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Women in Text - Breaking Gender Barriers

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**May 2026**

Fine Art

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## **Dissertation**

### **Women in text - Breaking gender barriers**

#### **Abstract**

This exhibition dissertation explores text-based artworks by female artists. This exhibition aims to raise awareness about the issues of patriarchy brought to light by feminist artists. Examining a range of works in an effort to engage and spread the feminist message to a wide range of members of society from various backgrounds, including working class, race, gender, and age.

The dissertation will explore what makes them so successful in communicating their message and why this form of expression is so crucial. Is it the media, the font, the colour, or is it the outrageously blunt way it's being said?

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## **Introduction**

This dissertation is an examination of feminist artists, but more specifically, the female artists who incorporate text within their work, as well as why this practice isn't more popular amongst female artists.

This dissertation will take the form of a hypothetical exhibition sourcing a variety of artworks ranging in time periods and media, but sharing one key theme of feminism. Looking at the multiple media, methods, and forms that text can be used within an art practice, and the effectiveness it has in communicating its message directly to the viewer. This exhibition will explore and celebrate the female artists who use text within their artistic practice to fight back against the patriarchy as well as challenge gender and sexual norms deeply rooted within society. Additionally, I will be investigating why using text as part of an artist's practice isn't a more popular practice for female artists. Is it not encouraged enough, not a desired method, or is it a deep-rooted social issue dating back centuries?

This line of investigation is significant to understand where women's relationship with text lies as it could be argued that historically because women have not been encouraged to have an education until fairly recently moreover how women's opinions and voices when it comes to any political or social issue, especially any that directly affect women is not considered could it be that by looking at the artist such as Barbara Kruger that use such outrageous text to be listened to is more powerful than voice alone?

## Chapter 1

This exhibition thesis stems from my own personal queries regarding women's relationship with text and how this is expressed through an artist's practice or the lack of text in the work. Looking back in time at the general attitude to women's education and encouragement to read and write, has this affected the social norm for there to be a presence of text as a form of direct communication from the artist to the viewer?

Curating a feminist exhibition focusing on female artists using text within their working practice is crucial to understanding women's relationships with writing and literature. Looking at the current state of the political agenda regarding women's rights globally, I would say it is more vital than ever that we bring attention to feminist/activist artists who challenge the patriarchy, who want to silence them directly using text through art to reach the masses, keeping the fight alive.

Women's right to education throughout history has always been an uphill battle, as women have been stereotyped as not having the ability to be as intellectual as men. Historically, women's education has been fundamentally different. Instead of focusing on literature, math and science, they were taught how to be the perfect housewife and a decorative object, someone to be seen and not heard. "As a result, needlework remained a crucial part of her education, as did music and dance. What better way to find a suitable match than by dancing well at a ball?" (Getty, 2024) although the separated curriculum for women and men has progressed to a time now where it is generally the same with equal opportunities for all that can not be said globally as young women and girls are punished daily for pursuing this fundamental right such as in parts of Africa "One significant barrier to girls' education in Africa is the prevalence of gender-based violence in and around schools, including harassment, abuse and exploitation, all of which creates unsafe learning environments and leads many girls to drop out."(S. Islahi, 2019). The question is, why do men feel the need to force young women out of education? Is it jealousy that they have the potential to be smarter than them, or is it about control? Is it their belief that keeping them deprived of education will keep them passive and easy to mould to their ideals?

We know that this will never work, looking at the case of Malala Yousafzai, whose story is infamous around the world. The fifteen-year-old girl who faced near-death for an education was shot in the left side of the head, coming home from school secretly, as the Taliban had banned all girls from attending. Surviving the worst to use her story to fight for all women and girls to have an education without fear of punishment or death. (Yousafzai, 2025) This evidence explores the context of sexism seen in society, but it is also key to discuss sexism specifically in the art world.

Looking at the gender inequality in the arts we can see from research from multiple sources such as Hellen Gorrill's "women can't paint" as well as the Guerrilla Girls that women are highly underexposed and neglected in the art world for example "DO WOMEN STILL HAVE TO BE NAKED TO GET INTO THE MET. MUSEUM?" (Guerrilla Girls, 2014) a piece used to expose the gender bias the MET museum has had against female artists as well as female subjects as the number of female artist displayed within the museum was miniscule but the amount of nude female subjects featured in art works was outstanding suggesting that they are only interested in women if they are naked and not for their artistic talents which is especially shocking when the majority or artist graduates are female. As seen in a study conducted by Created Land Trust, "In 2020, 73% of graduates studying art and design were women" (User, 2022), telling us that there is no shortage of female artists, so is the lack of representation down to gender bias. Therefore, this contributes to the pay discrepancy that already exists between women and men. If women are not being exposed in the art world, how will they be paid? In Helen Gorrill book "*women can't paint*" (Gørrill, 2020) Gorrill looks into the discrepancies between male and female artist exposure as well as this her research concludes that "it is clear that in taking into account scale differences, female artist visibility appears to be decreasing," (Gørrill, 2020) while "male artist achieves significantly higher prices than that of women" (Gørrill, 2020) Does this all come down to deep rooted sexism within society referring back to earlier in the paragraph that it's the belief that women can not be as good or talented at something as men, is this why there is such a great pay discrepancy in the arts "In Women Can't Paint, I present the evidence that today, when men sign a work of art, it increases in value, yet when a woman signs her work it goes down." (Gorrill, 2022) Looking at this evidence, isn't it clear that women are

severely undervalued and underpaid based on nothing but the fact that they were born with ovaries?

I've chosen to hold the exhibition in the Glasgow's women's library after looking at multiple venue options such as Women's Printing Society London who provided women with skilled training in printing allowing women into “a field traditionally dominated by men” which lead to “them to earn higher wages” (B, 2025) a significant advancement at the time (1876). Chawton House, where the famous poet Jane Austen lived and worked, is where Austen subtly challenged society norms about marriage in a patriarchal society. I decided that neither was as suitable as the Women's Library for many reasons, such as the Chaton House being too small to house any of the artworks due to the time period that it was constructed, as well as the Women's Printing Society not having a specific site/building, as they were freelance. What really made me set on having the Glasgow Women's Library as the venue was not only that they are large enough to hold the works, but also their goals in representing women in male-dominated fields and preserving their work; they have a great connection to women in text, providing a vast amount of text written about and for women. Therefore, the library and the exhibition share the same key ideas of empowering women, giving them a space to share their message.

The intended audience for this proposed exhibition is a diverse group of people from all areas of society, no matter their race, working class, age or gender, as this exhibition aims to educate and inform as many as possible about the feminist struggle that requires immense support to help bring about the necessary change that we need to see in society.

## Chapter 2



Figure 1:

Barbara Kruger

Your body is a battleground, 1989

photographic silkscreen on vinyl

112 x 112 in

This first artwork will be shown in the Glasgow Women's Library, Barbara Kruger's "Your body is a battleground" (Kruger, 1989) (Schneider, 2022), 1989. Kruger is arguably the most well-known and consistent artist who features text in her artistic practice. Kruger is a screen printing artist best known for her bold graphic images that challenge the patriarchy and social norms, directly through her bold statements in her works. This piece, "Your body is a battleground" (Panovka and Barrow, 2022) also radiates feminism; this work was originally made to protest anti abortion laws and remind the public that their bodily autonomy is subject to a political agenda.

Although now this work has become more relevant in recent years due to the overruling of Roe v Wade in America in 2022 setting women's rights back decades all because of "a man without a uterus" (Panovka and Barrow, 2022) Krugler

expressed in an interview that she was not shocked by the decision but stated that she feels that it could have been easily avoided with how the public voted during the presidential election telling us that women's bodies are clearly used as a political playing card I choose to have this art work in the exhibition as its a reminder never to forget the struggle from the earlier generation



Figure 2:

Betty Tomkins

Women Words (Avedon#8) 2019

Acrylic on Book Page

5x8 in

Betty Tomkins, a leader in the feminist movement, is well known for her work in expressing female bodies and sexual desires. Tompkins achieves this through many media, such as paint and photography. Tomkins' new line of work from her

“Women Words” (Avedon#8) (Tomkins, 2019). The project features photos or prints of other artworks portraying images of women obscured by text. Due to the small scale of the artwork and therefore the text, the piece requires the viewer to really take the time to be able to focus on what the piece is trying to communicate through the text. forcing the viewer to truly engage with the work, as the text itself is based on research Tomkins gathered based on a public response to an email she sent out asking what words they associate the most with women, no matter the nature of these words, whether they are pleasant or disrespectful. It shows a true public opinion of how the female gender is thought of in society currently.(Janssen, 2021)

The fact that the text is fully obscuring the women in the images leads the viewer to believe that the words are all the society cares about when it comes to women does this mean that women should embrace it or do they challenge this and say for themselves who they truly are as an individual as can a gender be stereotyped due to how diverse people are because of sexuality, religion, race, age, education, hobbies so many more factors than your genitals.

I've chosen to have this artwork by Tompkins displayed in the exhibition, as it is important to understand what society's opinion of women is currently and how those opinions affect everyday living for women. (The Flag Art Foundation, 2016) (P.P.O.W, 2018)

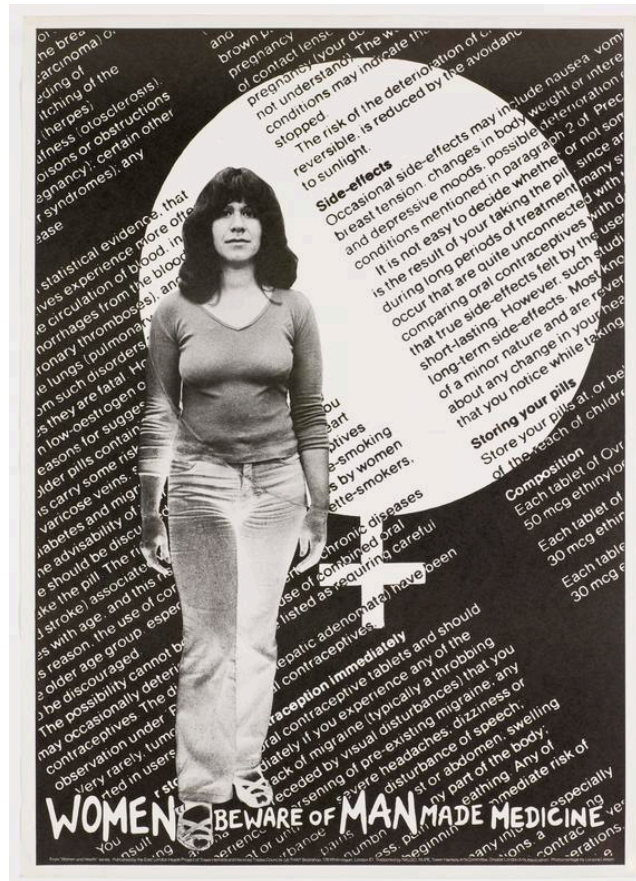


Figure 3:

Loraine Leeson

'Women Beware of Man-made Medicine' 1978-1980

Poster on Paper

24.4x17.7 in

Loraine Leeson's 'Women Beware of Man-made Medicine'(Leeson, 1978) was one of two posters that were made by litho printing, commissioned by the East London Council to bring awareness to women's health in the 1970s. The poster features a woman surrounded by the text from a female contraception pill explaining the list of side effects. (These posters were also used as covers for information pamphlets that were left in doctor surgeries and hospital waiting rooms)

The poster was commissioned at a time when there were significant cuts being made to the NHS, and medical advice wasn't as readily available as it is now through other methods, other than your GP. These posters were made in hopes that they could bring much-needed attention to medical issues at the time.

Especial for female health as at the time as well as in the present many women feel they are dismissed when seeking medical advice and that many concerns are put down to their menstrual cycle or their weight without any real investigation as seen in a study published by femtech sees that “An overwhelming 93 per cent of women report feeling dismissed when seeking medical help”(News Desk, 2025) and when the medical field is extremely male dominated you can't help but think is sexism playing into the amount of care given to women. Therefore, I have chosen to feature this poster in the exhibition as it highlights this extremely concerning topic that continues to affect women today (Science Museum Group, 2025).



Figure 4:

Jenny Holzer

Raise boys and girls the same way, 1979

Large Scale Installation

Jenny Holzer is a multimedia artist specialising in featuring text in their practice. One of Holzer's main objectives is to reach a large audience. She does this by creating work presented as signage, such as their LED lights, which are featured in public spaces, such as in New York's Times Square, one of the most visited cities/places in the world. Holzer's texts are more favourably described as Truism sentences that are so obvious that they shouldn't have to be said. I specifically chose this work/truism, “Raise boys and girls the same way” (Holzer, 1979) (Kateprobst, 2018), as it is again

so obvious that it feels ridiculous to say. Holzer's work is challenging society norms in how we raise girls and boys, and the expectations that are put on both of them to be feminine, masculine wife or husband, and the lack of choice or diversity that has been withheld from adolescents historically. (MOMA, 2004) For the exhibition, I would commission Holzer to create a smaller version of this sign, as the original would not fit within the exhibition space, looking at evidence from Marcia Hoeck the size of an art piece can change how the audience view the the work as Larger scale pieces have that wow factor that can immediately draw someone in however with smaller- scale works the work draws the viewer in with its small intimate details that make the piece more memorable as you must take more time studying the whole work up close to truly appreciate it. (Hoeck, 2022)I also think that a neon sign version featuring the same truism would equally have the same effect.



Figure 5:

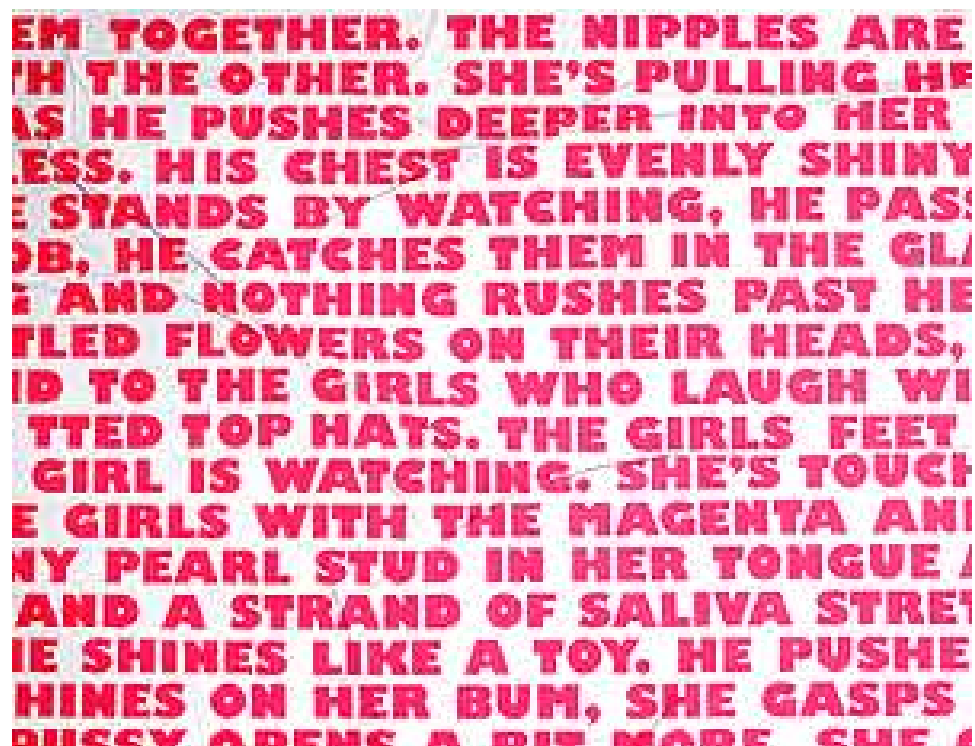
Jill Posner

Fiat Ad, Farringdon Road, London, 1979

Photography

Jill Posner, a London-based photography artist, who in 1979 began to notice a public retaliation against sexism in the form of graffiti and decided to document it.

I chose this piece as it was the first in the series "Spray It Loud" (Posner, 1979), as it is still relevant in today's society due to the advertisement's original nature, encouraging the sexualization of women. In today's culture although it is not so much publicly encouraged the sexualisation of women is still quite prominent as you can see through the common social norm of cat calling and multiple lines of research such as from the bbc who looked at research from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which states "Around one in eight women were victims of sexual assault, domestic abuse or stalking in the last year, according to new estimates." (Cuffe and Gregory, 2025) Even though Posner was not or has claimed not to be the original graffiti artist, the art of capturing these moments of rebellion is just as crucial. Having this piece in the exhibition, I feel, would have a large impact by continuing to fuel the fire of the feminist movement.



EM TOGETHER. THE NIPPLES ARE  
IN THE OTHER. SHE'S PULLING HE  
AS HE PUSHES DEEPER INTO HER  
LESS. HIS CHEST IS EVENLY SHINY  
E STANDS BY WATCHING, HE PAS  
OB, HE CATCHES THEM IN THE GL  
E AND NOTHING RUSHES PAST HE  
FLED FLOWERS ON THEIR HEADS,  
ID TO THE GIRLS WHO LAUGH WI  
TTED TOP HATS. THE GIRLS FEET  
GIRL IS WATCHING. SHE'S TOUCH  
E GIRLS WITH THE MAGENTA ANI  
NY PEARL STUD IN HER TONGUE  
AND A STRAND OF SALIVA STRE  
IE SHINES LIKE A TOY. HE PUSHE  
HINES ON HER BUM, SHE GASPS  
DISCY ADENE A DIS MADE CUE

Figure 6:

Fiona Banner

Arsewoman in Wonderland 2002,

ScreenPrint on Paper

161.42x240.1 in

Fiona Banners *Arsewoman in Wonderland* 2002,(Banner, 2002) Screenprint on paper is a large scale piece based on early 2000s porn movies as well as porn films that are directed by women, a very rare occurrence for the time it's a complete script of everything that happens within the film in graphic detail excluding any dialogue purely the sexual performance from banners perspective "Banner uses pornographic film to explore sexuality and the extreme limits of written communication."(Brocks, 2002) in an article by Emma Brockes the bluntness of the text had been discussed to be extremely uncomfortable for some viewers but is that because porn and sexuality at the time of 2002 was not a highly discussed topic and publicly people would shy away from acknowledging these especially for women as they were seen as un-lady like and dirty. Historically, sex has been viewed as a forbidden subject in society, particularly for women, as they were always expected to remain innocent. Regarding porn, there is always a widespread debate about whether porn can be feminist or not, even though the majority of it is tailored towards the male gaze. Nonetheless, exploring sexuality is fairly important, and porn can be used as a tool for it. Though it can be argued that due to the violent and aggressive nature of some forms of porn it can promote violence against women due to the overexposure of violent pornography to young cisgender men therefore this information suggest that it's not that you can't be both a feminist and enjoy watching porn however it's the type of porn and what it promotes that you validate by watching that's the issue. (Platt-Higgins, 2025) I've chosen to include Banner's work in the exhibition as the piece forces the viewer to confront thoughts or feelings about themselves, about their own sexual identity.



Figure 7:

Sarah Tod

What's A Girl Without Her Pussy

ScreenPrint on Paper

8.3x11.7 in

Sarah Tod's "What's a girl without her pussy" (Tod, 2025) is part of a series of satirical collage screen prints that all feature some amount of text to create a humorous lasting impression. Tod's goal is to use humour to confront stereotypical and sexist views that are rooted deep within today's society. For example, with this piece, if you were to focus solely on the text itself, it would automatically raise some red flags, but together with the imagery of the woman and her cat, it creates a lasting, funny effect. Tod has described the thought process as humor is something that people find enjoyment in something that they will continue to keep coming back to this combined with the shock factor of the blunt, crude text will leave a remaining thought in the viewers mind, and will more likely be something they choose to share with family and friends so what better way to bring attention to the feminist struggle.

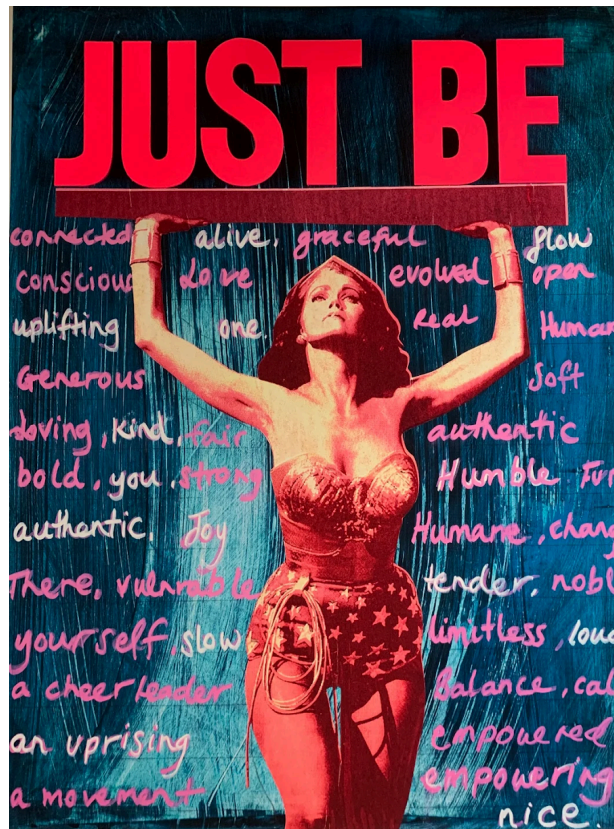


Figure 8:

Amy Gardner

Just Be 2024

ScreenPrint

33x46.4 in

Amy Gardner is an Australian artist currently based in London. Her work is based on the female experience and the idea of women supporting women. All of her works feature found images from the 50s. One of Gardner's goals is to demolish the idea of the perfect or ideal woman that has been stereotyped for decades as a housewife or a decorative object; therefore, it makes sense that Gardner would use imagery from a time when that stereotype was so commonly practised. Many of Gardner's works are mixed media prints, for example, combining screen printing and mono print in the same piece of work. I've chosen to have Gardner's piece "Just Be"(Gardner, 2024) featured in the exhibition as in contrast to the majority of the other works chosen the text featured in her work is more uplifting and hopeful the piece features

wonderwomen appearing to hold up the text “Just Be” (Art, 2021) while surrounded by empowering words that describe women. I believe that this piece suggests that even in times where women's rights are under threat and the future is unknown, we must keep supporting other women and lifting them up for the reason so greatly stated by Shelly Zalis that “woman alone has power; collectively we have impact.”(Zalis, 2019) which also perfectly demonstrates women’s status in society that they are undervalued and that it takes a collective to see a result.

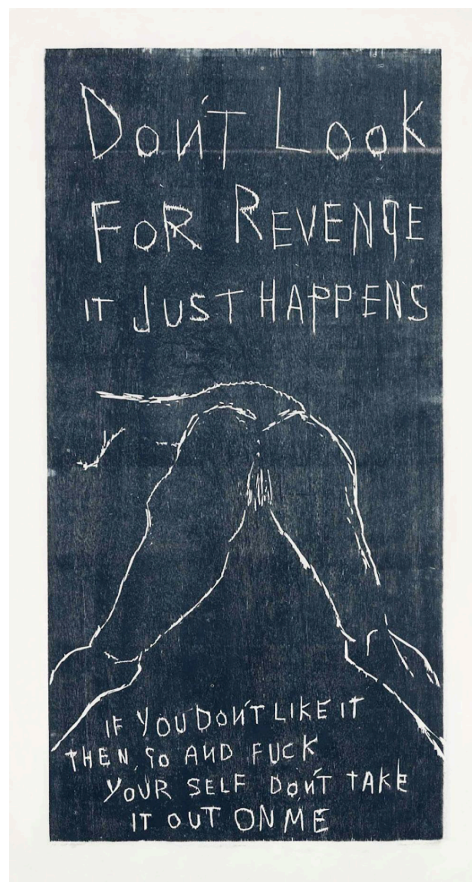


Figure 9:

Tracy Emin

It just happens 2001

Woodcut on Calico

831.4x55.1 in

Tracey Emin “it just happens” (Emin, 2001) is a wood cut printed on fabric the subject matter of the work is of a nude drawing of a female from behind bent over as

well with rough looking text this work exemplifies the raw nature of Emin's work the imagery of the nude body shows a vulnerability while the text itself is quite crude in what is being said but the rough pattern of the text shows a sense of urgency to say what she's feeling. Although all of this can be overshadowed by the blunt, aggressive statement. However, the aggression in what she is saying goes against the societal norm in which women should be poised and polite, which is another way that her work challenges patriarchal views (My Art Broker, 2025).



Figure 10:

Guerrilla Girls

THE EXTREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES 2022

Digital Media

The Guerrilla Girls are a group of anonymous feminist activists who use their widespread influence to protest many issues, not only in the art world but also happening in today's society. This can be clearly seen with this work, which was

made to criticise the Supreme Court in America for its ruling to eliminate women's rights to abortion in 2022. The piece is a short video where the yellow area of the text changes from "SUPREME" to "EXTREME" (Guerrilla Girls, 2014), telling us all that the overturning of Roe v Wade was not a decision made for the benefit of women but rather to control women. Limiting their access to health care, as well as policing their bodies, incites fear within anyone with a uterus. I feel that because this is such an ongoing issue within not only America but also with the fear that it may follow in the UK, with American-based right-wing groups funding the anti abortion protests in the UK. (Davis, 2025) Having this work in the exhibition will serve as a reminder that marginalising women won't be so easy.

### **Exhibition model**



Figure 11- Exhibition model initial layout design aerial view



Figure 12- Initial layout design



Figure 13- Initial layout design



Figure 14- Initial layout design

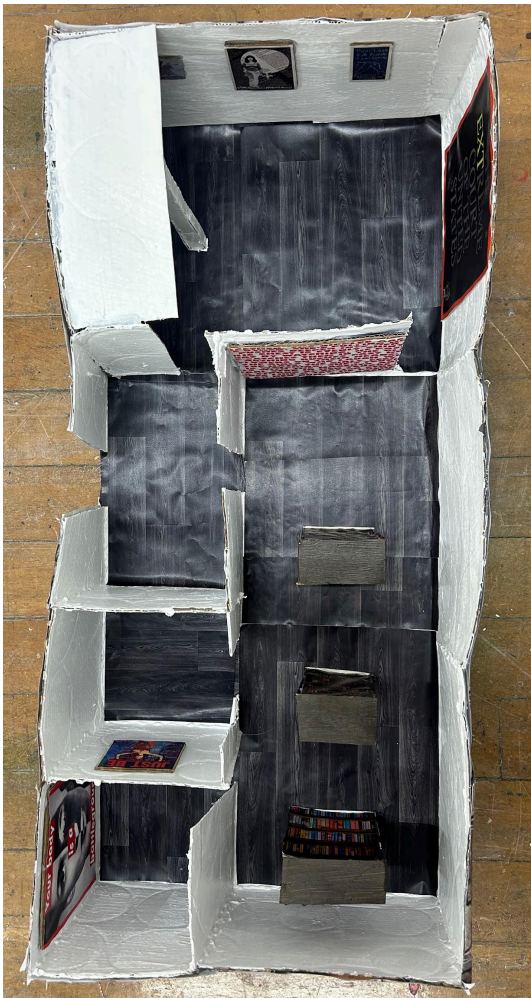


Figure 15-Final exhibition layout- Aerial view of the exhibition space- of the Glasgow's Women's Library

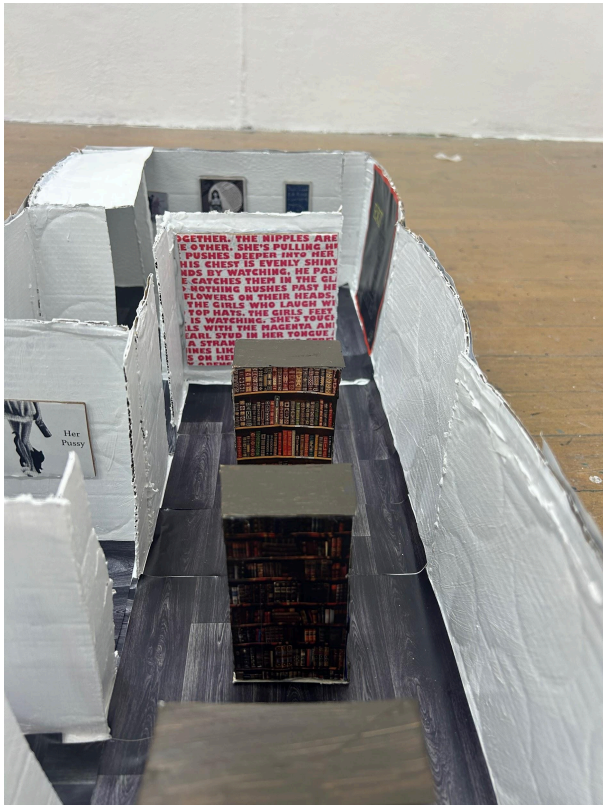


Figure 16- Final exhibition layout

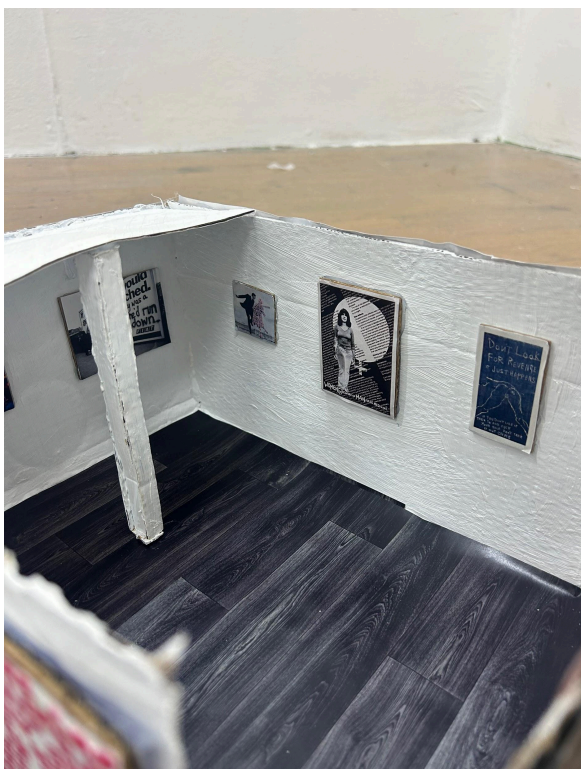


Figure 17 -Final exhibition layout



Figure 18- Final exhibition layout

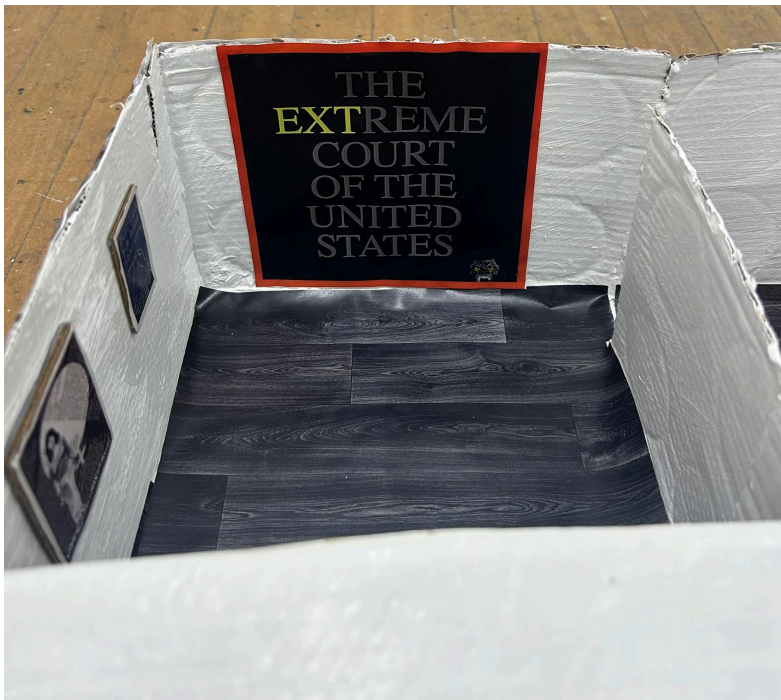


Figure 19-Final exhibition layout

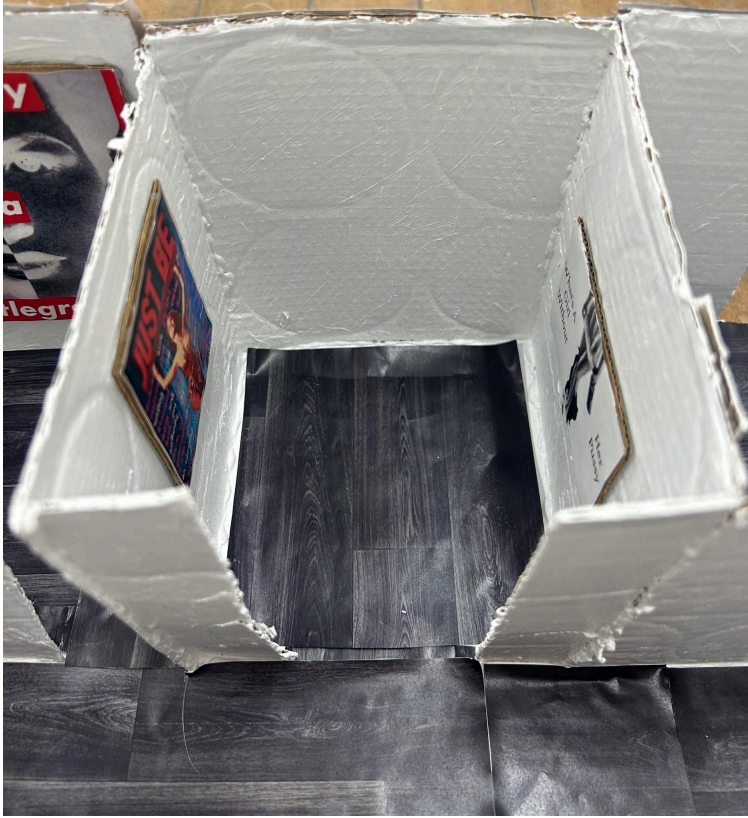


Figure 20 -Final exhibition layout



Figure 21-Final exhibition layout



Figure 22-Final exhibition layout

### **Chapter 3**

The main goal of this exhibition is to create a memorable immersive experience that gives as much of society/local community as possible access to activism art and information which they otherwise wouldn't commonly come across in their everyday lives and spark conversation about feminist issues and women's rights and what ways as a society we can improve and protect them to create equal opportunities for everyone.

The ten artworks selected to be displayed in this exhibition were chosen specifically because they all share the same two factors. The first being that they all feature some form of text, the second is that they are all feminist works (whether intended to be or not) by women. Mainly focusing on art pieces that advocate for women's rights, of any kind, from equality to healthcare, this is evident in the choices mentioned previously. In particular, Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Loraine Leeson and the Guerrilla Girls. Although this wasn't the only factor I looked for when selecting the artworks, I also wanted to find works that unapologetically challenge the patriarchal societal norm through the use of text, as I believe it shows a sense of rebellion, as historically the patriarch never wanted women to be academics hence why female artists combining their work or focusing their practice with literature is inspiring.

While preparing for my exhibition, I have investigated various resources in relation to curation and exhibition-making. I've looked at the variety of factors that feature in a successful and memorable exhibition such as the use of technology including sound, light, projection and video as all of these factors create an immersive multi-sensory experience including sound sight as well as Emitting the sensation of touch via light on the skin for example the Van Gogh alive exhibition which has been a running success globally since the early 2000's. The Van Gogh Alive exhibition is a completely immersive experience which features projections of Van Gogh paintings around an exhibition space, including the walls, the ceilings and the floor, completely filling the space to truly engage the audience. The projections of the paintings have been edited to have an animated movement from flying birds to people walking and flowers moving in the breeze. (TOWWN, 2021) Therefore, this has a direct

correlation to the Guerrilla Girls artwork which has been selected to be presented in this exhibition as the particular piece being exhibited has animated aspects to it therefore to present it to its full capability this specific piece will be projected on to a blank wall where there will be a running loop of the animation playing throughout the exhibitions opening times. I've also investigated the addition of sound within an exhibition and found that it helps to create a sense of place, which also helps improve the audience's understanding of the content, as sound can have an emotional effect on people, whether that be happiness, annoyance, unease, motivation, encouragement or empowerment. Especially because of how crowded and overwhelming an exhibition space can be, the sound will act as a way to drown out the background noise so that the audience can truly immerse themselves in the exhibition. (Chris, 2025) Therefore I've made the decision to include background music which I feel will provoke a deep sense of anger and frustration directed towards the patriarchal society which has influenced and motivated most of the artworks within this exhibition which is Labour by Paris Paloma (Paloma, 2024) I choose to this song specifically because of the content of feminist anger and how we can hear the change in tone from beginning to end representing the three stages in rebellion the calm before the storm in the beginning the boiling seething anger throughout and it ending in chaos. We can see this in the lyrics such as "Apologies from my tongue"(Paloma, 2024), suggesting that women's opinions and voices are obsolete to the patriarchy, which wishes women to be seen and not heard. Furthermore, this is supported by "24/7 baby machine"(Paloma, 2024), perfectly summing up how the patriarchal systems value women as only a tool to supply them with their own heirs to create the perfect "picket-fence dreams" (Paloma, 2024). Thus, this song immaculately represents everything this exhibition and the feminist movement are fighting for/against. For that reason, this song has been chosen to support the exhibition. I've been inspired by Barbara Kruger's "THINKING OF YOU. I MEAN ME. I MEAN YOU," Solo exhibition, particularly how she brings all the previously stated factors together. However, I've also been intrigued by Kruger's use of size and scale within her exhibition. Kruger works on a large scale already, as most of her works are featured in an outdoor setting, for example, using billboards and public transportation. Nevertheless, seeing the artwork in a confined exhibition setting gives a new dimension to Kruger's artistic practice. Kruger's work is wrapped around the walls of the exhibition space like wallpaper. Due to the enormous scale of

the artworks, the viewer feels as if they have entered another world that has completely consumed them as the artwork itself, combined with scale (as well as the previously discussed factors), creates an immersive experience, leaving the audience questioning themselves, their relationships and the society we form together. From this, I've concluded that although an artwork does not have to be a particular size to be impactful, in an exhibition environment that aims to create a memorable experience that inspires progressive and feminist thought, having a wow factor, a large piece of work can only work to your advantage. This is why this exhibition will feature two large-scale artworks(Barbara Kruger and Fiona Banner), which will both be allocated their own rooms within the exhibition space to emphasise the size of the work and maximise the intended effect (Moss, 2024).

## Chapter 4

A film that has greatly influenced me and my ideas has been “The Help”

The film mainly focuses on the Black working-class maids during the early 1960s(1962-1964), focusing on the segregation between black and white people.

As well as this, the film also explores the theme of feminism and the pressure society has put on women to conform to social norms and get married as soon as possible and have children, even if it isn't in their best interest. There are many examples of this in the help, such as Elizabeth Leefolt, who conformed to these social norms of marriage and children and had been the perfect wife, her whole personality. When it is clear it doesn't make her happy, but instead makes her miserable, this is obvious by the neglect she shows her children and the constant fighting between her and her husband. Although we have the progressive character of ‘Skeeter’, a young, ambitious woman who recently returned home after studying journalism, but is expected to focus on securing a man instead of a job. While she is still able to secure a small writing job to start off her career, she is expected to write a home help section (cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc.) Why? simply because she is a woman, and she automatically should know all of this information. However, by the end of the film, Skeeter made a name for herself and published a novel telling the stories of the black maids overcoming the social pressure to conform to the standard society had set for her. Finally we have Minny Jackson and Aibileen Clark, two black women who had to tell their stories anonymously and with the help of a white woman as if it's hard enough for a white woman at that time to have a voice it was near impossible for any black person let alone a black woman as they faced the threat of a brutal death by the KKK. (The Help, 2011)I think it is clear from the feminist themes and the connection of women and literature how it connects to this dissertation.

The true story of Anne Frank is a great inspiration and a true representation of optimism and ambition. A young girl whose dreams and aspirations were to become famous, to travel to study, write, and be free. Instead, she was forced to face the hardships of war at the tender age of thirteen, faced with the miseries of war, and discriminated against solely because of her religion. Nevertheless even while being

oppressed she used the only tool at her disposal, her diary, to express herself as a writer her thoughts, feelings and opinions, something that could never take away from her. but we can see the true power in her words as her diary has become one of the most famous forms of literature around the world and even in death her dreams became reality made famous by the publication of her diary. From Anne's story, we can see the true strength and power text holds and how a truly powerful form of text can truly last forever, as well as how it can inspire and affect people for generations. (Original title: Anne Frank: the Whole Story, 2001)

Bridgerton is a popular period piece set between 1813 and 1827, which focuses on the love lives of the ladies of the ton. Looking at the character of Penelope Featherington, a complex character whose writing has had an immense influence on their society, but under the alias of Lady Whistledown, why? To stay anonymous as a woman at the time who was known to have a job of any kind would then be thought of as devalued as a potential wife, and by staying anonymous, it assures her freedom to write without consequence. Throughout her story, writing wasn't just a source of expression for Penelope anymore; it developed into a tool that provided her with power, money and influence, everything she needed to ensure her survival in a society designed to benefit the lords/men. Penelope uses the fact that society at the time underestimated her because not only was she a woman, but she was also a wallflower, someone who wasn't noticed, who wasn't popular, to her advantage. She utilised these qualities to gather common knowledge and monetise it by publishing it under her alias Lady Whistledown. I think that looking at Penelope Featherington's storyline it gathers a lot of inspiration as it not only shows that text of any kind from academic to gossip articles can gather attention and influence and how it can reach anywhere on the social ladder from the working class to royalty coupled with the fact that she was able to gather a vast wealth from her business as a woman at a time where typically women in high society were financially dependent on the men of the household whether that was their husband, fathers or even their own sons. Therefore, I've gathered that text doesn't only hold the powers of influence but can also provide freedom, whether that be in the form of self-expression or literal freedom from financial benefit. (Bridgerton, 2020)

Little Women follows the story of four sisters in the 1860s and how they make their way through life, focusing particularly on Jo, the second eldest of the sisters, the most academically driven and ambitious writer, a feminist who rejects all social and patriarchal norms of the time, choosing to reject romance in exchange for independence. Refusing to marry, not out of disinterest but to keep her own values and dreams intact. Focusing particularly on one scene from the film where Jo is speaking with her mother where she then passionately speaks about how women are fit for more than just love “Women have minds and souls as well as hearts, ambition and talent as well as beauty and I'm sick of being told that love is all a woman is fit for. But... I am so lonely.” (Little Women, 2019)

This perfectly sums up the female experience between conforming to the social standard set out by the patriarchy or pursuing their dreams and aspirations, but potentially sacrificing something to achieve them. But why should it have to be a choice between one or the other when men have always been able to have both? For Jo, it's because the times wouldn't allow it. (Mashka, 2025)

Billie Eilish is a talented singer and songwriter who uses her talent and fame to explore many different topics, such as mental health, sexuality and gender as well as feminism through her songwriting. A highly successful and popular song she created was for the Barbie movie, which was dedicated to changing the typical way society sees the female experience and going into depth about how no two women are ever the same and exploring how societal pressure to conform affects women's mental health and happiness. “What Was I Made For?” The title of the song is an award-winning piece that examines the extreme pressures that are continuously put on women and young girls as they grow up to conform to societal standards. For example, the opening lyric “What Was I Made For?” Explores the desire women and young girls have to have more of a purpose than the standard one society expects from them. to carry the emotional burden in relationships of any kind and throughout their lives "don't tell my boyfriend it's not what he's made for" this furthermore backs up that there are still unrealistic and outdated feminine and masculine expectations

put on both genders automatically in our society, that a typical masculine man shouldn't be emotional and the woman is always to be carrying the pain.

Doing so forgetting their purpose and ambitions "forgot how to be happy" adding this additional labour onto women while men should have all opportunities to progress Rutherford backs up that a patriarchal system has had far too much influence on the world. "just something you paid for" suggests that again women are being treated as objects to meet and help someone else (a man) achieve their dreams and ambitions and support them with nothing in return.

This song explores how outdated patriarchal norms are. still having an effect on today's generation, and perfectly illustrates the emotional turmoil that many still have to face. (Eilish, 2023)

## Conclusion

This dissertation forms an original contribution of knowledge through the investigation of women in text.

The focal point of this investigation is to raise awareness around the issues of the patriarchy brought to light by female artists. Informing various visitors of the exhibition from diverse backgrounds such as the working class, race, gender and age. As well as discovering what makes text-based artworks so successful. During my investigation I've found there are multiple factors that affect the use of text in artwork such as the particular wording of the text like Barbara Kruger's work which directly engages the viewer by addressing them with "you," "your," "I," "we," and "they" forcing the audience engage and take notice making it more personal for them therefore more memorable. Also looking at the context of the text in the artwork and how that can greatly affect how you understand the text for example Jill Posner, "Spray It Loud" understanding that the text is a form of rebellion towards a patriarchal driven society is crucial to giving the artwork power and influence without that context the work would still be interesting but would it hold as much power?

Furthermore, how a powerful text can take many forms in different media, from screen prints, digital media, written as well as physical instalment's, therefore reaching a wider audience and inspiring and influencing many people from diverse backgrounds for generations, as text sets everything in stone, there is no wiggle room for debate. The significance of this research is immense as it fills a gap in knowledge within feminist artwork, as when researching this topic, there are no studies focusing specifically on women using text within their artistic practice. As a result, this research is a completely original idea. Filling this gap is key to understanding women's relationship with education and literature and how it has been affected by a system set up by men and for men. As a result of how expansive this area of research is, this dissertation has not been able to discuss and or evaluate every aspect relating to women in text to its full potential. Therefore, I would suggest that there would be a future and more extensive line of research focusing on women's rebellion in the form of text within an artist's practice. I would suggest starting by exploring feminist activism work regarding the use of text and how they use this tool to communicate their message and make change. Furthermore, I would recommend looking into the potential this art has to be made readily available

publicly in the form of billboards and advertisements to reach larger amounts of people, as creating awareness of the ongoing feminist struggle is a crucial way to ensure the fight stays active and progressive. From this investigation, I can conclude that text within artwork is an extremely important tool and, when used correctly, can greatly assist an artist in communicating their messages or statements to their audience. In addition, using text within their artwork can lead to full clarity of what their message is, as well as using a written form of communication sets your statement in stone; you can not edit it once it's made public; therefore, by using text as a tool, you are stating that you fully believe in your message. Moreover, there is the main focus of this dissertation, which is women using text, and as the previous statement definitely applies to women, their use of text can be seen as more crucial, as it publicly shows confidence as well as a form of rebellion against the patriarchal system that wants to oppress them and their opinions and views. In the end, the facts make it clear that historically, the women of the world have been categorically and continuously discriminated against based on nothing but their genitals. Though they all will have different experiences, we know where it originates from, which is a patriarchal system that has worked its way into many households and workplaces up until fairly recently. But why have we seen a change in this society that's been influenced by the patriarchal system? It's thanks to the incredible bravery of female artists (and activists) who use their working practice to create change through freedom of speech, bluntly speaking out through their artwork to challenge the social norms that were set out for them by a system that does not value them, what's more, reaching as many people as possible to change the system. Therefore, I conclude that women's use of text is imperative to continuing to spread awareness and make change, in hopes of creating and sustaining a society that values women for their intellect and ambitions and not just their genetic ability to reproduce.

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