

Title: Women Artists of the Renaissance and the Art of the Feminine: Societal Roles, Expectations, Values, and Beliefs

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Women artists view their subjects in a different way than their male contemporaries because their roles, values, beliefs, and societal expectations are defined differently, thus affecting their artistic style and interpretation of the world around them. My research will analyze the artwork of four prominent female artists spanning the Renaissance to Post-Impressionism. This includes Artemisia Gentileschi's Italian Baroque painting, *Mary Magdalene as Melancholy*, Lavinia Fontana's Italian Mannerist painting, *Self-portrait at the Virginal with a Servant*, Berthe Morisot's French Impressionist painting, *Summer's Day*, and concluding with Suzanne Valadon's French Post-Impressionist painting, *Seated Nude*. Each of these women artists communicates the contextual elements of their existence as well as the life experiences that shaped their personal views as defined by the philosophical assumptions that influenced their culture. Arguably, these differences have created a unique platform for personal expression which has given the spectator access to the private and personal lives of women. Like their male contemporaries, these female artists employ visual and symbolic interpretation to give meaning to their world. However, unlike their male contemporaries, these women artists interpret the world from a much different perspective due to patriarchal imperatives that historically restricted the feminine voice. The Renaissance and the Industrial Age witnessed great intellectual and technological advancement. During these periods of transition, Gentileschi, Fontana, Morisot and Valadon exhibited their artwork in private and public salons. The advent of women's greater participation in public spaces provided them with a wider platform to express their views, interpretation, and understanding of the modern world.