



FEMALE INVOLVEMENT IN ART INSTITUTIONS IN THE
CZECH REPUBLIC

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DECLARATION

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I declare that this thesis is my independent work. All sources and literature are cited and included.

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Adéla Prokopová

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ABSTRACT

Female Involvement in Art Institutions in the Czech Republic

This thesis describes the status of Czech female artists in the Czech Republic and its art institutions. The thesis investigates gender imbalance in past and present exhibition programs and acquisitions of state-sponsored art institutions, specifically Gallery Rudolfinum and the National Gallery. The aim of this thesis is to explain why female artists are under-represented and less awarded than their male counterparts. Four reasons are identified in the thesis: artistic canons, the historical position of women artists in Czech society, communism and feminism; and the situation in the Czech art world after the Velvet Revolution. Possible solutions as well as positive approaches and initiatives in the art scene to help improve the position of women artists are also discussed.

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1. Introduction

Before women gained access to the realm of fine art which has traditionally been a male dominated sphere, they were allowed to work only in the fields of decorative and applied art. Being a woman and becoming a professional artist was not easy. Art history does not have the female equivalents of canonical figures like Picasso or Michelangelo. In the twenty-first century, art is no longer as gender-exclusive, women now have access to art education and can pursue careers in the arts. Unfortunately, this inclusion is not reflected in the practice of many major and influential art institutions specializing in modern and contemporary art worldwide and particularly in the Czech Republic. Women artists are sparsely represented in collections of museums, permanent and temporary exhibitions, and they do not have solo exhibitions in major art institutions as often as their male counterparts do. Therefore, groups like the Guerilla Girls, an American feminist artists' organization, aim to gain recognition for women artists by bringing attention to worldwide under-representation of female artists by making 'report cards' counting the numbers of women in art exhibitions, or via their posters, such as the poster which reads, "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 4% of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women, but 76% of the nudes are female" (See Fig. i.). The position of women as objects in art as opposed to creators of art has been elaborated upon by the British art critic John Berger in his *Ways of Seeing*. As he writes, the problem is long embedded in the European art tradition, where the painters and the audience were usually men (64).

Before discussing women's position in the contemporary art scene, it is necessary to address a terminological issue. When speaking of women artists, it is important to differentiate between *female artists* and *feminist artists*. To be a female artist does not necessarily equal being a feminist artist. Women's art is art made by women regardless of their theoretical or political position. Though the term can have a connotative meaning and is

often ascribed to typically so-called 'feminine' genres, such as the applied arts. Women's art will naturally imply the female's view of the world, but it does not mean that there is a strict line between art done by women and art done by men.

Feminist art, on the other hand, is strongly socially and politically charged, it "raises consciousness, invites dialogue, and transforms culture" (Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges" 362). Lucy Lippard, an American art theoretician, calls feminist art "a political position, a set of ideas about the future of the world, which includes information about the history of women and our struggles and recognition of women as a class" ("Sweeping Exchanges" 362). Judy Chicago believes that "The goal of feminism is to change the character of art. 'What has prevented women from being really great artists is the fact that we have been unable to transform our circumstances into our subject matter to use them to reveal the whole nature of the human condition'" (Chicago in Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges" 362).

The interest of this thesis are women artists and equal representation, regardless of their theoretical or political position. Gender inequality in the art world is a much discussed issue globally. Since 1971, when Linda Nochlin published her article "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists," people in the art sphere have noted the under-representation of women in art institutions. Five years after she published her essay, Nochlin, together with Ann Sutherland Harris, curated a pioneering exhibition "Women Artists: 1550-1950" which first showed in Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It was a challenging project since at that time "art-historical literature about women artists was scant, monographs devoted to women were an absolute rarity, and museums and galleries were negligent about, if not averse to, exhibiting work by women" (Reilly, *Curatorial Activism* 44). Since then, many curators in the

global art world have been practicing “curatorial activism” as Maura Reilly¹ calls the practice of creating art exhibitions with the aim to introduce artists who have been for the most part excluded from the master narratives of art.

Though the situation for women within the art world is more inclusive than it was in the 1970s, equality has not been reached yet. The global art world still predominantly relies on familiar and established canons that present mostly white male artist superstars. According to Maura Reilly in her article “Taking the Measure of Sexism: Facts, Figures, and Fixes”

The common refrain that ‘women are treated equally in the art world now’ needs to be challenged. The existence of a few superstars or token achiever — like Marina Abramovic, Tracey Emin and Cindy Sherman — does not mean that women artists have achieved equality. Far from it. [...] The more closely one examines art-world statistics, the more glaringly obvious it becomes that, despite decades of postcolonial, feminist, anti-racist, and queer activism and theorizing, the majority continues to be defined as white, Euro-American, heterosexual, privileged, and, above all, male. Sexism is still so insidiously woven into the institutional fabric, language, and logic of the mainstream art world that it often goes undetected (Reilly, n.p.).

Contemporary society is more open to the questions of gender equality and inequality; thus, it is timely to focus on the paucity of female artists’ presence in large art institutions in the Czech Republic, where these gender issues are addressed less widely than in other Western countries. This thesis will examine the standing of Czech female artists in the Czech art scene. The thesis will map reasons Czech female artists’ works are less collected and

¹ Maura Reilly, curator and art theoretician, founded the Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum. Through her practice (exhibitions and publications) she raises awareness of the importance of thinking about gender, race and sexuality in the art world.

exhibited in important, state-sponsored Czech art institutions. The Czech art scene has had a uniquely complicated development due to the communist regime that controlled the Czech nation from 1948 till 1989. Thus, the problem more often studied in the Czech milieu is official vs. underground art scene during the communist era, rather than the paucity of female artists in national collections. Theoretical publications on gender in the Czech art scene are rather sparse and most research in this field has been done only recently by Martina Pachmanová.

The contention of this thesis is that artwork of Czech female artists is not adequately collected or exhibited by Czech state-sponsored art institutions, nor do female artists as frequently receive prestigious awards. The exhibitions and collections of major art institutions do not authentically reflect the genuine art scene. Artists, both male and female should have equal opportunities to exhibit and have their work represented in museum collections as well as receive prestigious awards. There are some qualifications to this statement; the pursuit of gender equality in the art world should not overshadow the pursuit of artistic quality. Gender equality and diversity enriches the entire art world; thus, should it be aspired to in the long run, though it will not necessarily and absolutely be realized in every single exhibition. It should also be noted that the problematics of under-representation is not restricted to women. There are many “Others” under-represented in the art world, including minorities, artists of color and generally any art outside the traditional Western canons. Including these “Other” artists for many curators and art institutional decision makers means stepping out of their comfort zone and thinking beyond precedents.

This thesis calls attention to the under-representation of Czech female artists in the major, state-sponsored art institutions. Chapter two assesses the past and present exhibition programs of these institutions and describes the situation for Czech women artists in the Czech contemporary art scene. The third chapter presents two case studies of Czech women

artists who are well-known abroad but less so in their native Czech Republic. The fourth chapter analyzes the reasons for the under-representation of women artists in the Czech art scene; each are treated in subsections. Subsection one deals with dominant canonical interpretations and presentations of the history of art, depending on who writes and for whom; subsection two deals with social history and tradition. It is argued that there were early emancipatory successes of women in the Czech milieu, but these did not have much effect on the inclusion of women in the field of visual arts. The third sub-section examines the absence of second wave of feminism in the Czech milieu, the rejection of feminism by the communists, as well as its negative reception after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The fourth subsection describes the complicated situation for institutions in the Czech Republic art scene, which after 1989, had to completely emerge from the pre-revolutionary prescribed ways of thinking and functioning. The fifth chapter presents current positive approaches to the representation of women in the Czech art scene and offers solutions to the problem. The concluding chapter sums up the discussion and explores how the reasons for women artists' under-representation in state-funded art institutions are interconnected.

2. The Current Status of Female Artists in the Czech Republic

This chapter provides an overview of the current situation in the Czech art scene. It provides comparative statistics on Czech women and men artists' representation in important state funded institutions, both in solo and group exhibitions and compares this with smaller and commercial institutions. It also analyzes the acquisition numbers of the main art collecting institution in the Czech Republic, the National Gallery in Prague and compares the proportionality of acquired works in the past three years (2018-2016) done by female and male artists. Secondly, this chapter examines the most prestigious award in the Czech Republic for contemporary artists under 35 years of age, the Jindřich Chalupecký Award, and the number of female and male laureates. The data presented in this chapter was obtained from the annual reports, lists of past and present exhibition programs, lists of artists and laureates, available through the institutions' websites.

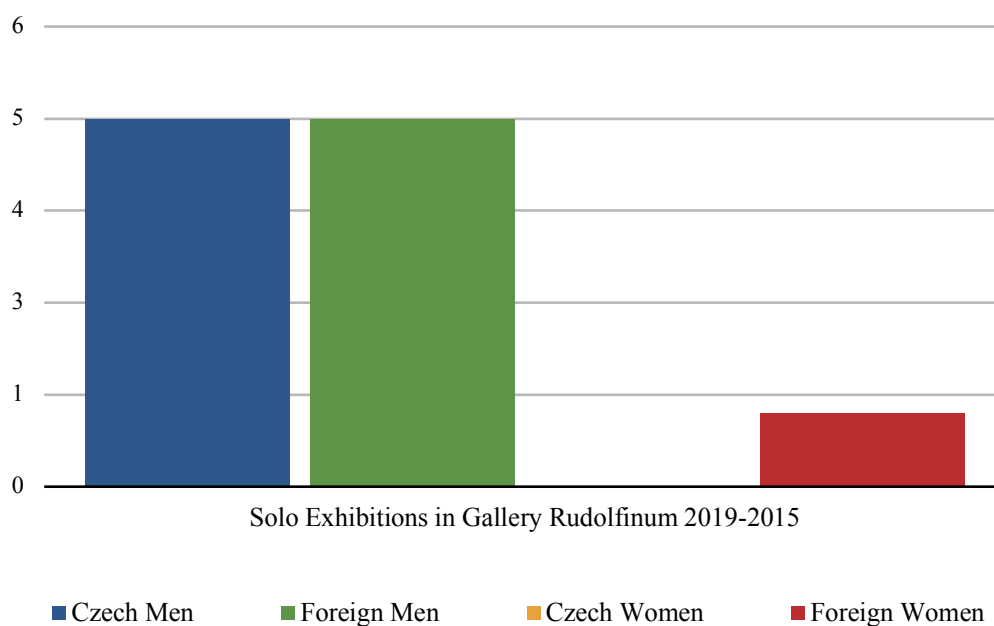
2.1. National Institutions

The Czech contemporary art scene is replete with young and established female artists including Marie Blabolilová, Veronika Bromová, Milena Dopitová, Romana Drdová, Anna Hulačová, Klára Hosnedlová, Anežka Hošková, Magdalena Jetelová, Eva Kořátková, Barbora Kleinhamplová, Pavla Sceranková, Johana Střížková and Kateřina Šedá. Their work ranges from traditional media (painting or sculpture) to new media (installation, performance, photography or video art), and deals with various topics from diverse perspectives, some are feminist artists who address gender issues and /or use their bodies as part of their work (Darina Alster, Erika Bornová, Veronika Bromová, Anna Daučíková, Lenka Klodová, Eva Kmentová, Kateřina Olivová), others focus on issues in the public sphere, or they work with themes from everyday life (Romana Drdová, Alena Foustková, Klára Hosnedlová, Anežka Hošková, Eva Kořátková, Alena Kotzmannová, Kateřina Šedá).

In spite of this range of female artists, Czech national and publicly funded art institutions, exhibit and collect an insufficient number of Czech female artists in contrast to the number of represented male artists, though these female artists may be oftentimes very successful internationally. Gallery Rudolfinum, which is known in Prague art scene as the local kunsthalle² has had, since its inception in 1994, only one Czech female artist solo exhibition - Adriena Šimotová's "*Vyjevování*" in 2011 (7.4. – 19.6.2011). Šimotová (1926-2014) was an important Czech artist and a crucial figure of the 1960s generation and the only Czech female artist to whom Gallery Rudolfinum dedicated a solo exhibition. The circumstances preceding her exhibition suggest the exhibition was staged by Gallery Rudolfinum in response to a series of warnings about their discriminatory practice. Prior to introducing the only solo exhibition of a Czech female artist, Gallery Rudolfinum was alerted of their discriminatory practice toward Czech female artists by a Czech feminist activist Mirek Vodrážka. Vodrážka, in 2005 wrote an open letter to the director of Gallery Rudolfinum, Jan Nedoma, and the minister of culture, Vítězslav Jandák. In the letter, Vodrážka criticized the institution's practice of not introducing solo exhibitions of Czech women artists in their program. Subsequent to his letter he staged a happening in front of the Rudolfinum where he criticized the institution's practice. As part of this he presented a large-scale poster that read: *Jak jsou zastoupeni české umělkyně a čeští umělci na samostatných výstavách v galerii Rudolfinum of roku 1994-2005* (The proportional representation of Czech male vs. Czech female artists in solo artist shows at the gallery Rudolfinum between 1994-2005) (in Štefková, *Czech Feminisms* 258). Beneath the above cited text were painted legs — the left leg listed all Czech male artists who had had a solo exhibition in Rudolfinum and on the right leg were only question marks since there were no women artists' names on record

² The term kunsthalle, from German, is generally used to describe institutions which do not have collections but have large premises and present various temporary exhibitions.

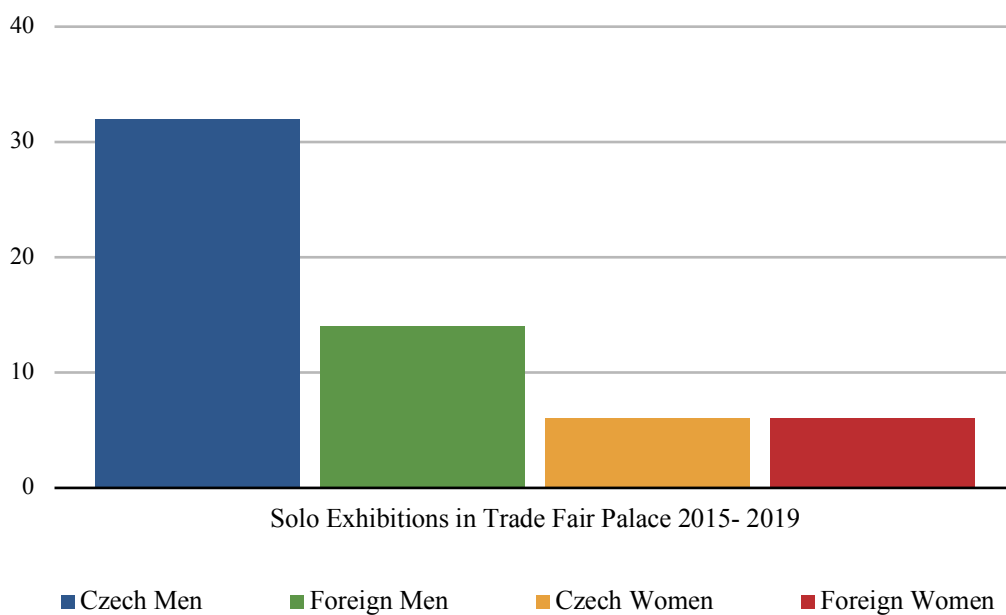
(See Fig. ii). In addition, Vodrážka also created a documentary called “*Mlha a moc*” in 2010. In the documentary, he asked the director of Gallery Rudolfinum why there had been no solo exhibitions of Czech female artists during the twelve years of their existence. Nedoma answered: “*Jmenujte mi ženy, které by si zasloužily být vystaveny v Rudolfinu*” (“Give me the names of women who would deserve to be exhibited in Rudolfinum”) (cited in Červinková, 64). He argued that the gallery had presented solo exhibitions of foreign female artists, including Luise Bourgeois, Kiki Smith, or Cindy Sherman. However, with his answer, that implied he does not consider any Czech female artist worthy of having a solo exhibition in Gallery Rudolfinum Nedoma clearly showed the low regard in which Czech female artists are held by this publicly funded institution. Furthermore, as Štefková pointed out, his answer implies the “blindness towards gender prejudices of his aesthetic judgment and the reluctance to admit that a part of the career of the exhibited foreign female artists and the not exhibited Czech female artists is the institutional support or the lack of it” (authors’ translation) (“*Záblesk těla*” 98). Since the first solo exhibition of a Czech female artist in 2011, Gallery Rudolfinum has not represented any other Czech female artist in a solo exhibition. Between years 2019 - 2015, the gallery showed five solo exhibitions of Czech male artists, five exhibitions of foreign male artists, one exhibition of a foreign female artist and zero solo exhibitions of Czech female artists. For the year 2020, they are again preparing solo exhibitions of two foreign male artists. It does not appear that they are planning to change their attitude toward their exhibition program and improve the inequitable status of Czech female artists in their institution in the near future and the exhibition of Šimotová was only a small exception in their program.



Gallery Rudolfinum may be a notorious and extreme example of the under-representation of Czech female artists in a publicly funded art institution. Thus, it is also necessary to look at an institution which is not only publicly funded but also a dominant, national institution for art, the National Gallery. The main focus is on National Gallery's *Veletržní Palác / Trade Fair Palace*, since this is the National Gallery's venue for modern and contemporary art. The last solo exhibition of a Czech female artist in National Gallery's Trade Fair Palace was Magdalena Jetelová's "*Dotek doby*" in the fall season 2017/2018 (19.11. 2017 - 18.3. 2018). Martina Pachmanová states that the under-representation of Czech female artists is manifest in low acquisition numbers as well as in long-term expositions, and cumulative shows (Vltava interview). The record of past and present temporary exhibitions in the National Gallery demonstrates there are insufficient solo exhibitions of women artists, and that in group exhibitions women are sparsely included.

The National Gallery primarily presents Czech male artists, or international male artists. Between years 2019 - 2015, the Trade Fair Palace hosted 32 solo exhibitions of Czech

male artists, one of which was in section “Introducing” and only six solo exhibitions of Czech women artists, four of which were in section “Introducing”. Solo exhibitions of international female artists were in the same numbers as solo exhibitions of Czech female artists: six solo exhibitions and four of them in the sections “Introducing” and/or in the section “Poetry Passage”. Solo exhibitions of male international artists amounted to fourteen, four of which were either in the section “Introducing” or “Poetry Passage”. It is deliberately specified that a certain number of solo exhibitions were in the section “Introducing” or “Poetry Passage”, since these sort of exhibitions are of a smaller size in comparison with the solo exhibitions in main halls of the Trade Fair Palace. The low number of female artists’ solo exhibitions made up two-thirds by these smaller exhibitions. The “Introducing” section thus represents an exception in terms of solo exhibitions of Czech female artists. It has as its aim to present emerging artists; however, it is located in a rather hidden part of Trade Fair Palace. This section introduced quite a number of female artists, including Romana Drdová (CZ), Helena Hladilová (CZ), Nicole Morris and Miroslava Večeřová (CZ), Megan Clark, Pavla Dundálková (CZ), Patricia Dauder and Valentýna Janů (CZ) (NG past exhibitions). This differentiation implies women artists are mostly presented in the second tier; they are ever emerging and not fully recognized in contrast to Czech male artists who receive more opportunities in the main halls of Trade Fair Palace. In the Fall season 2019, three solo exhibitions of Czech male artists were introduced in Trade Fair Palace: Milan Grygar, Josef Bolf and Emil Filla (NG present exhibitions). The female artists, however, in respect of their talent do not belong to the second tier, which can be demonstrated with Romana Drdová’s case. In 2015 she created an installation in “Introducing” called *Pohled* (The Overlook) and two years later she became a finalist of the Jindřich Chalupecký Award.

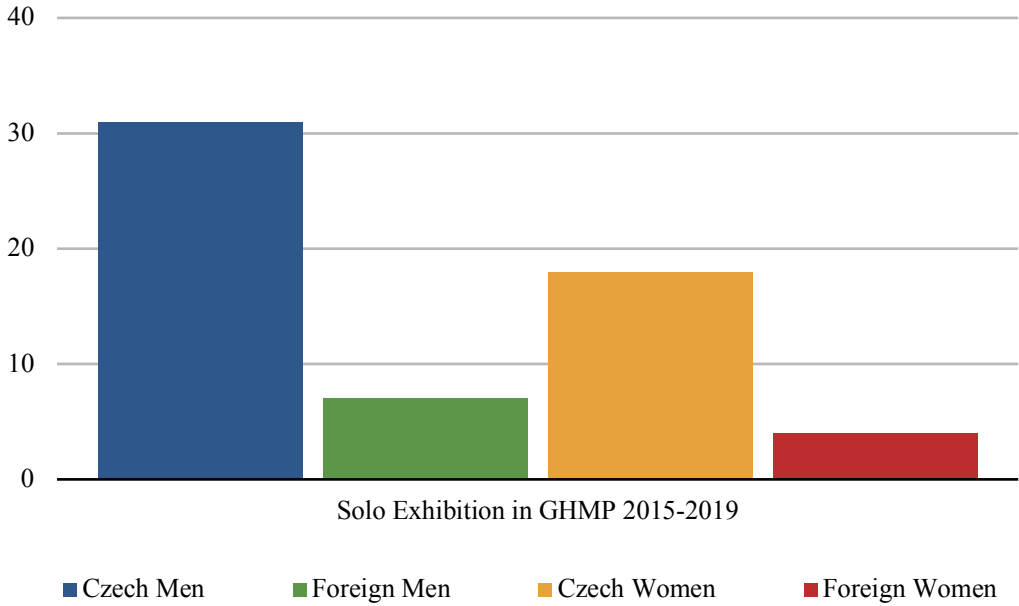


Group exhibitions in National Gallery are generally also not very gender balanced. An exception in terms of group exhibitions were “*Jiří Kovanda a (ne)možnost spolupráce*” and “*Against Nature: mladá česká umělecká scéna*” which involved a high number of female artists. In case of the Jiří Kovanda exhibition, ten women were presented (of which seven were Czech women) together with seven men (six of which were Czech) (NG past exhibitions). However, this does not make up for the majority of group exhibitions which are primarily by men.

Also, the acquisition numbers and representation of Czech female artists for the National Gallery are comparatively low. In 2018, the National Gallery purchased twelve works of art, of which only one item was by a female artist. Donated works in the same year amounted to fifteen and of this only two were works by women. The year 2017, had higher numbers of acquisitions of women’s art; the National Gallery purchased nineteen works of art of which four were women artists and included figures like Jetelová, Koťátková and Šedá. Donated works in 2017 amounted to fifteen and five of those were women. In 2016, the

National Gallery purchased only seven items and none of these was a work by a female artist. (NG Annual Reports)

The records of past solo exhibitions in Prague City Gallery (GHMP), another publicly funded art institution in the Czech art scene, show its more welcoming attitude toward women artists. Between years 2019 - 2015, the Prague City Gallery showed work of 31 Czech male artists and eighteen Czech female artists. In terms of foreign artists, GHMP introduced seven solo exhibitions of male artists and four solo exhibitions of female artists. It is significant that the head of this publicly funded institution is a woman, in contrast to National Gallery and Gallery Rudolfinum. Women are also in leading positions of the two commercial galleries discussed below.



In terms of the most prestigious award for Czech contemporary artists, the Jindřich Chalupecký award, gender balance among the winners is also lacking: the award has 24 male laureates and only six female laureates. However, since 2014 there has been a rising number

of females among the five finalists. In 2019 and 2018, three finalists were women³; in 2017 there were two women finalists; in 2016 there were again three women; the years 2015 and 2014 had two women among the award's finalists. This supports the fact that there are more and more female artists whose work is considered by the professional jury as worthy of reward. Nevertheless, throughout these six years only once, in 2015, was the recipient of the laureate of Jindřich Chalupecký Award a woman: Barbora Kleinhamplová.

2.2. Commercial Galleries and Centers for Contemporary Art

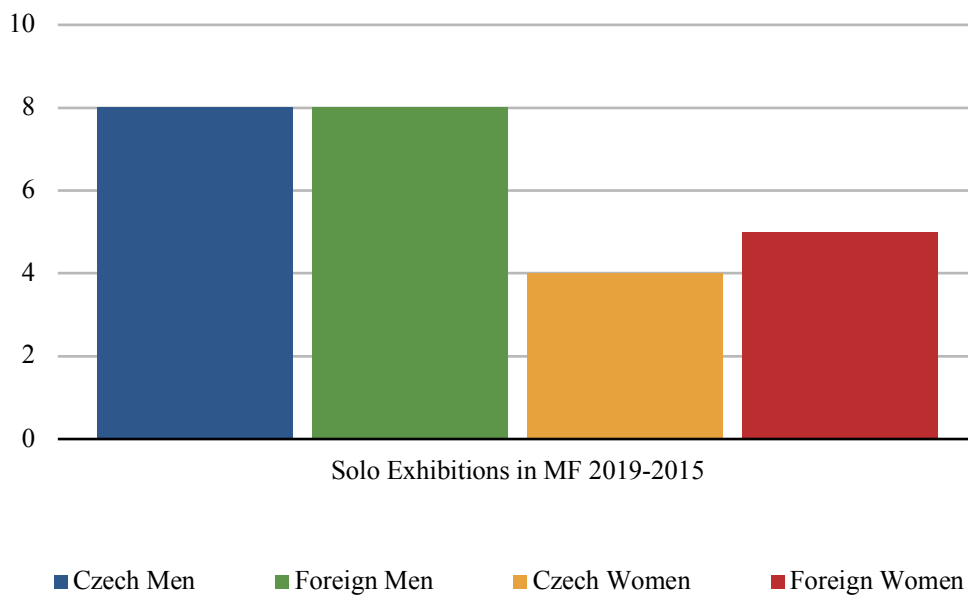
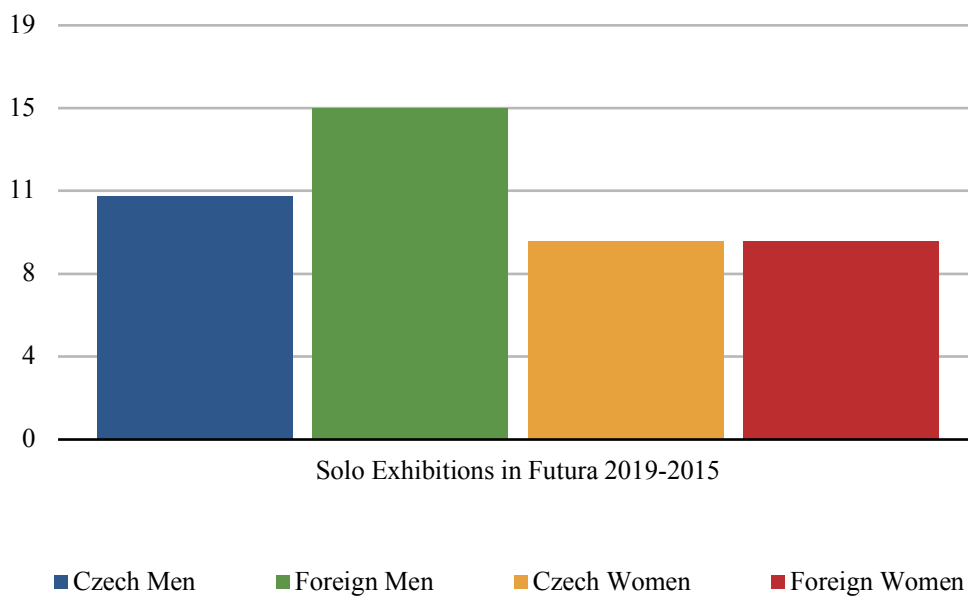
The situation for women artists in the Czech Republic is better in smaller, independent or commercial institutions. Hunt Kastner is a commercial gallery that represents seventeen artists of which six are Czech women (Klára Hosnedlová, Anna Hulačová, Eva Koťátková, Alena Kotzmannová, Zorka Ságlová, Michaela Thelenová). Drdova Gallery, another commercial gallery on the Prague art scene represents eight artists and four of them are women. Drdova Gallery have the highest proportion of female artists in this study.

List of Artists represented by Drdova Gallery

Male Artists	Female Artists
Hynek Alt	Barbora Kleinhamplová
Václav Kopecký	Pavla Sceranková
Jan Nálevka	Aleksandra Vajd
Daniel Vlček	Monika Žáková

³ In 2019 one “finalist” was a group of women artists - Comunité Fresca.

Meetfactory and Futura, two dominant centers for contemporary art in Prague are also more welcoming to women artists in their exhibition programs. Though they tend to exhibit more international artists and also do more group exhibitions than solo exhibitions. Nevertheless, in the studied time period (2019-2015), they have presented the work of more Czech female artists than both the National Gallery and Rudolfinum combined. Meetfactory, between years 2019 – 2015, presented, in its main gallery and in gallery Kostka, four Czech women artists in solo exhibitions (Marie Lukáčová, Radka Salcmanová, Adéla Součková, Milena Dopitová). Foreign women artists had in Meetfactory's main gallery and gallery Kostka five solo exhibitions. Both Czech and international solo men's exhibitions amounted to eight. Futura showed between years 2019-2015 nine solo exhibitions of Czech women artists (Markéta Magidová, Sláva Sobotovičová, Lenka Vítková, Denisa Lehocká, Karima Al Mukhtarova, Lenka Klodová, Romana Drdová, Ivana Králíková, Anna Daučíková). Solo exhibitions of international female artists amounted to nine also. In addition, there were ten exhibitions of Czech male artists and fifteen exhibitions of international male artists. The graphs below show the greater equity of solo exhibitions of women and men artists in MeetFactory and Futura in contrast to the bigger publicly funded art institutions, Gallery Rudolfinum and the National Gallery.



This chapter has presented the statistics of significant national and commercial institutions as well as centers for contemporary art in the Czech Republic, comparing their numbers of solo exhibitions of both Czech and international female and male artists. The graphs demonstrate the lower number of female artists, compared to the number of men artists, represented in the state-funded art institutions, Gallery Rudolfinum and the National Gallery. In contrast, the graphs for the commercial and private galleries / centers for contemporary art show the greater gender equity of solo exhibitions or artists represented in these institutions.

3. Case Studies

It is paradoxical that among the internationally best known Czech artists there are women who are far less known and less represented by large art institutions in their homeland. Already in the 1930s, Czech art critic Hana Volavková addressed the paradox of international presentation of women artists. She wrote:

Our [Czech] female artists are more successful abroad than in their homeland [...]
The case of famous French sculptor Jeanne Poupelet is fairly similar. Her work was bought earlier in America than in France, where she waited a long time for success. The distrust toward women's art is not only specific to us and it seems that women artists succeed better the bigger outreach they have (author's translation) (in Pachmanová "Ženská um. emancipace" n.p.).

This chapter focuses on two case studies to demonstrate the situation of Czech female artists who are well known internationally yet less known at home. It introduces the work of these artists and it examines the opportunities they are given in their homeland.

3.1. Case Study: Eva Kořátková

The under-representation of women in the Czech contemporary art scene can be well illustrated with the case of Eva Kořátková, who is better known internationally than her contemporary male Czech artists, yet she is not as known in her homeland as they are. The most recent statistical data, mapping year 2018, show Eva Kořátková as the most exhibited Czech artist abroad⁴ (J&T Banka Art Index⁵). Kořátková won the first place in Art Index's top ten Czech contemporary artists in 2018 (J&T Banka Art Index) as a result of her

⁴ The most exhibited artist in the Czech Republic was Jiří Černický.

⁵ The aim of this project is to provide an objective description of the art scene's development, showing a list of artists based on their active participation in the global art scene.

international successes. Kořátková is represented in the Czech Republic by a commercial gallery Hunt Kastner, and in 2007 she received Jindřich Chalupecký award. However, she has never had a solo exhibition in either the National Gallery or Gallery Rudolfinum, and the general public in the Czech Republic is not familiar with her work.

In her work, Kořátková deals with the role of an individual in an everyday social context. She explores how social structures like family, school, and other institutions relate to individual experience of the world. She creates installations using everyday objects, working with a wide range of materials including metal and fabrics. She also creates illustrations and collages, often depicting human body in surreal situations. For example, she explored the school system in her *Cesta do školy* (2008). As part of this project, she created a piece named “Sit straight” (See Figure iii.). She made constructions fixing the typical children's body postures in the school institutional setting (such as reading a book, sitting upright with hands behind the back or raising a hand). Constructions created in order to hold human body in various, often unnatural, positions are typical of Kořátková's work (See Figure iv., *Paralelní životopis*). In another project, *Dvouhlavý životopisec a muzeum představ*, Kořátková recreated the visions of mentally ill people through diverse media, illustration, installation and performance (See Figures v.-vii.). She supplemented the visual representations with very detailed doctor's records of the patients' illnesses. She presented this project in *Prádelna Bohnice*, a gallery set in the grounds of the Psychiatric Hospital Bohnice, and as part of this she organized various happenings in the hospital area.

The under-representation of Kořátková in national institutions might be caused not only be her being a woman but also by the feminine themes she uses and explores in her work. The choice of themes is related to the women's perceived predestination to care-taking. The way she artistically deals with themes related to psychological issues in relation to institutional structures might be perceived by the national institutions as not fitting their

established categories. Also, she works with people outside of the art community, such as the patients of psychiatric hospital, which can also be viewed by the national institutions as something that may invade their enclosed system. The social dimension of her work might be unwanted in the premises of Czech national institutions. Yet she is very successful in smaller institutions in the Czech Republic and abroad where the institutions easily receive these topics. Her successes are then paradoxically based on her distance from the “center”, i.e., from the national institutions.

Her talent is recognized abroad, her works, 96 collages and drawings from the series *Untitled (Unlearning Instincts)*, created in 2013-2014 are in collections of one of the most prestigious museums in the United States: the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York (Met)⁶ (See Figure viii.). They were exhibited in a group exhibition in 2018 under the title: “Public Service Announcement: Works by Eva Kořátková and Rachel Harrison”. In 2019, Kořátková did a performance called “Asking the Hair about the Scissors” on the occasion of the Exhibition “Harald Szeeman, Grandfather: A Pioneer, Like Us” in the Swiss Institute in New York, which celebrated the famous curator of the twentieth century. Recently, she also participated in Istanbul Biennial where she presented her project *The Machine for Restoring Empathy* (See Figures ix.-x.). This work is an installation and a workshop. “Operated by people who sew together strips of fabric to accommodate a group of animals, people, plants, objects or other beings that either lack something, or feel incomplete, broken or wounded; this machine is a kind of living organism which provides a room for sharing as well as for protest” (Istanbul Biennial, n.p.).

Despite Kořátková’s prestigious position in the global art scene, the last solo exhibition in Prague (besides in the gallery that represents her) was in 2015 in Prádelna Bohnice called “*Dvouhlavý životopisec a muzeum představ*”, “Two-headed Biographer and

⁶ Which is paradoxically criticized for under-representation of women artists.

the Museum of Notions”. Below is a chart with her exhibitions. She has had 27 in the past five years (Hunt Kastner). Only four of them were in the Czech Republic (in bold). Above all, they were in Hunt Kastner, the gallery that represents her, or in other smaller / alternative gallery settings: Foundation and Center for Contemporary Arts, Cursor Gallery or in Prague City Gallery, which as mentioned above is led by a female director. Thus, this case study supports the contention that artwork of Czech female artists is not adequately exhibited by Czech state-sponsored art institutions. And it also supports a claim, which will be explored in more detail later, that when an art institution is led by a female director, the institution is very likely to be more inclusive toward women artists.

Eva Kořátková's Exhibitions 2019-2017

Year	Exhibition	Location
2019	16th Istanbul Biennial, The Seventh Continent	Istanbul, Turkey
	Confessions of the piping system	Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, DN
	Kestner Gesellschaft	Hannover, DE
	What are we made of?	Kunsthalle Darmstadt, DE
2018	#7.0 Eva Kotatkova	Convent space for contemporary art, Ghent, BE
	The Dream Machine is Asleep	Pirelli Hangar Bicocca Milano, IT
	Woman in a Box	Hunt Kastner
	La Condizione Umana	Palermo, IT
	47th International Film Festival	Rotterdam, NL
	Conditions of Impossibility III/VII: The work of Indolence	Foundation and Center for Contemporary Arts, Cursor Gallery, Prague
	Foreign Bodies	Raster Gallery, Warsaw, PL
	Public Service Announcement	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US

	The Marvelous Cacophony, 57th October Salon	Cultural Centre of Belgrade, RS
	Conditions of Impossibility VI/VII: Technical Detail	Kurzor Gallery, Praha
	Radio pour les plantes, les animaux, les affaires et tous les autres	Théâtre de Privas, Paris, FR
2017	Stomach of the World	Haus 21, Vienna AT
	Room of Anxious Objects	21 Künstlerräume, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf, DE
	The Diary of a Stomach	Meyer-Riegger, Berlin DE
	The Inner Skin – Art and Shame,	Marta Herford Museum, Herford, DE
	Proposals to Surrender	Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai, China
	Luther and the Avant-garde,	Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur Bonn, Altes Gefängnis, Wittenburg, DE
	Den Frie Udstilling,	Den Frie – Center for Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, DK
	Paratoxic Paradoxes	Benaki Museum, Athens, GR
	Forms of Contemporary Sculpture – A Figurative Medium	Prague City Gallery, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, Prague
	DE GAUDIOPOLIS 2017 – The City of Joy,	OFF Biennale, Budapest, HU
	JIWA: The Jakarta Biennial	Jakarta, Indonesia
	And Then There Were None	Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe, DE

3.2. Case Study: Kateřina Šedá

This case study introduces an artist, Kateřina Šedá, who is better known in the Czech milieu than Koťátková. Yet, she too, receives more attention abroad than in the Czech Republic. Šedá is better known for a variety of reasons. There has been Czech media

coverage of her participatory art; she has represented the Czech Republic at the Venice Biennale of Architecture. In addition, her awards that are not limited to visual arts (in 2017 she won the literary prize *Magnesia Litera* for her publication *BRNOX*, and the prize *Architekt roku / Architect of the year* for her work that can be described as “social architecture”). Finally, because of the regional specificity of her art, Šedá often employs Czech towns and villages and their inhabitants as she focuses on regional problems near her hometown Brno which deal with problems such as tourism (project *UNES-CO* for the Venice Biennale) (See Figure xi.) .

She is an interesting example of a female artist known better outside of the traditional domains of art. In 2010, she proclaimed in an interview in *Česká Televize* she did not want her practice to be labeled as (conceptual) art, she would much rather to create new category. The term “social architecture” which labels her work nine years later fulfils her wish. It hints at the problems common to women artists who finally appeared in the Czech art scene in greater numbers in the nineties. To circumvent the traditional male canon and establish themselves as individual artists, these women employed non-traditional artistic media, which is harder for the traditional institutions to adopt and work with.

In her long term project, “Bedřichovice nad Temží,” developed in a small south Moravian village, Šedá has worked with the inhabitants of this village over the period of five years (2011-2015). The overall aim of her project was to bring people in the village together. She wanted to bring together the inhabitants who otherwise did not interact because they spend all their days out of the village in the nearby city Brno, to which they travelled for work. This project was composed of many parts; for example, she took the inhabitants of the village and flew them to London, as part of her collaboration with Tate Modern, and organized a happening called “*Od nevidím do nevidím*”, where, the Bedřichovice citizens did the same activities as they would do back home (like going for a walk, sweeping the floor,

playing sports or cards...); however, in a completely different setting of London (See Figures xii.-xiv.). She mapped out the area of London around Tate Modern which resembled the layout of Bedřichovice. She also had British artists around the “borders” of the village, painting, from photographs what they would see, had they been in Bedřichovice (See Figure xv.). Recently, she opened an exhibition in Gallery of Fine Arts in Ostrava which documents this long-term project. The commission from the side of Tate Modern at time of Šedá’s project suggests a more progressive approach of this Western institution toward new, conceptual and participatory art forms.

A more recent project (2016), that in its final form took a shape of a book, focused on the city of Brno. Her publication *BRNOX* introduces an outcome of her research in part of the city of Brno, called Bronx and its Roma community (See Figure xvi.). The book is an artistic interpretation of a tourist-guide, because the reader is offered a several “walks” through the city, each focusing on a specific phenomenon, such as tradition and religion, food, children, night life, etc.

Because her practice does not fall neatly into any art category, it is challenging to collect and exhibit her work. In her case (more than in Kořátková’s), it is then a question of ways of working with, and exhibiting, new artistic media that does not restrict itself to traditional forms that are easily exhibited in gallery premises and the readiness and willingness of art institutions to accept and work with it. The national institutions perhaps assume that because her work is already set in the Czech context it does not need to be exhibited in Czech museums and galleries. It is easier for the Czech general public to encounter Kateřina Šedá’s social architecture *in situ* or in the media, where she receives attention for a new major project. Her work can also be found in an untraditional setting for art, in a bookstore, where people can buy her newly published book UNES-CO. The last is also true for Kořátková. Perhaps it is also because both Šedá and Kořátková are involving the

non-art circle community into their projects which makes them less appreciated by the conservative institutions who (un?)consciously support the enclosed system.

Šedá's list of exhibitions is also international. An overview of her exhibitions below for the past three years shows her participation in the global art world (Šedá). Eight of her 32 exhibitions were in the Czech Republic. Besides the recently opened solo-show in Ostrava, showing the work from her "Bedřichovice nad Temží" project, most of the exhibitions in the Czech institutions are group exhibitions. Most importantly, as the chart shows the artist has more exhibitions in the Czech Republic in smaller, independent or private galleries. In addition to the already mentioned exception, there is one group exhibition in National Gallery *Salmovský Palác* and one exhibition in *Moravská Galerie v Brně*. Despite the fact that the standing of this artist in the Czech art scene is better than Koťátková's, in her portfolio, there is still missing any larger solo project in the National Gallery or in Gallery Rudolfinum. A project commissioned by either of these galleries would help her enter the male dominated canon.

Kateřina Šedá's Exhibitions 2019-2017

Year	Exhibition	Location
2019	Museum: An Inquiry Into Modes of Encounters	Times Museum, China
	Moc Bezmocných	Kunsthalle Bratislava, Slovakia
	Bedřichovský Poledník	Galerie Výtvarného Umění Ostrava
	Navzdory	Galerie Josefa Fragnera
	Stencils 2	Quito, Equador
	24/7	Somerset House, London
	IKON Gallery - Research and project presentation	Birmingham, UK

	Night Plovdiv	Plovdiv, Bulgaria
	Lofoten International Art Festival	Lofoten, Norway
	Work/Existence	Konsthallen MEKEN in Smedjebacken, Sweden
	Herzlich Willkommen	Hainfeld, Austria
	UNES-CO	Egon Schiele Art Center, Český Krumlov
2018	Možnosti dialogu - group exhibition	Salmovský palác NG
	Legendy Gr2	Novoměstská radnice Praha
	Mobilis Utopia	Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia
	Standing Still/Lying Down	Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit USA
	TRAM	Train Gallery & Cultural Center Bratislava SK
	Bez Opony	Galeria Schemnitz Slovakia
	Catastrophe and the Power of Art	Mori Art Museum Japan
	Before we forget	Göteborgs Konsthall in Sweden
	Familie	Stedelijk Museum, Netherlands
	Normal Life	Vestjyllands Kunstpavillon, Videbæk, Denmark
	Haus der Sinnsuche	Kunsthalle Berlin
	You had to be there	The Swissnex Gallery, San Francisco USA
	The Trouble With Grandparents	Kunsthau Dresden
	Hana a Radek: Svatební Cesta do Černobyly	Galerie Uffo Trutnov
	Paneland	Moravská galerie v Brně
2017	Neighbour	Vögele Kultur Zentrum in Pfäffikon, Switzerland
	Zyklus 12.0.	Dormitorium Stift Lilienfeld, Austria
	Out of Sight	Kunsthalle Mainz, DE

	Making an Image of the World	Kunsthau Muerz in Mürzzuschlag, Austria
	Strach z neznámeho	NTK Gallery Prague

This chapter demonstrated that there are comparatively fewer Czech female artists in the national, state funded art institutions. Attention was brought to the paradoxical problem of Czech female artists whose work is exhibited and renowned abroad, who, nevertheless, do not receive adequate opportunities in their homeland's national institutions. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that commercial or smaller art galleries / art centers in the Czech Republic give more space to Czech female artists than national institutions give them. The following chapters will explore the causes of the under-representation of Czech female artists in Czech national, state funded art institutions.

4. Reasons for Under-representation

This chapter explores reasons for the under-representation of Czech female artists in large, state-sponsored art institutions. Each subsection deals with one of the identified reasons: First, are the dominant canonical ways of interpreting art history. Second is the historical position of women artists in Czech society. The third sub-chapter explores communism and feminism in the Czech milieu. The last sub-chapter discusses the post-revolutionary situation in the Czech art institutions.

4.1. Canonical Art

The first cause of the female under-representation in art institutions are artistic canons; i.e., the body of works of art that are considered authoritative. The term “canon” comes from “the Greek *kanon* which means ‘rule’ or ‘standard’, evoking both social regulation and military organization” (Pollock, *Differencing the Canon* 3). The canons have long been male dominated in the art sphere, with men controlling the domain and forming the narratives. Because canons are dominant ways of interpreting and presenting the history of art, it depends on who writes and for whom. Canons are problematic because they are perceived as an authority and are an easily available source of information for people whose power lies in creating exhibitions and buying works of art for museum collections. Thus, it is necessary to ask who is in charge of decision making and representing art at institutions, and to what degree canonical authority, and those who control it, might exclude female artists.

The story of art, as it is generally known and presented, is for the most part, the story of individual male artists and their connection with other male artists, together forming artistic styles or movements, such as Renaissance, Romanticism, Impressionism, Abstract Art, Fauvism, Expressionism and Cubism. These styles / movements and their representatives together form art historical canons.

The art canon represents a certain story of art that is accepted in academia and among art theoreticians, which then is imposed on the general society. The canon determines what students learn in schools and what people see in art museums. Since the 1970s, feminist theoreticians have questioned the established canons due to the paucity of female figures. The feminist art historian Griselda Pollock elaborated, they believed that women “As ‘women artists’ not artists who are women, they are excluded a priori from the category ‘artist’, which has been symbolically reserved for men” (“The Missing Figure” 54).

Pollock identifies the canon as the determining what we see in the art gallery. She defines the canon as “a discursive formation which constitutes the objects/texts it selects as the products of artistic mastery and, thereby, contributes to the legitimation of white masculinity’s exclusive identification with creativity and with Culture” (*Differencing the Canon* 10). She argues that famous women artists such as Frida Kahlo or Georgia O’Keefe are not canonical. She elaborates, “they are rather notorious, sensational, commodifiable or token [...]” (*Differencing the Canon* 10). Pollock here points out that, though women artists are oftentimes very successful, they are not admitted to the canon. This is true of both international artists and Czech female artists. In the Czech context, this is well illustrated in the already mentioned National Gallery’s section “Introducing”. The canon simply does not allow for gender difference because the canon represents a single male standard.

The Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony explains the difficulty of women artists’ becoming canonical. The term hegemony originally means rule or domination. Canons, represent, in the framework of Raymond Williams, a follower of Gramsci, a selective tradition (O’Connor, 76). They present the past in a certain way, “in the interest of the dominance of a specific class,” and pre-define the reading of present and future. Furthermore, “Tradition cultivates its own inevitability by erasing the fact of its selectivity in regard to practices, meanings, gender, ‘races’ and classes (Pollock *Differencing the Canon* 9). Tradition

and canon have such a dominant and recognized position in the society that they “predict” the way things shall continue, that means the continuation of appraisal of mostly white male artists.

French philosopher, Sarah Kofman, provides a Freudian reading of the canon. She argued that for Freud, “the public’s real interest in art lay not in art itself, but in the image it has of the artist as a ‘great man’” (in Pollock, *Differencing the Canon* 13).

Freud suggests that art history combined theological and narcissistic tendencies. The story of art as a story of great men, and only men, registers a specifically masculine narcissism; primary, infantile idealization of the father gives way to, and is compensated for by, the creation of a hero, who must be like the heroizing self but also an idealization, a figure elevated above that self (Pollock, “The Missing Figure” 38).

Kofman argues that Freud’s reading of art history consists of worshipping a hero, the artist, with whom people narcissistically identify as with their ideal other (in Pollock, “The Missing Figure” 38). Because the discourse and evaluation of art has traditionally been a male dominated sphere, the artist hero cannot be a woman. Hence women are excluded from the art historical discourse, they are “positioned as other, a resource for art, a part of the world of nature, reproduction, and matter which masculine creativity strives to master and reform in activity — artistic creation — that makes (the) man (Pollock “The Missing Figure” 39). This interpretation holds for the Czech context, where there are male artist superstars such as František Kupka, Alfons Mucha, Jan Zrzavý, Josef Čapek, Stanislav Kolíbal, Emil Filla, Karel Malich, Milan Grygar among others whom the Czech spectator admires and whose legacy is more strongly celebrated than that of female artists.

The problem of canons extends beyond the history of art. It is not only about who writes the history of art and about whom they write, but also who makes decisions at

museums and who is in the leading positions of art studios at academies of art. In case of Prague's Academy of Fine Arts, there are eighteen studios, and only three of those are led by a woman: Intermedia studio I, led by Milena Dopitová, Intermedia studio II led by Pavla Sceranková and Dušan Záhoranský and New Media Studio II led by Kateřina Olivová.

In terms of solo exhibitions, Reilly observes in the case of a British institution - Whitechapel Gallery, which is led by a feminist director, Iwona Blazwick that the gallery had 40% solo exhibitions of women artists, which made it the highest scoring institution in the statistics presented by Reilly ("Taking the Measure" n.p.). This supports Linda Nochlin's claim that institutional structures keep women from succeeding in the art world. Only when the leadership of an institution is in the hands of a feminist director, will women artists have more opportunities to exhibit their work. As most institutions in the global art world are still led by men, women are underrepresented in collections and exhibitions. Furthermore, 70% of curators in the US art museums are women but they very rarely step up to the position of an institution's director. "In 2015 [...] top twelve art museums (based on attendance) [...] were all led by men" (Stanfill in Lippard *Curatorial Activism* 9).

This trend, described by Lippard, applies also in the Czech context. There are many women theoreticians and curators in the art scene, but they very rarely make their way to the leading positions of large institutions. Smaller institutions, on the other hand, are often led by women, and their more inclusive practice is manifest by gender equity in the exhibition program or list of artists represented, as was already illustrated with the commercial Drdova Gallery that has the highest parity of female to male representation.

Publicly funded art institutions which scored lowest in the statistics above, have male directors. Gallery Rudolfinum has still the same director it had in 2005, when Vodrážka criticized the institution's exclusionary practice towards Czech female artists, Petr Nedoma. The National Gallery currently has an interim director, Anne-Marie Nedoma, since the last

director, Jiří Fajt was fired in April 2019. However, the previous practice of this institution was always led by a male director. An exception is the Prague City Gallery with its female director, Magdalena Juříková, where the statistics were significantly better.

Reilly claims curators hesitate to reinstall museum collections in a way that would “offer new perspectives on old stories” (“Taking the Measure of Sexism”, n.p.). As a telling example, she mentions the initiative “Elles” in Centre Pompidou in 2009, where the permanent exhibition was reinstalled for a certain period with women artists only. The exhibit was a massive success, the visitor numbers to the permanent exhibition increased; however, after the end of “Elles”, the institution returned to old practices, such as showing only ten percent works by female artists in their permanent exhibition (Reilly “Taking the Measure of Sexism”, n.p.). This illustrates the difficulty of creating exhibitions with women artists only. Such attempts to give women’s art the attention it deserves, once over, does not resonate in the established system of the art world. They often separate the under-represented “Women Artists” instead of incorporating them into a larger art historical discourse. Pollock suggested in contrast to this practice of working with binary oppositions, re-imagining the cultural field as a space for multiplicity of voices where “differencing creates a productive covenant” (*Differencing the Canon* 11).

This sub-chapter focused on the issue of the artistic canon and its considerable influence on the way art is studied, exhibited and viewed. As this chapter described, the problem of the canon is embedded in the traditional / historical beliefs about the art world and about women. It is a world into which women rarely enter for they do not fit the prevalent stereotypes. It has also been shown that whether the leading positions in institutions of art are occupied by either women or men influences the gender equity in the given art institution. Revisionary approaches, where new perspectives on the art canon are offered, also tend to be

complicated and usually not very favored by curators, generally not leading toward a long-term changes and improvement.

4.2. Historical Position of Women Artists in Czech Society

The second cause of the female under-representation in art institutions goes hand in hand with the first. The low number of women artists in art institutions on a global level is caused by history and tradition which is, for the most, part patriarchal. In other words, men traditionally had more authority, power and opportunities in wide range of fields, such as in the field of visual art. This sub-chapter first presents the background of the Czech women's emancipation in association with the National Revival that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The initial emancipatory successes, however, did not sufficiently influence the realm of visual arts. Emancipation was achieved to a certain degree in various areas, in the cultural sphere mostly in literature but not substantially in the visual arts. Secondly, the sub-chapter focuses on women artists and the institutional and social obstacles in their pursuit of art careers with the focus on Czech lands.

Czech women's emancipation is closely associated with the Czech National Revival that took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a part of which Czechs revived their language, culture and identity. Women's emancipatory efforts in the Czech lands in the nineteenth century were associated with patriotism and motherhood, which in effect made the women's movement less intense than in western nations which had an established and solid feeling of national identity. Czech women were, in contrast to for example Britain's or France's nationalist movements, encouraged by men to join them in the efforts for the National Revival (Pachmanová, *Zrození umělkyně* 31). In the early stages of the National Revival, there were few Czech patriots, which led the male leaders of the national struggle to encourage women to "participate in theater performances, literary salons, and patriotic balls,

all conducted in Czech” (Malečková, 48). Most Czech women’s organizations were moderate and focused on charity and “cultural patriotic activities,” but there emerged also a few more radical groups (Malečková, 49). There was a connection drawn between the national emancipation and women’s emancipation. Eliška Krásnohorská, a member of the women’s emancipation movement in the Czech lands, who established the first private gymnasium for girls called Minerva, explained the similarity between the national movement and women’s emancipation: Germans considered Czech men to be intellectually inferior and unworthy of higher knowledge and the same applied to the approach of men toward women (in Malečková, 49). As illustrated with Krásnohorská’s comparison between the oppression of Czech men by Germans and the oppression of Czech women by men, Czech women “worked to shape and adjust the emergent national discourse’s representation of the ideal Czech womanhood, frequently manipulating the national project in order to achieve specific gains for women” (Jusová, 9). By comparing the approaches of Germans, from whom they wanted to distance, with those of men toward women, Krásnohorská put pressure on the change of situation with positive results for women. Czech feminists according to Jusová “presented women’s equality as a linchpin of democracy” (11). In other words, gender equality was perceived by Czech feminists as a crucial aspect of democracy and according to them, it needed to be accepted by all.

Czech feminists had known the work of the English philosopher John Stuart Mill since the 1860s, and his book *The Subjection of Women* was translated to Czech by Charlotte Garrigue Masaryk⁷ in 1890. In his work, Mill critiqued the female subordination, identifying it as one of the fundamental causes of the problems in society. His emphasis on the ideological context of the female question and the necessity to undermine the gender inequality was important for the women’s cultural movement (Pachmanová, *Zrození*

⁷ She was a wife of the Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

umělkyně 33). Czech women, inspired by the words of Mill, aspired to change their position in society by entering the cultural spheres.

Czech women also gained support from Czech male intellectuals. In the literary manifest *Česká moderna*, published in 1895 by a group of artists including F.X Šalda and Josef Svatopluk Machar, the authors explicitly demanded freedom for women to enter cultural and social life: “*Důsledně žádáme i pro ženy přístup do kulturního a sociálního života*” (Pachmanová, “Od diletantek k profesionálkám” 2). As this demand suggests, women were traditionally excluded from social and cultural spheres, their place was at home and this convention was legally supported since the times of Austria-Hungary Empire. The situation for women was improving thanks to the National Revival. However, women artists at this time were still a rarity, though there were some women artists like Zdenka Braunerová or Amálie Mánesová. The above described emancipation helped in many spheres, one of which was literary field, but in the realm of visual arts, the situation remained for the most part closed to women.

In the nineteenth century, it was generally easier for women to establish themselves in the cultural sphere as writers than as visual artists. Mainly because of the necessary initial investment; to become a professional visual artist, one had to have an education in art to master the skills taught, while aspiring writers needed “only” their talent, paper and pen. In other words, women who wanted to be visual artists had to leave their homes to receive their education in an institutional setting; whereas, writing could be practiced in the premises of their households (Nochlin, 7). Since painting was less compatible than writing in the household domain, to which women were destined because they were the primary care givers, there were more female writers than female visual artists. With the society’s emphasis on the importance of women being first and foremost mothers, attending lessons outside of their homes, if that was even an option, was generally unthinkable. Motherhood was, according to

Pachmanová, one of the ideological pillars of patriarchal society and it remained the key role of a woman regardless her social status or occupation (*Zrození umělkyně* 49-50).

In addition to the smaller initial investment, the social perception of the creative activity played an important role. Whilst writing was acknowledged in the society as an appropriate activity for women, manageable together with their household and childcare duties, practicing visual arts was perceived either as a creative, free-time, non-professional activity, a means to decorate the household; or as dilettante and incompatible with the traditional role of women (Pachmanová, *Zrození umělkyně* 38).

From the above described emancipatory practices, it can be presumed that the situation improved for women in general; however, there were still many factors that limited women in the pursuit of their dreams, especially for those who wanted to pursue the career of an artist. To obtain a proper art education for women in Central Europe was a genuine problem. Especially in the Czech context, where the doors of the Prague Academy of Fine Arts were not opened to female students until the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak State in 1918. This was twenty-one years later than in France, where women started to attend *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in 1897. In the Czech context, the first women practicing art were noblewomen and dilettantes (1750-1810) (Pachmanová in Morganová, *Někdy v sukni* 84). There was no private equivalent of the Academy in the Czech milieu, so female artists were few, and they often belonged to families with an artistic tradition, where they could learn from their artist fathers and/or brothers as this was their only avenue. Nochlin confirms this “striking characteristics of women artists generally: they all, almost without exception, were either the daughters of artist fathers, or generally later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, had a connection with a stronger or more dominant artistic personality” (“Why have there been no great women artists” 9). In the late nineteenth century (1870-1900), only in exceptional cases, did the first professional female artists pay for private art lessons or

travel abroad to gain their education. The second generation of professional artists and first graduates of the “women’s school⁸” worked in the early twentieth century (1900-1920). They were followed by the third generation of professional artists among whom were also the first graduates of The Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (1920-1940). Then, the post-war generation of artists were mostly wives of famous men (1950-1970) (Pachmanová in Morganová, *Někdy v sukni* 84). The last generation mentioned was influenced by the communist regime and will be discussed below.

Needless to say, there were numerous moral prejudices regarding the studies in art academies namely revolving around naked models in studios. Careful study of the nude model was, however, essential to aspiring artists who worked in traditional art genres. However, aspiring female artists were deprived of this essential part of artistic training. As Nochlin writes, this meant for women artists “being deprived of the possibility of creating major art works, unless one were a very ingenious indeed, or simply, as most of the women aspiring to be painters ultimately did, restricting oneself to the ‘minor’ fields of portraiture, genre, landscape, or still life” (“Why have there been no great women artists” 5-6). Most Czech women artists, thus, went to the School of Arts, Architecture and Design⁹ which was established in Prague in 1885 and welcomed female students. The emphases of their studies were typical “female genres”, traditionally considered lesser, such as painting landscape and still life or forms of decorative and applied arts.

Czech women’s art was understood in the context of applied art which was tied to the women’s role in the household and contrasted with “high art” made by men. Women’s handicraft was important in the early years of the twentieth century as it was considered a crucial part of the continuation of national traditions. It is natural that women worked with

⁸ A part of UMPRUM, since its establishment, this institution was open to women.

⁹ Today’s UMPRUM - Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design at the time of its establishment did not have status of a university.

materials that were close and available to them, like fabric and cotton threads. Yet male critics ascribed the source of women's specialization to their inclination to decorativeness and superficiality, their natural tendency to make themselves as well as their homes look nice (Pachmanová, *Zrození umělkyně* 67,74). Teréza Nováková, a 20th century publicist, on the other hand, blamed the institutional structures for women's specialization on decorative arts (Pachmanová, *Zrození umělkyně* 72). The preconceptions about women, rooted in the patriarchal society, limited what women could study and what was considered appropriate for them to create.

The term “*ženské umění*” (women's art) was used to differentiate the art made by women from the “true art” made by men. This can be illustrated by the critiques. The Czech artist Vlastimil Rada in *Republika I* wrote “*Pravé umění jest tvořeno z vnitřní nutnosti. [...] Ženské malování jest diletantská hračka, prostředek k zahánění nudy, náhražky pletení a vyšívání. Jest to zaměstnání z nedostatku jiného zaměstnání, z nudy, a tato nuda obráží se též v obrazech. Ženské malování jest soukromá zábava a nepatří do oficiálních výstavních síní*”, “True art is made out of inner necessity. [...] Women's painting is a dilettante game, a way out of boredom, a substitute for knitting and embroidering. It is an activity stemming out of lack of other activity, of boredom, which reflects in the paintings. Women's painting is a private entertainment and does not belong to official galleries” (author's translation) (in Pachmanová, “Exaltování rytíři” n.p.). Or a Czech poet, František Halas wrote in the magazine *Právo Lidu* in 1927 (“*ženy jsou odsouzeny téměř vždy jen k méně či více dokonalému napodobování ve výtvarném umění, ne k objevitelskému úsilí a práci*”) “women are confined to more or less perfect imitation in visual arts, not to discovery efforts and labor” (author's translation) (in Pachmanová, “Exaltování rytíři” n.p.).

Pachmanová points out that the term itself “*ženské umění*” was first used by women themselves. The term, according to Pachmanová, came into existence together with the

beginnings of women's art initiatives in the nineteenth century (*Zrození umělkyně* 114). The common exhibitions of exclusively women then strengthened the labelling of women artists as a group and women's art. Professionals and critics at this time did not differentiate between the individual artists, taking all female artists, regardless of their genre or skill as a unified group. Hence the exhibitions of women's art were perceived as feminine manifestations, rather than as the result of their inequality in social but also institutional terms (Pachmanová, *Zrození umělkyně* 121). Lippard, in her article, "Sweeping Exchanges," raises an important argument that art made by women cannot be placed into the traditional category of a single style or movement for art made by women is very diverse. She writes: "Feminist and/or women's art is neither a style nor a movement, much as this may distress those who would like to see it safely ensconced in the categories and chronology of the past" (Lippard, 362). Women were not recognized as individual artists but rather as a group. It was hard for those evaluating art from the traditionalistic perspective, i.e., seeing art as a male dominated area, to acknowledge women artists as individuals. Instead, because of their difference they were labeled as a group. This labelling can be interpreted as a protective mechanism of the male dominated art sphere against their undesired diversity of their domain and above all as a means to discourage the women to proceed in their art careers.

Male professionals in the field of art feared the entry of women into their male-dominated arena. The art critic, Karl Scheffer, did not like the growing number of professional female artists, calling it a dangerous trend (Pachmanová, "Od diletantek k profesionálkám" 3). Men embraced the modernist view that portrays men as dominating the spheres of reason, culture, order and conquest and women as representing irrationality, nature, chaos, submission, passivity, psychic lability and lack of courage (Pachmanová, *Zrození umělkyně* 28). The same qualities ascribed to women were also ascribed to the art they created.

Public exhibitions of Czech female artists prior to 1918 also occurred very rarely. “The first break-through into the bastions of male artists was conducted by the Circle of Women Fine Artists (*Kruh výtvarných umělkyně*) founded in 1918 and that —according to its published program — aimed ‘to gather, if possible, all women artists in Czechoslovakia’” (Pachmanová “Les femmes artistes” 2). The Circle of Women Fine Artists organized many exhibitions both in Czechoslovakia and abroad.

The situation for Czech female artists became better due to the support of the first generation of female art historians in 1920s. Pachmanová mentions Hana Volavková, Alžběta Birnbaumová, Miloslava Sísová and Věra Urbanová who called attention to the ideological character of the term “*ženské umění*” and the gender-biased art criticism (*Zrození umělkyně* 133). These art historians were trying to show that women’s art and modern art are complex categories that comprise of individual authors each with their own ways of visual representation. The situation for female artists improved thanks to the mentioned art historians, but women remained under-represented as compared to men.

This sub-chapter explored the historical position of women artists in the Czech milieu, also in the context of women’s emancipatory efforts, which were, in the early stages, aligned with the National Revival and to a substantial degree successful in certain realms; however, not in the realm of fine arts. Despite the early emancipatory successes, there were institutional and social obstacles in women’s pursuits of artistic careers, especially in the field of visual art.

4.3. Communism and Feminism

The third cause of under-representation of women in Czech art institutions is the perception of feminism and the question of women’s emancipation in the Czech milieu. The long period of “feminist silence” under communism and the state governed emancipation of

women changed the perspective on feminism in Czech society. This sub-chapter argues that Czech women artists are in a more difficult position given the understanding of feminism, its connotations and implications in the Czech milieu.

During the interwar period, Czech feminists demanded a revision of the obsolete family law which set forth the traditional model of a family where the man was a family's breadwinner and “legal head of household” and the woman was his wife, a mother and a caregiver “legally responsible for carrying out domestic chores and obliged to follow their husband’s decisions” (Jusová, 12). The feminists did not succeed, yet a progressive family law was paradoxically adopted later by the communist government. However, as will be addressed below, the adoption of such a law did not alter the situation for women enough.

With the onset of communism, the term feminism and its implications were suppressed and forgotten. The second wave of feminism did not make its way through the Iron Curtain. At the same time as feminism was flourishing in Western countries, and female artists like Louis Bourgeois or Judy Chicago were being discovered, the totalitarian regimes in Central Europe forbade any such discussions. Bourgeois and Chicago in their work explore the role of women in society, focusing on the topics of family, motherhood or sexuality. The knowledge of feminist artists did not enter the Czech milieu even during the period of the 1960s. Pachmanová refers to the anthology *České Umění 1938-1989* which omitted feminist art from its list of art movements (“Mlčení o feminizmu” 37).

The communist regime placed emphasis on the equality of classes, but gender equality was also an important aspect of its ideology. The gender differences were perceived by communists as stemming from the natural “sexual and physical differences between women and men” (Johnson and Robinson 7). The communist government discredited feminism as “a Western ideology but also appropriated the independent Czech women’s movement from interwar democratic Czechoslovakia (1918-1938) for the government’s own purposes”

(Fojtová, 117). The “equality” of Czech women served political purposes, but the women were overburdened. “Throughout the communist period, women’s role was defined as a unity of economic, maternal, and political functions; a counterpart to this threefold role has never been spelled out for men” (Heitlinger in Fojtová, 119). This returns to the argument of the career in visual arts and its incompatibility with caring for the household, motherhood as well as the newly introduced obligation of being employed.

The ways in which women’s emancipation was implemented by the communists was primarily beneficial for their idea of a socialist state and not beneficial to women. This emancipation meant that women were obliged to work, just as men, which might be seen as a means of emancipation, releasing women from the domestic domain, but the population retained social distinctions between roles, behaviors and occupations that should be ascribed to either men or women. Johnson and Robinson report the distinction between life at home, where women were “tied to childcare, to household care, to laundry” (8) and life in public where women “worked in female-dominated occupations at lower wages, women were treated as male workers except when pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and leadership intervened” (ibid). In other words, women were expected to be mothers, take care of the household and to work outside the household equally as hard as their male colleagues. The actual role of women under communist regime did not change, neither was it discussed publicly despite the proclaimed social equality. “The official state propaganda claimed to have emancipated women through education, work and childcare, but in reality, it failed to achieve its goals” (Grigar, 82).

Wagnerová argues that Czech women during the communist era emancipated themselves “alongside, rather than according to, the state’s dictates” (77). However, the emancipation was of a different character than what happened for Western feminists. There is a significant difference; women in the West actively took part in the second wave of

feminism, gaining equality and recognition for women without the support of their states, as opposed to Czech women upon whom “equality” was imposed from top by the state law. The difference thus lies in the Western’s emancipatory efforts’ focus on “women’s right to interpret the world freely and outside masculine norms, and to make decisions about one’s life accordingly” (Wagnerová, 78). Czech women were in contrast “emancipated” in a way that fulfilled male expectations.

During the communist era, Jindřich Chalupecký was the only theoretician who reflected on women’s art in the Czech context (Pachmanová “Mlčení o feminismu” 38). Pachmanová observes that Chalupecký was against the idea of feminism and contrasted art made by western female artists with art by Czech female artists. He perceived Czech women’s art as appropriately tied to their biological, social and psychical predestination (“Mlčení o feminismu” 39). This is, from Pachmanová’s perspective problematic, because by denying correlations with feminist discourse, he denies the power of women’s art to undermine patriarchal norms in art and culture (“Mlčení o feminismu” 41).

Feminism was for a long time a problematic topic in the Czech milieu. People are still to a certain degree distrustful of the implications of this term. In part, this is because, after the revolution, Czech people gained only a fragmentary understanding of feminism. Their understanding mostly depicted feminism as hatred of all men. A survey, “*Žádné ženské umění neexistuje*” prepared by a Czech art theoretician Věra Jirousová in 1993, is a telling example of the Czech women’s reluctance to be described as feminist artists. Despite acknowledging the presence of gender inequality in their society, they did not want their art to be marked as “women’s art” or “feminist art”. Therefore, there was a lack of pressure, from Czech female artists upon the institutions and canons who have the authority and formulate artistic discourse. In contrast, feminist artists in Western countries like Judy Chicago made their way to important art institutions by which they raised awareness in society about the lack of

female artists in institutions of art as well as the lack of appreciation of women in society generally. An example is her famous piece *The Dinner Party*, by which she celebrated important women in history.

In 2003, Vodrážka commented in an exhibition catalogue *Povolání architekt[ka]* that in the Czech environment, there is a prevalent prejudice concerning the women's emancipation movement. He argued that people believed the emancipatory movement ended with the first wave of feminism when women achieved equal civic and political rights, demonstrating that the second wave of feminism missed the Czech Republic. Thus, the women artists of the postwar generation did not feel the need to fight the patriarchy, but rather they should work together with their male colleagues in the underground art scene to fight against the totalitarian regime (in Morganová, *Někdy v sukni* 15-16).

As Barbara Benish, artist and theoretician working between Czech Republic and the United States, confirms, there was a very small number of female artists practicing visual arts under communism. Benish came to the Czech Republic in 1989 to create an exhibition (*Dialogue: Praha - Los Angeles*) with Czech artists and she was able to introduce only one female artist in her exhibition, Margita Titlová. She reports the number of women graduating from art schools was quite high at that time, yet after the female art students graduated, they very rarely pursued a career in the sphere of visual arts. They oftentimes became mothers and / or they were repressed by their husbands and did not have the opportunity to fully dedicate their time to art making and participate in discussions and other activities surrounding the art scene at that time (Personal interview).

After the fall of communism, women artists began to explore their places in society, also reacting to the trends brought about by globalization such as consumerism. Individuality and questions of identity became one of the central themes of artists in the post-communist countries. In case of female artists, Grigar suggests, they felt the need to establish their

“freedom of interpretative choice” (87). Women artists often used their own bodies in their art to question the social mechanisms that influence the perception of gender. For example, Milena Dopitová’s work “*Dvojčata (Já a moje sestra)*” / “Twins (Me and my sister)” or “*Čtyři Masky*” / “Four Masks”. Also, Míla Preslová’s work “*Rozptýlím se*”, or “*Dva ku dvoum*”. Large institutions were, however, not open to the exploration of these topics, resulting in under-representation of women.

This sub-chapter discussed the situation for female artists under communism, where feminism and its implications were officially forbidden topics, resulting in Czechoslovakia missing the second wave of feminism. It also focused on the state-governed emancipation of women, which, however, was not as beneficial for women as it was for the communist ideology. Women were overburdened, having to work equally as hard as men while also taking care of the households and raising children, resulting in few practicing female artists during communism. Though the stature of female artists rose in the art scene after 1989, the large national institutions could not dedicate enough attention to women’s art. Because, as will be discussed in the next section, at the time of the Velvet Revolution, they had to remodel their institutional structures from scratch.

4.4. The Czech Art World after the 1989 Revolution

The fourth reason for the under-representation of women artists in the Czech context is the change in the functioning of art institutions that took place 30 years ago. This sub-chapter describes complicated situation the Czech art scene after 1989 in which institutions and the art scene as a whole had to completely change from the previous prescribed ways of thinking and functioning. It is argued that this process of change influenced all artists but most particularly the women artists of the 90s generation, who were largely limited exhibiting in smaller venues, and these remained their place. The small and mid-sized galleries which

emerged after the revolution today still supplement the function of the large state institutions in the Czech Republic and have demonstrably more open attitudes to female artists.

“The early 1990s were times of heated feminist exchanges and public discussions about feminism” (Jusová, 1). The first exhibition that dealt explicitly with gender and art in the Czech context was curated by Vlasta Čiháková-Noshiro named *Kolumbovo vejce* (Columbus’ s Egg) (Štefková, *Czech Feminisms* 251). It was an exhibition of women artists only, and the title was metaphorical, suggesting “an unspecified problem and its innovative solution while simultaneously evoking the traditional symbol of the female principle” (Štefková, *Czech Feminisms* 251). According to Zuzana Štefková, feminism and gender perspectives in art in the post-1989 Czech context were not seen positively, rather it was perceived as a Western import (*Czech Feminisms*, 252). This popular perception also did not help the women artists to make their way into large institutions and gain adequate appreciation. The Czech general public primarily visits bigger institutions, smaller venues are still to a certain degree a niche of the relative closed art community. This then leaves many women artists unnoticed by the general public, because they are not visible where people expect to see art and which ascribe a certain authority, and above all which are visited regularly.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Czech society went through an era of transformation. In terms of the Czech art world, it meant the end of strict censorship and the renewal of free artistic expression. The unofficial (underground) art that had been created and exhibited under communism in secrecy became official, and it could finally be developed further and made visible to all (Morganová, “Č. výtvarné umění v době transformace” 61). Czech artists were ‘playing catch up’ with the Western art world, where post-modern art was already a reality. However, the Czech art world under communism had not been completely dormant. During the early 1980s, the Czech unofficial art scene flourished by organizing exhibitions in non-

gallery premises and practicing art in the nature. The public was used to a categorization of official and unofficial art, and this lingered even after 1989. Adopting to a new situation where “‘true’ art is also a state-supported and publicly funded aspect of culture” (author’s translation), was according to Morganová difficult for the people in the art scene (“Č. výtvarné umění v době transformace” 73). Czechs were accustomed to a situation where the official art equaled social realism and true art was the avant-garde, underground art. Many alternative artists, and particularly female artists were used to the independent galleries and art circles; they saw these as the place to present their work, rather than the National Gallery which for so long had been forbidden to them.

The fall of communism also meant the transformation of art institutions which previously had prescribed ways of functioning. Morganová mentions the problems regarding mechanisms of decision making and financing in the culture sphere (*Někdy v sukni*, 11). The cultural sphere at this time functioned in a “trial mode” where established institutions were transforming, new ones emerging within an unstable market (Morganová, *Někdy v sukni* 41). The state financial support systems for art institutions stopped working as they done, so these institutions had to adapt to new grant and stipend systems of funding (Červinková, 63). The economic, institutional as well as educational situation was far from comparable with the West. This was vividly manifested in national institutions, where the internal, administrative problems were given the most attention, resulting in the institution’s inadequate interest in contemporary art for the first time abundant with women.

In 2000, Milan Knížák became the director of the National Gallery in Prague, and he remained in this function for no less than fourteen years. His strategy was generally considered, in the Czech environment, to be authoritarian and conservative. Czech art theoreticians criticized the development of the National Gallery under Knížák’s leadership for its tendency toward isolation, self-centredness and for not keeping up with the European

standards in the artworld¹⁰. A striking example of his self-centered practice is the case of permanent exhibition that was to be created in Veletržní Palác in 2000. Despite the fact that the curatorial team led by Hana Rousová had already developed a detailed vision for this exhibition, Knížák swept it from the table and enforced his own vision (Skřivánek, n.p.) An inherent part of his conservative approach was his blindness towards important Czech female artists, both in terms of permanent exhibitions (Skřivánek mentions Adriena Šimotová) and in terms of acquisitions (Skřivánek mentions Kateřina Šedá) (n.p.).

Some of the Czech art institutions, like Prague City Gallery or *České Muzeum Výtvarného Umění*¹¹ after 1989 focused on the presentation of the post-war art, most of which had been, up until the fall of communism, carefully hidden from the Czech spectator. They also finally brought in the western art that had long been flourishing in the non-communist countries (Morganová, *Někdy v sukni* 11-12). Young artists and especially women artists, however, mostly remained out of focus of the publicly funded art institutions. Of the publicly funded institutions, Prague City Gallery seemed to be the most progressive one. It tried to follow contemporary trends and to invite young artists, yet as Magid notes, due to internal conflicts and lack of professional competence, the outcomes of their practice were confusing (n.p.).

Alternative spaces were created in apposition to the traditional institutions. This characteristic of their position made them more open to young artists and to gender equality. The 1990s generation was especially rich with female artists. The common characteristic of the new generation of female artists was their conceptual approach. They had graduated both from AVU and UMPRUM and tended to exhibit their works collectively, as in the case of

¹⁰ Lenka Lindaurová and Tomáš Císařovský, two renowned Czech theoreticians, created an initiative “*Čas pro změnu*” (Time for change) as part of which they wrote an open letter to minister of culture, voicing their concerns with Knížák’s practice, demanding his replacement, first sent in 2008 and then again in 2010.

¹¹ Institution no longer existent today under this title and at the original place. The institution moved in 2009 to Kutná Hora and functions under the title GASK, *Galerie Středočeského Kraje*.

Ženské Domovy. Among these artists belong, for example, Milena Dopitová, Veronika Bromová or Markéta Othová. On the one hand, the post 1989 era was a time when female artists are no longer in an “invisible zone” (Morganová, *Někdy v sukni* 15). On the other hand, as Bromová mentioned, they mostly exhibited in smaller gallery venues because those were available to them (Personal interview). This implies the situation post-1989 did not change sufficiently the national, publicly funded art institutions’ stance toward women artists. “Large institutions continuously deal with their own deep structural crises and the representation of women artists is not their primary concern” (author’s translation) (Kottová, email message to author). The young and now also more frequently women artists retreated to smaller gallery venues where they, for the most part, still remain. Or as illustrated above in the case studies, they exhibit abroad.

The Czech art scene post-1989 is characterised by moving away from the center, which is made up of the national institutions. The center institutions are understood as dominant in forming the art narrative. They are an authority in the art world. However, the contemporary art scene had already moved away from this center under communism, this was manifested by the underground art scene. After the revolution, these galleries officially substituted the functions of the large institutions, mainly in terms of being more open to the younger generation, which featured many women artists, and also being more open to problematic topics, such as feminism.

This sub-chapter discussed one of the most important problems in the Czech art milieu, that is the supplementing of the role of large, national, state-funded art institutions by smaller, independent or commercial spaces. These became alternative spaces which were more open to new trends in the global art world and, to a diverse spectrum of artists. Thus, they were more welcoming to women. The next chapter will explore positive examples of

institutional art practice as well as offer other solutions to the problem of gender inequity in national art institutions.

5. Solutions

This chapter discusses recent initiatives in the art scene that are supportive of Czech female artists such as the *Feminist Art Institution Codex* or *Mothers ArtLovers* that have arisen in the Czech art scene and signify a more active approach to the representation of female artists. It also describes further solutions to improve the situation for female artists.

An initiative to improve the position of women in arts and overall in society arose in the Czech art scene in 2017. *The Feminist Art Institution* was originally a seminar and lecture series organized by Tranzit¹² and attended by artists, curators and critics from Czech Republic and Slovakia. The outcome of this project is a *Feminist Art Institution Code of Practice* that sets forth principles to be followed by art institutions which aim to change the patriarchal state of the art world and society in general. The Feminist Art Institution Code of Practice introduces four main points:

- 1) A feminist art institution is (self)-critical. It subjects its structure and programme to review in order to reflect changing social conditions. [...] A feminist art institution seeks to develop new types of institutional environment. It redefines what it means to be a *public* institution and embraces groups that are otherwise marginalised or discriminated against within the concept of *public*. It deems art (hence culture) to be a universally shared asset (the commons), to which everyone has an inalienable right. [...]
- 2) The ethics of its own internal operations are as important to a feminist art institution as the programme by which it presents itself to the public. [...] An organisational structure must be created that is capable of developing a

¹² “Tranzit is a network of autonomous initiatives in contemporary art in Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovak Republic and Romania since 2002”. It originated from an urge to create a platform for contemporary culture to “alter the stereotypical patterns of values, identities, histories and aesthetics/activitie”. (n.p.)

meaningful programme while taking into account the needs of those who are part of it. [...] The operations of a feminist art institution are the outcome of collective discussion and decision-making, and not a 'one wo/man show'. The distribution of power is clearly articulated. It is subject to debate on the part of all interested parties and can be changed.

- 3) A feminist art institution is based on a feminist understanding of work. It is inspired by the importance feminist theory attributes to care (for children, the elderly, sick and handicapped) and other activities that cannot be monetised but are crucial for the wellbeing of society. One of the aims of a feminist art institution is to raise the profile of activities that are essential to the existence of any organisation yet are taken for granted and financially unremunerated. Different types of care (and art can be deemed a type of care) are of crucial concern to a feminist art institution. [...]
- 4) A feminist art institution takes it as an article of faith that contemporary society is patriarchal, as is the contemporary art world. The aim of the institution is to participate in the struggle to change this situation. A feminist art institution therefore promotes quotas as a temporary solution to gender imbalance and discrimination. A feminist art institution promotes a 50% minimum representation of women in its annual programme, whether this involve exhibitions, festivals, conferences or panel discussions. At least 50% of all managerial, creative and other positions of responsibility are occupied by women in a feminist (art) institution. (n.p.)

In sum, the feminist art institution aims to revisit the established principles of what it means to be a public institution. The internal structures are important in a feminist art institution, decisions are to be discussed and made collectively. *The Feminist Art Institution* acknowledges work that is generally taken for granted and it requires gender balance in its annual program as well as in its internal structures.

In the short-term, achieving absolute gender balance in every art exhibition would be unnatural and forced and perhaps not even possible from the curatorial perspective. The curator is not always able to find equal number of female and male artists to fit into his or her exhibition theme. Yet from a long-term perspective of an art institution, the representation of women and men artists should aim towards balance. However, it is important that the pursuit of gender equality does not undermine the pursuit of art's quality. Therefore, establishing quotas for exhibitions is controversial and not always effective. Quotas thus cannot be implemented as a long term solution, because they may misrepresent reality.

Exhibitions that set as their goal to represent the contemporary art scene should represent the genuine art scene. The reference here is to Nový Zlínský Salon in 2017 which presented the exhibition named "*Co je současný obraz*" ("What is the contemporary image"). The exhibition ostensibly presented the contemporary Czech art scene; however, showed 34 male artists and only one female artist. The gender imbalance incorrectly implied there is only a small percentage of female artists in the Czech art scene. The incorrectness of the implication can be supported for example by the lists of artists represented in commercial galleries Hunt Kastner and Drdova, as mentioned above. In the Czech art scene, there is definitely not 99 percent of male artists and only one percent of female artists. The representatives of Czech art scene (artists, critics and theoreticians alike) criticized this approach and demanded this exhibition be closed.

Another initiative on the Czech art scene is “Mothers Artlovers”. It was established in 2016 by Czech artist Darina Alster and it comprises a group of women artist mothers. They work as a platform for sharing and developing their thoughts, motherhood support (babysitting, sharing things), institutional support, possibility of collective work, inspiration (exhibitions, projects, workshops). This project addresses the problems of female artists who decide to have children and the attendant financial issues. Artists generally work as freelancers, meaning they often do not have a stable income. Artists’ incomes (those who do not have another job, like teaching) thus mostly depends on money they earn from leasing or selling their artwork. Working as a freelancer means that women artists usually do not obtain maternity pay. It is, however, difficult to create art and take care of a newborn baby at the same time which then puts women artists in a difficult situation, which is why many women artists disappear from the art scene altogether, once they become mothers.

The initiatives mentioned above are trying to create a more welcoming environment in the art scene to women in the arts, artists and theoreticians alike, and those who are also mothers. Karina Kottová, a curator, theoretician, director of Jindřich Chalupecký Society and mother argues in her interview for *Radio Wawe* that positive development has been happening in the last six years, which meant a change mostly in smaller institutions, it is, according to, Kottová no longer a taboo for parent curators or artists to bring their children to an exhibition opening (n.p.). Also, in Studio Prám the artists who work in the studios also bring their children with them to work. The smaller and mid-sized institutions and groupings are in this motherhood and family issues increasingly more open. “It is necessary to create an adequate space for women artists’ work and position in the art scene as well as it is necessary to appreciate their work symbolically and practically” (author’s translation) (Kottová, email message to author).

One of other possibilities for improvement, as Reilly suggests, is revisionism. It is the most obvious strategy, an integrative approach, by which the canon is re-visited and rewritten and artists that have been omitted are included (*Curatorial Activism* 23). “A revisionist approach then, rediscovers what the canon conceals and suppresses; it questions the adequacy of accepted conceptual structures and looks for the ‘sins and errors of the past’” (ibid). The problem with revisionist approach is that it still remains largely dependent on the Western canon and leaves the newly included figures in a subordinated position (Reilly, *Curatorial Activism* 24). In the Czech art scene, this can be illustrated with the case of artist Běla Kolářová, who was previously known as the wife of Czech artist, Jiří Kolář. Her art has been discovered only recently: in 2008 Museum Kampa dedicated her a solo exhibition called “*Fotografie, asambláže, kresby*”. In 2019 Oblastní Galerie v Liberci showed her exhibition “*Pohyb / čas*” (Placáková).

Secondly, Reilly mentions the concept of area studies. Area studies “produces new canons and supplements the traditional discourse by focusing on work that is based on either racial, geographical, gendered, or sexual orientation” (*Curatorial Activism* 25). This approach spotlights disadvantaged groups of artists, in this case women artists. In the Czech context, area studies can be illustrated by the exhibition *Někdy v Sukni* (In a Skirt Sometimes), curated by Pavlína Morganová. These exhibitions are of a great importance, oftentimes presenting high quality artworks to public for the first time. They make the underrepresented artists visible. Yet they are criticized for isolating “artists on the basis of their gender, nationality, and sexuality” (Reilly, *Curatorial Activism* 26). This implies a conflict at the center of feminism and the difficulty the curators face when wanting to improve the situation. On one hand, they can incorporate the female artists into the established narrative, which is then, however, criticized for not sufficiently challenging patriarchal structures. On the other hand,

they can create exhibitions of women artists only by which they commit the same mistake as the men, they discriminate based on gender of the artist.

An example of the area studies from the Czech milieu are Pavlína Morganová and Martina Pachmanová, two Czech theoreticians and curators who focus in their practice on the underrepresented women in art. Morganová curated the exhibition *Někdy v Sukni* (In a Skirt Sometimes) in 2014. This exhibition was the first large exhibition of women's art in a major Czech art institution, first in Moravian Gallery in Brno and then in Prague City Gallery which presented the work of female artists who significantly shaped the Czech art in the nineties. The exhibition arose from a premise that women artists played the most important role in the art scene in the 1990s, following decades of purely male artists groups (Morganová, 7). The exhibition showed the work of for example Milena Dopitová, Veronika Bromová, Štěpánka Šimlová, Kateřina Šedá, Lenka Klodová, Alena Kotzmannová or Míla Preslová. Morganová argues it is symptomatic for her exhibition *Někdy v Sukni* that the majority of the nineties' women artists do not use traditional media, or if they do, they take an innovative approach. Pachmanová, on the other hand, focuses on the 'forgotten' Czech female artists and the theoretical background of art creation in the twentieth century.

Another solution is relational studies. This approach was proposed by a cultural studies scholar Ella Shohat in relation to school curricula. When applied to the art world, it suggests presenting art "a-historically, ignoring national borders or periodic categories, [...] arranged thematically or without a coherent thesis" (Reilly, *Curatorial Activism* 30). The relational approach to curating exhibitions focuses on presenting multiple artists from diverse backgrounds in a dialogue. This approach is about leveling of hierarchies (Reilly, *Curatorial Activism* 30). Women and other underrepresented artists should, based on the relational approach, receive more attention.

This chapter has focused on some positive approaches occurring in the Czech art scene that try to improve the situation for women in the arts. These, however, have not yet influenced larger institutions. Approaches which can be implemented by the larger institutions have also been addressed. They are oftentimes problematic, nevertheless, they mean a step forward for the underrepresented artists, among whom female artists feature largely.

6. Conclusion

The previous chapters described the standing of Czech female artists in the Czech contemporary art scene. The under-representation of women artists is a global concern. This has been critically addressed to a much greater extent in the West than in the Czech milieu. It has been argued that artwork of Czech female artists is not adequately collected or exhibited by Czech state-sponsored art institutions, nor do female artists as frequently receive prestigious awards. Women artists also have fewer solo exhibitions than men artists. The work of internationally known Czech female artists is collected on a very small scale by the national institutions. Female artists in the Czech Republic are gaining support through initiatives like Feminist Art Institution or Mothers Art Lovers. These initiatives, established, and led by women in the sphere of arts stress the importance of equality, care and motherhood, and incorporate this into their practice. Female artists have better conditions in smaller and mid-sized institutions which arose in opposition to the large, state-funded institutions. The smaller galleries are more open to the young generation of artists which includes a larger number of females. One of the most successful Czech women artists, Eva Koťátková exhibits primarily abroad; in the Czech context she has exhibited mostly in smaller institutions, or institutions with female directors. Kateřina Šedá represents the problems of female artists having to establish themselves outside of the male canon, which in her case resulted in being more acclaimed outside of the traditional art world domain.

The causes for the under-representation and lack of recognition of female artists that have been identified in this paper are interconnected. For example, patriarchal structures affect the canon making it difficult for women artists to enter. Also, women do not frequently become directors of large art institutions, rather they remain in the domain of smaller institutions and / or they practice freelance curating. The canon functions as an authority which perpetuates the traditionally patriarchal lineage of art history, which makes the entry of

female artists into their domain complicated and improbable. The strength of canon is supported by the leading positions in art schools as well as in large institutions which are predominantly occupied by men. The revisionary practices in the exhibition making, where solely women artists are showed in permanent collections, such as “Elles” in Centre Pompidou in 2009, are only a temporary highlights in the institutional practice which is eventually replaced by the previous practices (Reilly, “Taking the measure” n.p.). As demonstrated by Reilly and this thesis, if institutions are led by female directors, they are more gender balanced in their choice of artists, telling examples are Drdova Gallery or Prague City Gallery. Moreover, the smaller and mid-sized institutions, for example, Meet Factory, Futura, or Hunt Kastner, are more gender balanced in their programmes, as demonstrated with their solo exhibitions and artists represented.

It has also been argued that the problematics of under-representation of women artists is long embedded in history and tradition where women were in an oppressed position. Despite the early women’s emancipatory successes in the Czech lands due to the Czech National Revival, women artists since the eighteenth century have been in rather small numbers. They were typically daughters or sisters of artists, partners and wives of artists or from a wealthy family; thus, could afford to, for example, travel abroad for education or pay for private lessons. Education has been the central problem for women artists especially in Central Europe where the women were not allowed into the Academies that serve as important entryways into the professional art world. Social perceptions of women did not help those with artistic ambitions either, since the career of a professional visual artist was mostly confined to men. Most women were confined to the sphere of decorative and applied arts until 1918, when they for the first time had the opportunity to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. The traditional perceptions of gender roles and the inability of women to study and practice fine arts is influenced by the historically patriarchal vision of the world.

Another cause identified in this paper is the particular reception of feminism in the Czech context and the missing second wave of feminism in the Czech milieu due to the long period of communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Although the communist regime did proclaim interest in gender equality, many theoreticians argued the emancipation of women under communist rule resulted in overburdening the women and, most importantly, not changing the stereotyped gender distinctions. It also forbade discussions of feminism on the grounds that it was a Western import. The Czech population is very careful about everything “feminist” as a result of the misconceptions and negative connotations of this term which the Czechs gained after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The practice of feminist artist in the West, which had a significant impact on the position of women in the arts, has been for a long time missing in the Czech milieu. Moreover, the discourses which feminist practice initiate find their way into the Czech institutional structures slowly and late.

The fourth cause follows on the previous. The post-revolutionary re-structuring of the art world also influenced the under-representation of women artists in large state-sponsored institutions. It has been thirty years since the communist regime ended, and the Czech art world is still catching up with the West. Closest to the Western art world are smaller and mid-sized institutions who are open to women as well as to innovation.

Lastly, it must be noted that the topic of this study deserves more attention, for which the scope of this paper does not suffice. Female artists may be successful and famous, but the job of curators and institutional decision makers is to turn these successes into something greater, so that women artists may become as legitimate a part of the historical art canon as their male counterparts. The reaction of the Czech art community to the Nový Zlínský Salon which claimed to represent contemporary art scene and showed only one woman artist, together with initiatives on the Czech art scene, including the Feminist Art Institution Codex and Mothers Art Lovers community and Martina Pachmanová’s theoretical research and

curatorial activity of Pavlína Morganová, strongly suggest that gender equality in representation and appreciation in the Czech art scene, though aspired to, is still in the early stages, and not yet apparent in national, state-funded institutions. The under-representation of women artists in large state funded institutions should be extensively studied and the results should be given to the respective institutions with a call for improved practice. The smaller initiatives are a good starting point, but their voices must be heard by the more powerful canon makers and institutional decision makers and subsequently the larger public.

7. Bibliography

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8. Figures



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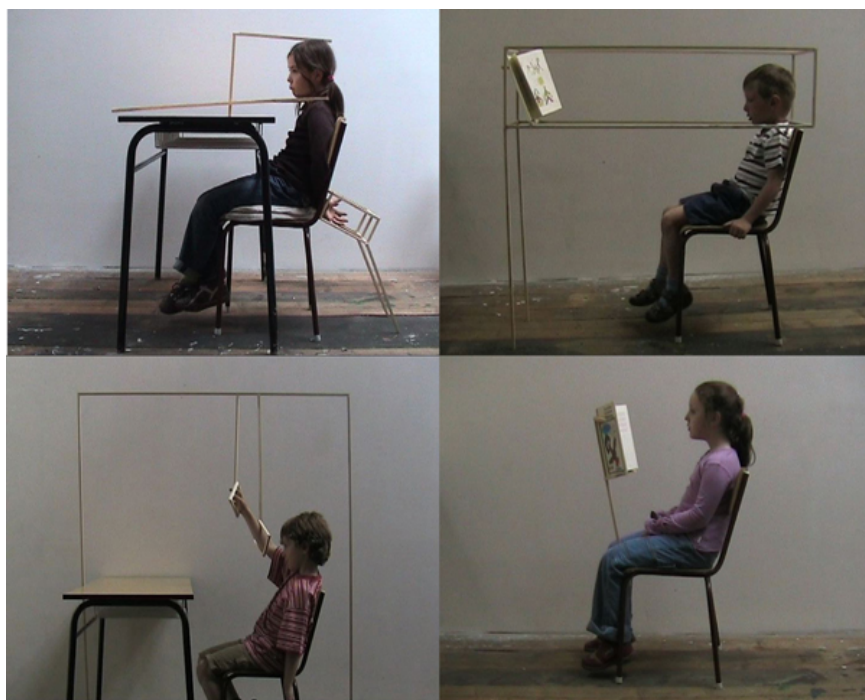


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Figure x. Eva Kořátková, *The Machine for Restoring Empathy* (2019)
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Figure xi. Kateřina Šedá, *UNES-CO* (2018)
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