

Abstract:

Womanhouse was created as an exhibition artwork by Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, and the students of the feminist art program at UCLA during the second wave feminist art movement. Created in an abandoned mansion, the installations were designed to represent how a woman's life changes once she is married. To create the concept for each installation, the artists participated in consciousness-raising sessions that allowed them to voice their thoughts and feelings on a topic. The kitchen represented the nurturing side of women that were always caretakers and became mothers to their children. This work focused on essentialism, the celebration of the essence of being a woman. Essentialism worked towards the same goal that *Womanhouse* did, to come together and celebrate everything about being a woman. The entire exhibit was meant to show that when women become married, they are hopeful that they'll become equals to their husband in the home, but instead, they become the housekeeper of the home and the caretaker of the children. I argue that *Womanhouse* was revolutionary because it used the consciousness-raising sessions to visualize the gender inequality that was happening to women every day.

Methodology:

Research for this project was made through searching online sources and even Chicago's own writings of her experiences while making this art exhibit. Finding a video that was created by someone that came through *Womanhouse* was extremely beneficial in researching this topic. This research benefited from recent scholarship and from growing awareness of the significance of this exhibition/artwork, as well as growing awareness of the value of feminist art in general.

Conclusion:

Womanhouse helped to give a voice to so many women that were voiceless during the time that this was created. More than that, it was a physical representation of the gender inequalities that women had to bear every day. This served as proof to those individuals that did not fully understand the gender inequalities that women faced.



Womanhouse was an exhibit that was a collaboration of many prominent woman artists' in the 1970s in the California area. This was the first female-centered art installation to appear in the Western world and it shocked many of the people that saw it. *Womanhouse* raised a series of vitally important questions about how women are treated in society daily and the gender roles that have been placed on women since the day they are born. What made *Womanhouse* so important was that it was made by women and for women. Chicago was only keeping women in mind when making this piece, because this was meant to celebrate the essence of being a woman. Men were only allowed to see *Womanhouse* so they might understand the misogyny and gender roles that women are required to go through every day.



In *Linen Closet*, created by Sandy Orgel, a mannequin is shown being "trapped" in the shelving of a linen closet. This represents how when a woman is not serving her husband, she is inside the home carrying out household chores. Another element of this piece shows how as soon as women get married, they have an expiring shelf life.



In *Bridal Staircase*, Kathy Huberland used art to showcase the harsh realities of being a married woman at that time. The piece shows a mannequin walking down a staircase in a wedding dress. The dress starts out as white but slowly turns grey as it moves down the stairs. This represents how women are hopeful to be an equal in the home when they become married but slowly become aware of how that is not the case.



In *Web (Crocheted Environment)*, Faith Wilding combined the skill of the male-dominated architecture with the more "feminine" aspect of needlework. In history, female ancestors have built shelters out of found objects and woven them together, like the crocheted web in this piece. This piece is depicting the typical "craft-work" that women have done for centuries. Craft work had not been seen as fine or high art, and second wave feminism sought to bring this skill to the light and to show that this was a valid style of art.

Works Cited

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