much of the larger works as possible, so as not to distract and lose focus from my selection of works that I've curated. I would still like to keep some of the pieces though, as to not sterilise what was in a way Carrington's own curated display of work within her own personal space.



Figure 1: Inside of Carrington's Home

The part of the house I am displaying in consists of three spaces. The kitchen, hallway, and an entrance hall. The flow of works blends the three artists together smoothly, forming a dialogue of collaborative thinking and shared expression.

Other Considerations

I looked at a few different venue choices before I got to my final decision of Leonora Carrington's Mexican home. I considered first of all the Women's Library in Glasgow. The Glasgow Women's library is the only fully recognised venue in the UK that dedicates its archives to the achievements and works of women. I thought this would be a good choice as it would give the opportunity for these women's works to be exhibited and perceived by an audience that hadn't seen their work before, as most previous exhibitions of their work have been in the Americas or Europe. I also like the significance of it being a 'women's' only space, detaching the works again from the male heavy perception that the surrealist movement has created. When observing the layout of the venue and trying to consider wall space and observational space, I found a struggle in that aspect. Almost every wall is lined with bookshelves as well as the bookshelves wrapped round in tight L shapes, limiting the available exhibitable space. Even though it would feel intimate and cosy, it would distract too much from the works themselves and not allow them to shine and be observed in the correct manner, given the level of detail and storytelling present within all three artists' works.

I also considered exhibiting within my own home, as my space is one often shared with fellow artists and friends whom I spend a lot of close time with not only creating works but also the simplicities of daily life. This would have embodied the home comforts and bonds that you could feel between the three artists work, and create a unthreatening intimate space for the viewer to experience the work, as you would not have to feel the intimidation that can sometimes be felt when viewing works in an official gallery space, where it is silent and non-ambient. However, there are some restrictions that follow using my flat as an exhibitable space. For one, I live in a one-bedroom flat, so space is minimal, and I would not have enough wall space to show the appropriate amount of works for the show. Even if I were to remove all my furniture to create space, I would then end up losing the environment that made me consider this option in the first place. A second point is that I want this exhibition to be well considered and publicised, therefore holding the display within my house would not garner the same footfall as if it were held within an established location.

Intended audience

Thinking about the impact I want to achieve, I want this exhibition to be viewed by a wide range of ages and genders, so that the importance of their work and the influence of them all having such a close relationship. I want this exhibition to highlight also the misogyny that was present within the Surrealist movement as well as make space and create new avenues for people to learn more

about the unjust and sexist fetishisation of the female partners and collaborators to the heavily celebrated male surrealists, who are mostly shown when exhibiting surrealist works within galleries.



Figure 2:

Kati Horna, 1957

Untitled (Remedios Varo wearing a mask made by Leonora Carrington)

Gelatine Silver Print

21.6 x 19.7cm

Kati Horna's work is the most direct display of the collaborative work between the artists, as a lot of her prints directly involve Varo and Carrington as models for her concepts. In this photograph, Varo is seen facing away from the camera wearing a dual headed mask portraying cartoonish like depictions of a female character. Little description of this work is available, but from the way the face is framed within the mask, with the heart shape outline around Varo, which reflects the shape of the hair on the figure, one can only assume that it is meant to be a reflection of Varo.

The composition is cropped and intimate, showing the closeness of the collaborators as well as the focus on the mask itself and Varo's portrait. It also shows how much they all wanted to contribute and express themselves by using each other as their subjects or documenters.



Figure 3:

Kati Horna, 1962

Untitled (Ode to Necrophilia)

Gelatine Silver Print

20.6 x 19.1cm

Belonging to a series of works dubbed *Ode to Necrophilia*, this image portrays a shawled figure standing in the corner of the room, next to a bed with a cast of a face lying on the pillow, adjacent to a lit candle. The image is tight in composition with the eye first being pulled to the hooded figure in the corner, in which Leonora Carrington was the model. The black hood over her face represents traditional mourning wear worn in many cultures, entirely covering the face of the mourning women from the viewer. Carrington also has a hand covering her face, in a position that suggests she is crying heavily over the loss of the character portrayed by the mask lying on the pillow.

Once again, Horna has chosen to use one of the two to be a main feature of the photography, this time being Carrington. She was inspired by and trusted the artist to portray her work in the way she envisioned and made use of Carrington's Surrealist knowledge to enhance the atmosphere of the work.



Figure 4:

Untitled (Ode to Necrophilia)

Kati Horna, 1962

Gelatine Silver Print

This is another one of the prints that belongs to the *Ode to Necrophilia* collection, this time Leonora Carrington's position within the frame, with her now lying at the left-hand side of the bed with her head crouched down, touching the side of the mask's cheek. She is still wearing the black shawl, and her hands are still within placement that suggests she is deeply grieving. With a wider angle, we can see that the bed is messy, with the blanket haphazardly falling over the top of the mattress.

The mask resembles the painterly style of the figures within Carrington's paintings, further lending to the continues flow of collaboration between these selected artists, and how their presence around each other had a resulting impact on their indivual work as a whole.



Figure 5:

Remedios Varo, 1961

Embroidering the Earth's mantle

Oil on Masonite

100 x 123cm

Varo's work involves more of a direct personal relationship between the artist and her experiences. With the influence of the techniques of the Old Masters being very prevalent in Varo's work, Varo approaches her paintings very delicately and detailed, despite their small size. This image portrays a group of girls, dressed in school uniforms, trapped in a tall tower weaving against panels, which we can see transforming into landscape as it trickles down the side of the building.

This work shows the magical influence Varo carried through to her work, with the girl fabricating the world from the fingertips, having the power of creation through the craft of weaving. Carrington's work is similar in this way, but does not provide such objective human figures, opting more for subjective forms.



Figure 6:

Woman leaving the Psychoanalyst

Remedios Varo, 1960

Oil on Canvas

70.5 x 40.5cm

This work centres around a cloaked figure again, this time clad in a flowing green gown, carrying the ‘baggage’ from the appointment with the Psychoanalyst. The baggage itself is the head of Varo’s father (Kaplan, 1987,pg44), which the figure is going to toss down the well shown at the front of the image. Varo has portrayed herself again in this character, not only in the way that the figure shares her likeness, but also in that the figure is disposing of her own father’s head. Varo is directly confronting her childhood trauma in this work, whilst still letting her alchemist aesthetic take the foreground.

This work is an important one to display for Varo, as it demonstrates her range of techniques which again feeds into her magical practice, as to achieve the glossy glow that emanates from her paintings, she started by scratching into her gesso layer with a collection of crystals that she kept in her studio.(Sotheby’s, 2025)



Figure 7:

Remedios Varo, 1956

The Juggler

Oil and inlaid mother of pearl on board

91 x122cm

Varo also used other magical mediums when creating her work, and this included mother of pearl, which can be seen in this piece. *The Juggler* is one of Varo's most well-known and enticing works. The main character, 'The Juggler' is Varo's self-portrayal within the piece, performing to a crowd of identical women clad in grey cloaks. The pop of red on the coat of the main figure stands out brilliantly against the subdued beige background and cloned watchers. There is also a figure in the cart that could also be argued to be another self portrait of Varo, but a more subdued and unaware example of the self, in contrast to the magician.

The painting could be seen as a comment on a sense of enlightenment, with the magician having achieved a higher level of awareness to the brainwashed group and is there to teach them of the potential of their ways.



Figure 8:

Leonora Carrington, 1942

Green Tea

Oil on canvas

61 x 76.2cm

I think with the work it is important to note that this painting was created after Carrington was institutionalized, which nods to that experience can be seen in the figure present on the left of the image, a woman clad in cow skin wrapped up like a mummy-almost resembling a strait jacket. The woman's contrastingly serene background bares strong resemblance to the English countryside that Carrington would have grown up in, which even though she rejected her younger life in the countryside, it has been displayed in an almost nostalgic, fond way. Carrington, like Varo, likes to portray her own likeness within her works, as a way of conveying her experiences and vision that she has in a personal manner, whilst keeping the figure ambiguous enough for the viewer to project their own interpretation.



Figure 9:

Leonora Carrington, 1953

And then we saw the daughter of the Minotaur

Oil on Canvas

60 x 70cm

When we view this artwork, it gives off the sense as if we had stumbled in and interrupted the moment. A minotaur, a flowing floral figure, and two cloaked boys gather round a clothed table covered in crystal balls. Carrington wants the viewer to engage in visual language and dialog with her paintings and immerse the viewer in a mythical world. The open space combines the outer and inner with dreamlike clouds dancing along the ceiling and vines wrapping up the column. The beautiful floral figure represents a matriarchal presence, combined with the supposed 'table reading' that is occurring, drags you back to that mystical magical world of the occult that all three artists were so heavily inspired by.



Figure 10:

Leonora Carrington, 1938

Self Portrait

Oil on Canvas

65 x 81.3cm

This self-portrait is very different from the other works I have chosen to put in this exhibition, as this one was made much before Carrington reached Mexico. This piece was painted when she was 20 years old, at a time when she was considered a ‘muse’ or to put it correctly, a ‘femme-enfant’ to the Surrealist movement. I felt this piece an important one to include as it, even though from being from that time, still shows Carrington’s rebellious personality through and through. Not only is she sitting in a flashy chair with crazy voluminous hair and an atrocious outfit, she has used her motif of a white horse, but in two different states. One horse stands still and is stiff as it is a rocking horse mounted to the wall above her head. The other, in contrast, is free moving and escaping through the window into the open nature. This shows Carrington’s resistance to structure and her desire to be free as that beautiful white horse, without a care in the world.

Model of exhibiting space (Not to exact scale)



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

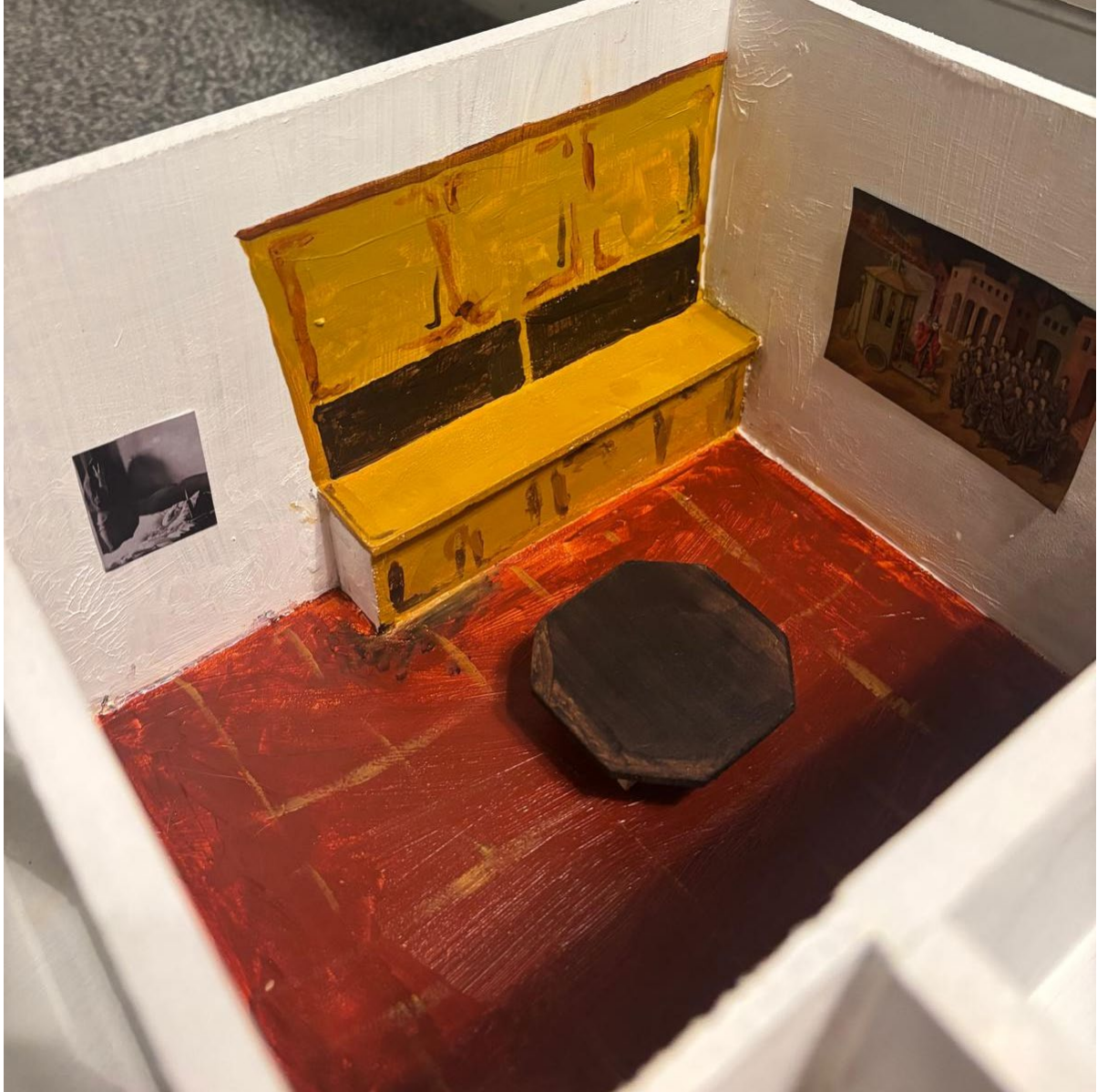


Figure 17

Chapter 3 – Curatorial Influences

As the display is set within a domestic setting, I have looked at various artists and curators who have held exhibitions centring around a domestic space or other environments expanded upon a traditional white cube gallery, whilst still investigating this format and allowing for criticism and comparison. The themes that Varo, Carrington, and Horna were all heavily influenced by women's domestic lives, as well as the close relationship that they had with each other, and I feel the viewer should take a step into their world and experience that feeling when viewing their works.

Looking to the ideals set by the White Cube, I want to assess why this style and approach of curation would not be appropriate for the desired visual and textural experience I wish for the viewer. The White Cube gallery concept is one of removing all external context from the artworks so that it can be viewed solely as the piece itself. White walls, white floors, and no windows provide a sterile, atmosphere-less environment that puts the work on an illuminated pedestal. The isolation of the art object can be associated with the stripping of the personal identity of female muses in exchange for sexual aesthetic. The removal of context was a highly popular aesthetic within curation during the mid-twentieth century, setting a new standard within galleries with many major art institutions adopting the white cube standardisation.

“A high modernist fetishization of the art object determined the white cube.”

Misko Suvakovic, professor of aesthetics and theory, University of Belgrade (Filipovic, 2005, pg68)

The abject isolation of a work of art as much as it can provide a clean slate, akin to the idea of *Tabula Rasa*², where there are no forward preconceptions made about a piece before viewing, therefore it can be experienced to the supposed utmost extent. I, however, feel as though the environment that inspired or played apart in the creation of a piece of work can lend great visual context and aid to the viewing experience. There have been many critiques of the overall idea of a white cube gallery, one of which being Whitney Birkett in her thesis *Infinity and Beyond: A critique of the aesthetic White Cube*. Birkett argues that a white cube aesthetic poses an uncomfortable and class-bound environment stifling for visitors and deterring any comfort whilst viewing the works. (Birkett, 2021) The stripping of all contexts and being mounted on a podium, creates an expectation of prior knowledge to really understand the work, making the art a difficult new media to engage with and off-putting viewers from discovering new art and artists.

Benjamin Ives Gillman, Secretary for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts at the beginning of the 1900's is a contributing figure for the start of the motion towards a White Cube aesthetic, arguing

² Tabula Rasa (Blank Slate) – A philosophical idea famously explored by John Locke describing the thought of humans being born as a blank slate with no predetermined knowledge or bias.

that the previous overcrowded coloured wall layouts of galleries at his time were causing ‘museum fatigue’, opting to move towards a neutral wall, even spaced well-lit displays of pieces as to not tire the eye out. (Gillman,1918) Other comments within his book however could suggest a different interpretation of a gallery layout, instead opting for a cosy, domestic environment that made the viewer feel at home and unintimidated. (Birkett,2021,pg13)



Figure 18: Gilman’s ideal gallery curation

The choice of setting being Carrington’s home allows the viewer to feel enveloped and relaxed when viewing this selection of works, without also becoming too overwhelmed as the space itself, even being a home, is quite neutral in decoration and airy is design. The placement of the works is close together but still give the viewer plenty of room to experience the works on their own, or in dialogue with other pieces. The intimate setting also allows for the viewer to not feel discouraged to examine up close and see the small intricate details Varo and Carrington included within the paintings or take in the smaller scale format of Horna’s photography. This exhibition also benefits from the artists creation of smaller works, which allows for them to have to opportunity to be displayed within such a venue in the first place without any restriction for scale.

Chapter 4 – Other sources

I was majorly influenced by a lot of exhibitions I had either seen in person or have researched in the past, which have explored either exhibiting within a domestic setting or ideas of feminist exposure. Although they are not of direct relation the style and viewer experience greatly relates to the curatorial ideas I am wishing to establish.

Women house was a large-scale collaborative installation exhibition by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro, first on show in 1972. The exhibition consisted of works created by over 20 artists, either students in Chicago's Feminist art program or local artists. Situated within an abandoned mansion, the space was transformed into an assemblage of works discussing many themes of female domestic experiences. Chicago and Shapiro's exhibition provided great feminist contributions within the art world at the time, as there was still a very misogynistic overbearing attitude present. In an interview with LA Times, Chicago spoke upon the outrageous comments that were being slapped on women artists.

“Woman artists are thought to be lesbians, castrators. It's said they're not serious about their work; they do it as a hobby. They're neurotic. They're trying to be men.”

(LA Times, 1972, pg6)



Figure 11: *Womanhouse* catalogue cover, 1972

The choice to have this show within an actual house vastly improves the viewer experience, with it feeling integrated and natural, opposed to be placed on a pedestal within a traditional gallery context. The space is then also able to be fully immersive as if stepping into someone's natural space, embodying the themes of domesticity. The hope is that these same thoughts are given to this exhibition, *Femme Enfant*, with a sense of completeness, the environment lending a hand to the work.

Another impactful domestic based installation that played influence was Marta Minujin's 11 roomed walk-through installation that immerses the viewer in her experience of Buenos Aires. This installation is like no other I have experienced, with unexpected performers scattered throughout, and unsettling sound effects. Walking through the intricate stairways and hallways you are made to feel new sensory experiences and be challenged in your perception of installation art. Although being not all one domestic setting, the environment Minujin has created aligns with the atmospheric involvement with the viewer.



Figure 12: *Le Menesunda*, Marta Minujin, 1965

The tight layout and atmospheric lighting help make the experience less unsettling to the best of its ability, even when you are presented with strange subject matter in front of you. The cosy nooks and cranny's make you feel as if you are stepping through glimpses of memory – small snapshots of someone's life. The flow from room to room helps the viewer to take in every detail as their eye follows naturally from left to right, up and down, without feeling the over intimacy of high walls and pristine blank canvas. This element of flow and storytelling is something I wanted to be present in my curatorial decisions, keeping that idea of comfort to the viewer in mind when choosing the placements for the works within the space. As much as there is room for the viewer to individually view and appreciate the works, the dialogue of pieces continues in the peripheral.

Conclusion

This exhibition *Femme Enfant* explores the trio of artists Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, and Kati Horna through a collation of their works presented within the home of the late Carrington. The evolving sense of domesticity and women hood is enhanced to the viewer by being present in the place that all the artists combined their thoughts and lives whilst creating the works. The importance of addressing the voices of female artists is incredibly important within this climate, especially keeping the works of late artists circulating. There is a strong abjection seen by these three artists against reducing themselves to serve the aesthetic fetishisation of the female image, and pushing forward their own artistic identity and practice, which left them to become established artists within their new world in Mexico.

The work made to establish an objection from the conformity of the views of male minds within the movement, from the cementer of fetishism over the female form stemming from Andre Breton, tracing back to the inspiration for these thoughts, Sigmund Freud. There has been an exploration into the importance of acknowledging the female psyche, rather than to dismiss it to a form of hysteria, like these male movement leaders were asserting. The acceptance and appreciation of the female subconscious contribute to the surrealist movement, as work is being created without the fetishisation of the female form and mind, lead to a wider field of thought. From animal human hybrids to comments of the rituals of cultures, Carrington, Varo, and Horna all work with elements of symbolism, choosing to use these as their objects of obsession.

With images of mysticality, witchcraft, science and absurdity, these works create a fun and playful environment whilst also addressing many of the traumas of the artists life experiences, many which came out through the subconscious image making of the work. Even the abject evidence of their collaboration is shown in either the sharing of subjects and techniques, but also through Horna's use of Varo and Carrington as her subjects in many of photographs. The lines became blurred at the conversation these works were having with each other, particularly in the paintings of Varo and Carrington, many of them sharing the same tonal palette, composition, or use of animal human hybrids as caricatures of themselves, the artist, or symbols of further meaning.

Curating with a conscious abjection of a White Cube standard in mind, rejecting the sterile removal of context. I want this exhibition to be as inclusive and involving as possible, so the classist formal standard of the White Cube would not be appropriate to gain this viewer experience. This exhibition invites the viewer to view the nine works in a comfortable and immersive atmosphere. Every small detail and theme can be fully absorbed at close scale without the intimidating pressure that is often felt within standard gallery formats. The exhibition being local to their homes will also hope to make significant cultural awareness to the area of the artists who were living and working there and create further dialogue about these woman's lives and practice. The space itself gave a lot of play and atmosphere to the works, working well with there smaller scale format that they all worked within, creating a natural feel to the display. Whilst

walking through the rooms, it is almost as if the paintings were already there, put up by the artists themselves as an evidential display of their collaboration and intertwined lives. Overall I hope this exhibition establishes and also resurfaces further feminine thinking on the prominent art movements, as well as keep the works of these artists in circulation for further admiration.

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