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# How Male Gaze Can Influence the Perception of Art Pieces from the Psychiatric Art Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences? (Case Study)

**Abstract:** The objective of this paper is to comprehend the environmental impact, specifically the influence of the psychiatric institution, on a work of art created within the context of psychiatric treatment. Additionally, the paper focuses on exploring the artwork's impact on the viewer, and examining how we perceive these drawings – whether as neutral observers or through a sexualized lens. The intention is to present a collection of artworks produced by a female patient during her hospitalization in the 1950s and 1960s at the National Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology in Budapest. For the purposes of this study, the artist has been given the pseudonym “Antonia”, as her identity is only known within the institutional records through her marital status, identification by her husband's name, and an approximate age at the time of admission. Antonia's drawings depict women engaged in various everyday situations, such as enjoying an elegant dinner or dancing, and also include portraits of a young, attractive, and sexually appealing individual. When interpreting these drawings, it is impossible to avoid being influenced by the perspective from which the figures, seemingly vulnerable and exposed even in their elegant attire, offer their creator a glimpse into their emotions, anxieties, and fears. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that, even in contemporary times, decades after their creation, when approached from the perspectives of art history, psychology, and sociology, these drawings can only be accessed through the patriarchal lens that initially categorized them as part of the museum canon and included them in the collection during their respective era. Departing from this foundational standpoint proves to be a challenging endeavor.

**Keywords:** *femme-fatale*; identity; being a woman outsider artist; male gaze; PsyArt Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Following the closure of the National Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology, previously known as the Royal Hungarian National Lunatic Asylum of Buda and subsequently renamed the National Institute of Neurology and Neuroscience, in 2008, the corpus of artistic works produced within the premises of the aforementioned institution, as well as at the Angyalföld Institute of Neurology and Neuroscience, was assimilated into the collections of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Reflecting

upon my time spent within this environment, it becomes apparent that the overarching theme of the *femme fatale* offers a pertinent framework through which to interpret the reproductions and individual renderings of these works, which were created for diverse purposes. This thematic lens also proves to be fitting for an examination of individual artistic accomplishments, as exemplified by the presented drawings below.

Mireille Dottin-Orsini's work, titled *Cette femme qu'ils disent fatale* [*This Woman They Called Fatale*],<sup>1</sup> establishes a connection between the literature produced during the transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the visual representations prevalent at the time. Within the literary works of this period, the male figure, assuming the role of the sole creative and productive entity, frequently portrayed women as mere reflections of himself – entities created for his own amusement and often serving as catalysts for his own demise.

In this context, women were perceived as instruments through which the man could gratify his own male physical desires, an idea that was often interpreted as a rather abstract concept. Consequently, these women were regarded as artificial beings devoid of independent thought or agency, existing solely as products of male ingenuity. The portrayal of women as replicas within 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature is viewed through the prism of medical professionals, and the literary imagination beckons those who possess familiarity with women's experiences, exhibit sensitivity toward social disparities, and articulate them. Notable figures in this realm include Cesare Lombroso and Jean-Martin Charcot.

Thus, the concept of the male gaze,<sup>2</sup> characterized as a provocative act of figurative undressing, assumes paramount significance, likely influenced by the predominantly male medical community prevalent during that era. Mireille Dottin-Orsini also contemplates this phenomenon, drawing attention to the profound extent to which doctors, well-versed in their knowledge of women during the pre-Freudian epoch, contributed to the construction of the female image within literary works.

From their inception, psychiatric institutions have fostered diverse modes of self-expression, often with therapeutic intentions. Such endeavors encompass the cultivation of impromptu visual manifestations through drawing and painting techniques,

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<sup>1</sup> Mireille Dottin-Orsini, *Cette femme qu'ils disent fatale: textes et images de la misogynie fin-de-siècle* [*This Woman They Called Fatale*], (Paris: Grasset, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> I will not undertake a review of the entire literature on male gaze within the scope of this paper. The concept of the male gaze refers to the way in which visual arts, literature, and media often depict the world from a masculine perspective, objectifying and sexualizing women. It was first introduced by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" published in 1975. The literary aspects of sexuality, based on the concepts of Sigmund Freud (exploring the psychosexual development of individuals and proposing theories related to human sexuality), Jacques Lacan (developing his own psychoanalytic concepts; emphasizing the importance of language and the unconscious in shaping individual subjectivity), Simone De Beauvoir (analyzing the social and historical construction of gender and arguing for women's liberation from patriarchal structures in her work "The Second Sex" in 1949 – the same year when Jean Dubuffet constructed the conception of Art Brut) and Elizabeth Grosz (about embodiment, sexuality, and power), among others, are discussed in the following dissertation: Melinda Jill Storr, "The Gaze in Theory: The Cases of Sartre And Lacan," (Ph.D. diss., University of York, Centre for Women's Studies, 1994). It examines the concept of the gaze through the perspectives of Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan.

as well as the subsequent manifestation of ceramic or textile artifacts. Moreover, these endeavors encompass theatrical presentations and the invitation to partake in cultural gatherings. The individuals engaged in profound contemplation regarding the elucidation of psychiatric issues, the depiction of cohesive, unblemished, and diverse bodily perceptions, the advancement of a contemporary all-encompassing methodology, and, in numerous instances, they endeavored to foster inclusion across broader social strata. One need only think of Charcot's "Leçons de Mardi", when he stimulated his susceptible patients to produce the hysterical symptoms he had discovered, as a planned theatrical performance. In this context, the visual creative result did not take on a permanent, tangible format, remaining at the level of ephemeral, merely impressive spectacle.<sup>3</sup> The visual, pictorial expressions have begun to be expressed parallel to the representation of a scenic world. Often the exotic, the bizarre, differing from the expected, the difference was in the focus.

Nearly every creative endeavor we undertake – be it scientific research, a visual art creation, or even an organizational exercise – portrays a reflection of ourselves at the moment it becomes publicly accessible through a medium external to us. Put differently, we mold it in our own likeness, taking into account the environment or medium to which it is directed, and which subsequently observes and interprets it as the recipient. Consequently, our self-acceptance, our perception of identity within our own physical form, and our self-image exert considerable influence over our impact on the surrounding environment. Simultaneously, the internalized imprint of how the world perceives us – often detached from reality – impacts our emotional state and influences our responses to the context, even misleadingly. This dynamic presupposes interpersonal relationships or group dynamics, which, when faced with illness or temporary trauma, can create a vacuum for those experiencing such circumstances.

The perennial inquiry revolves around the demarcation between those situated within and those positioned outside. This encompasses the distinction between the performer, the one delivering the artistic rendition, and the spectator, assumedly adopting the role of observer or outsider. Discernible are those endowed with insight into the intrinsic interrelationships and concealed truths yet to be unveiled – individuals entrusted with the understanding of the clandestine essence, as well as those who find themselves ostracized and excluded from this privileged circle. Starting from space – and from a psychic point of view – the perspective and the focus are also important attitudes.

Are we the ones analyzing something or are we being watched? Only the stability of our identity enables us to play different roles. The acknowledgment of one's bodily constraints and the subsequent development of body image significantly impact an individual's visual manifestation within the societal context, as well as their creative endeavors. The experience of trauma can potentially result in various psychosomatic ailments, including dissociation, post-traumatic disorder, and related conditions.

Individuals who experience traumatic events tend to deviate from their objective reality, resulting in emotional distress, when they perceive their circumstances

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<sup>3</sup> Veronika Darida, *Hisztériák [Hysterias]* (Budapest: Kijárát, 2012), 19.

as irreparable and devoid of viable solutions. One approach to addressing trauma involves the act of artistic creation, wherein the individual endeavors to contextualize and encapsulate their traumatic experiences. On one facet, this trajectory precipitates recollection, desolation, mourning, frustration, and even a state of debilitation, thus initiating a course of victimization. Conversely, on the alternate facet, the capacity to construct and thrive as a consequence of these undertakings stands as an intrinsically advantageous outcome.

I am dealing here with a subjective reading of the book published, also in Hungarian, by Judith Herman, *Trauma és gyógyítás [Trauma and Recovery]*.<sup>4</sup> In it the author examines the history of hysteria, the parallels and analogies of trauma symptoms experienced by people who are victims of domestic violence, suffering from abuse, vilified women and also veterans returning from war. Herman sees the identity of these symptoms and discovers the difficulties of the elaboration of the trauma, the process of mourning, and draws attention to the undesirable effects of the indifference of the societies that surround them.

The development of our bodily representation, the way we embrace it, the transformations and solidification of our sense of self, and the modes of affiliation with a collective are all pivotal constituents of our individuality, shedding light on our psychological traumas and endeavors for self-restoration. Constructs of societal roles, fantasies, aspirations, instances of actuality, and cultural customs traverse the threshold between anticipated and fabricated stances, perpetuating a delicate interplay.

The psychological interpretation of the concepts of *male gaze* and *male box* elucidates the advantages and disadvantages inherent in a paternalistic society, where women and female creators find themselves in a minority and oppressed position. The notion of the “male box”<sup>5</sup> retrospectively reflects the detrimental impact of societal expectations of masculine roles on men.

Within this context, theater serves as an apt analogy for analyzing the act of self-presentation and one’s societal standing. Here, the presence of the protagonist is conceptualized as a performed role, wherein an observing interpreter intermittently engages and distances themselves from the narrative. This observer often identifies with the situation and the predicament presented by the protagonist, seeking personal solutions to various life circumstances. Much like a hospital patient placed in an isolated incubator, constantly ‘monitored’ by a doctor, both the performer and the observer in theater are equally ‘exposed’.

Daniel Wojcik, in his recommendation for his book on outsider art, explains art “as an expression of raw creativity, it remains associated with self-taught visionaries, psychiatric patients, trance mediums, eccentric outcasts, and unschooled artistic geniuses who create things outside of mainstream artistic trends and styles.”<sup>6</sup> My

<sup>4</sup> Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma és gyógyulás – Az erőszak hatása a családon belüli bántalmazástól a politikai terrorig [Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror]* (Budapest: Háttér – Kávész – NANE Egyesület, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Tony Porter, “A call to men,” [https://www.ted.com/talks/tony\\_porter\\_a\\_call\\_to\\_men](https://www.ted.com/talks/tony_porter_a_call_to_men). acc. July 11, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Wojcik, *Outsider Art: Visionary Worlds and Trauma* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), <https://www.upress.state.ms.us/Books/O/Outsider-Art>

presentation does not follow the traditional interpretation of outsider art, but rather the line that Wojcik pointed out in his book, so that the works of both qualified and unqualified artists are juxtaposed.

I wish to analyze some graphic objects of the Psychiatric Art Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.<sup>7</sup>

The Outsider Artist chosen, *Antonia* (a pseudonym to mask her identity) is a housekeeper by profession. Via hospital records we know only her marital status; her husband's name (used for identification), and her approximate age at the time of reception. The 12 drawings in the collection were made in a few days at the National Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology during her stay there, from December 12, 1959 to December 19, 1960. Not much is known about her fate afterwards; according to the current state of research, she was transported to Pomáz (name of a town north of Budapest, where she was transferred to another institution). Antonia's artworks depict ethereal, evanescent figures of a woman who is unable to safeguard the boundaries of her own body, who at the same time puts herself on public display, bowing to the male gaze. She also shows us portraits of different hairstyles as if she was multiplying herself, a rather typical vision of traumatized women according to the medical literature. I quote: "in situations of extreme stress, a dissociation takes place: the subject 'splits' off part of itself from the experience, producing "multiple personalities" in the process. The diagnosis of MPD (multiple personality disorder) was once very rare but became quite common for a while in the 1980s and 1990s."<sup>8</sup> The context of the selected works from the Collection of Psychiatric Art of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is mainly that of a psychiatric institution. The works created in this setting are often placed outside the art scene. They are to be judged as an artistic production precisely through the process of creation.

Regarding the institutional circumstances of the creation of these pieces presented, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the social support of the network of doctor–patient relationships as well as that existing among the patients themselves. In this network the temporary and long-term intimate relationships or their absence, the sexual exaltation or even the asexuality and the absence of any human relationship can be shown in the form of a visual language. I will try to present the visualization of the trauma. "The context between the body, (sexual) identity, role conflicts and the effects of traumatization articulate well the creative process and their manifestation in the works", summarized Márta Csabai.<sup>9</sup> "Body image refers to the psychological relationship between an individual and his or her own body experiences

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<sup>7</sup> Drawings, paintings, ceramics, and documentation from the collections of the National Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology created at two sites, Liptómező and Angyalföld, were transferred to the holdings of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2008, <https://www.psyartcoll.mta.hu/>, accessed on March 31, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Judith Herman and Contemporary Trauma Theory," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, ½ (Spring – Summer, 2008): 277.

<sup>9</sup> Márta Csabai and Ferenc Erős, *Testhatárok és énhatárok. Az identitás változó keretei [Body Boundaries and Self-Boundaries: The Changing Frames of Identity]* (Budapest: Józsefvárosi Műhely, 2000), 61–65

and attitudes and the way in which they are organized.<sup>10</sup> Body image is a significant determinant of self-esteem and self-image, which can be considered a central part of the personality.”<sup>11</sup>

The women represented in different daily life situations such as eating an elegant dinner, dancing, and even portraits are made probably about the same person as young, attractive, sexually appealing. In the drawings analyzed here, there is no stage or stage situation as discussed above. What is worth looking at from this point of view, however, is precisely the focus, the approach to the problem – or even its removal. Her problem-centricity is successfully highlighted by the surfaces left free. I have written an article about the drawing *Dinners*,<sup>12</sup> now I wish to analyze one of the *Dancers, Woman in Evening Dress* (Image 1 and 2). This is a double-sided drawing, on the reverse of which is a woman with long, fair hair, wearing a low-cut evening gown. The standing or dancing figures always lean on their right foot, lifting the left from the ground. This female figure on the reverse side of the *Dancer*, also depicted from above, facing the viewer, is fully clothed, in a low-set décolleté. It is as if she is looking for a place to support herself on some kind of round table.

We can only empathize with this half-clothed, half-naked woman; our perception is influenced by the male gaze, which has long been the dominant and still defining feature of art history. We cannot evade it, we cannot focus on the problem that the message of the cartoon aims to convey, that this point of view is compelling. On the one hand, it binds the artist, because she is trying to conform to it, and on the other hand, it constrains the viewer, because he or she is trying to place the whole of the figure in some space, in some time, to imagine a story around it. Meanwhile there is no space, no time, and no story. We feel deceived.

There is a lack of narrative reducing the graphics to mere factual communication. The colors have no abstract field of interpretation drawn from the inner world, as the sketch is only a black and white representation, a kind of removing any valuable meaning. The frontal female figure's movement is just a visualization of the repetition, turning around one point, existing as a woman who perhaps wishes to be accepted, seen as nice, attractive, and pleasant. What is accentuating all kind of elegance is the matching pearl necklace and bracelet, a pair of high-heeled shoes together with a low neckline long evening dress. The short-haired, slender lady holds a crystal-like champagne flute in her upraised hand. The glass is just as flawed as the figure itself: as a footed cup, it would certainly not stand on any table or counter, nor would the dancer be able to balance on her slim legs and tiny feet. The figure can be seen from a slightly top-down perspective, as if she were the center of the world, her necklace and dress cut describing an almost regular circular shape, as we present ourselves in

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<sup>10</sup> Celia W. McCrea, Angela B. Summerfield, and B. Rosen, “Body image: a selective review of existing measurement techniques,” *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 55, 3 (1982): 225–232.

<sup>11</sup> Beáta Szászi and Pál Szabó, A táncos test: egészség, testi elégedettség, testhez való viszony, evési attitűdök és önértékelés vizsgálata táncosok körében [*Dancers' Body: The Examination of Health, Body Satisfaction, Body Attitudes, Eating Attitudes, and Self-Esteem Among Dancers*], *Tánc és Nevelés [Dance and Education]* 2, 1 (2021): 4–29.

<sup>12</sup> Judit Faludy, “A testkép szerepe a kreativitásban – Egy tárgycsoport kontextualizálási kísérlete [*The Role of Body Image in Creativity – An Attempt to Contextualise a Group of Objects*]”, *Psychiatria Hungarica* 30, 3 (2015), 167–177.



a psychological test. This time, the woman is not balancing on one leg, not sitting peacefully alone at the laid dinner table, almost flying in front of a saturated nowhere background in some weightless space where only the folds of her dress ripple, while her wavy hair falls neatly over her head. In fact, the body is only held together by the strong contour lines, made three-dimensional only by the crown of hair and the pronounced, accentuated, round female breasts. Two forms explicitly linked to femininity, sexuality, desire. The intention was born from an inner motivation, aimed at the spectator, the external observer. The nipple seems to imitate a shoe button reflecting on a string of pearls. The wide hip-strengthening waistband gapes like an open form, the ruffle of the sack dress imitates a fish in the dancer's dropped left hand. In Western culture, the fish is also interpreted as a symbol of strong sexuality. The full dress here offers much more protection than on the pirouetting figure of the long, black-haired *Veiled Woman*:<sup>13</sup> at least the lower part of the body remains covered, only the ankles are visible again. The female figure, placed in the centre of the square (in the middle of the paper), is shown this time with a straight waist, in a right posture, only her head is tilted to the left, as in Antonia's other drawings. She shows herself in her shamelessness. To whom do these drawings find their address? Who assumes the role of the viewer, the intended recipient? Within which perspective may we elect to orient ourselves? Are we seeing a stage scene, a role dream, or a representation of the inner world? How do we look at this drawing, as the creator of the image of women in the late fifties and early sixties, or with the male gaze of the men, especially doctors who quasi undressed all women instinctively without doing so in reality, which is impossible to escape? Do we perceive the presence of an institutional framework, perhaps a vague reference to the dominant, even negative role of the family, or the formulation of an aggressive father image, a neglectful mother figure? Or does it all reflect a complete lack of motherhood? Does the revelation reflect the secret qualities of a lover or an Amazon, or is it just an experiment in the fiction of "what if...?" based on the real world? How the artwork is reflecting the effect of that male gaze as special inner thinking, imagined reality and also of real common sense is seeking them? Are all these drawings representing the symptoms of illness, a wishful thinking of an abandoned, traumatized woman at her middle-aged state? Is it an automatic answer to the situation or an imaginary scene of a traumatized person? The artist's environment, mostly male doctors, and the staff of the Institute seem to be safe enough to make the cartoons, no stress, no external constraints, no time limits, endless days are structured around meals and medical examinations.

In the context of complete figurative representations, the quality of boundlessness, as construed from their observed manifestation, conveys a sense of vulnerability. There is no explicit boundary between the body and the outside world, rather the lack of self-protection is shown. The boundaries become permeable, there is no distinction between inside and outside, no restraining, regulating force to prevent even violent intrusion or the involuntary outpouring of the inner world. For the creator, the spin is constant. There is no foothold, no concrete, fixed ground, no shelter, no hiding place,

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

no homeliness, no framework, no medium, no sustaining social network, no network, no connection, no religious vocation. Even if the face is schematized, we think of it as a lack of drawing skill rather than as a mask, a hiding presence.

There are boundary questions between art and spontaneous creation, inner and outer worlds, spirituality and corporeal living, desire to please, revealing and hiding, concealment, profanity and religious experience, eroticism and sexuality, violence, and desire. Didier Anzieu, a French psychologist has studied the function of the human body, and particularly the skin,<sup>14</sup> as a self-protector, as a boundary-maker, which in this situation can be extended to the dress, a tool that today also plays the role of decoration. The same skin function becomes almost irrelevant in a hospital setting, or in a hierarchical situation, this skin function becomes alienated from the wearer.

This is where we feel our own vulnerability. The impact of the drawings on the viewer of the present is a strong sense of empathy and helplessness. A feeling, as Pascal described it, that we are grains of dust. He writes:

Let's take our bearings then: we are something, and we aren't everything. The being that we do have cuts us off from knowledge of first beginnings, which arise out of the nothing; and the smallness of our being conceals from us the sight of the infinite.

Our intellect is at the same level in the world of intelligible things [= 'concepts'] as our body occupies in the extended world. Limited as we are in every way, our status as intermediate between two extremes shows up in all our faculties.

Our senses don't perceive any extreme:

- Too much sound deafens us;
- too much light dazzles us;
- we can't see well things that are too far or too near;
- we lose track of speech that goes on too long or not long enough;
- too much truth stuns us (I know people who can't understand that zero minus four equals zero);
- first principles are too self-evident for us;
- too much pleasure disagrees with us;
- too many concords are displeasing in music;
- too many benefits annoy us (we don't want too big a burden of moral debt: 'Benefits are acceptable when the receiver thinks he may return them; but beyond that hatred is given instead of thanks' [quoted in Latin from Tacitus]);
- we don't feel extreme heat or extreme cold;

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<sup>14</sup> Didier Anzieu, *Le moi-peau* (Paris: Dunod, 2006).



- excessive qualities are bad for us, and not perceptible by the senses; we are acted on by them but don't feel them;
- extreme youth and extreme age hinder the mind;
- similarly with too much and too little education.

In short, extremes are for us as though they didn't exist, and we are for them as though we didn't exist. They elude us, or we elude them.<sup>15</sup>

Pascal also mentions happiness, which man is almost incapable of. The meaning, exactly to be unfortunate can explain Antonia's depiction of movement, perpetual motion.

181. We're so unfortunate that we can take pleasure in something only on condition that we'll be upset if it turns out badly, as a thousand things can do, and do do, every hour. Someone who found the secret of •re-joicing in something good and •not being upset when it turns out badly would have hit the mark. It is perpetual motion. [He means, presumably, that that achievement (in psychotherapy?) is as desirable and as impossible as perpetual motion is in physics.]<sup>16</sup>

The museum cartouche echoes this vulnerability of the outsider artist chosen – it was not customary in the period to address married women by their maiden names, so the completely subordinate form of Mrs. attached to the husband's name appears here too. In Western languages, this pattern follows a different structure: the husband's

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<sup>15</sup> “Connoissons donc notre portée; nous sommes quelque chose et ne sommes pas tout. Ce que nous avons d'être nous dérobe la connoissance des premiers principes, qui naissent du néant, et le peu que nous avons d'être nous cache la vue de l'infini.

Notre intelligence tient dans l'ordre des choses intelligibles le même rang que notre corps dans l'étendue de la nature. Borné en tout genre, cet état qui tient le milieu entre deux extrêmes se trouve en toutes nos puissances. Nos sens n'aperçoivent rien d'extrême. Trop de bruit nous assourdit; trop de lumière éblouit, trop de distance et trop de proximité empêche la vue; trop de longueur et trop de brièveté du discours l'obscurcit; trop de vérité nous étonne: j'en sais qui ne peuvent comprendre que qui de zéro ôte 4 reste zéro. Les premiers principes ont trop d'évidence pour nous. Trop de plaisir incommode. Trop de consonnances déplaisent dans la musique; et trop de bienfaits irritent: nous voulons avoir de quoi surpayer la dette: Beneficia eo usque læta sunt dum videntur exsolvi posse; ubi multum antevenerere, pro gratia odium redditur[3].

Nous ne sentons ni l'extrême chaud ni l'extrême froid. Les qualités excessives nous sont ennemies, et non pas sensibles: nous ne les sentons plus, nous les souffrons. Trop de jeunesse et trop de vieillesse empêchent l'esprit; trop et trop peu d'instruction.... Enfin les choses extrêmes sont pour nous comme si elles n'étoient point, et nous ne sommes point à leur égard: elles nous échappent, ou nous à elles.” Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, tome I (Paris: Hachette, 1871), 246–250; English translation: Jonathan Bennett, 2017, p. 11, <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/pascal1660.pdf>, acc. March 27, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> “Nous sommes si malheureux que nous ne pouvons prendre plaisir à une chose qu'à condition de nous fâcher si elle réussit mal; ce que mille choses peuvent faire, et font à toute heure. Qui auroit trouvé le secret de se réjouir du bien sans se fâcher du mal contraire, auroit trouvé le point. C'est le mouvement perpétuel.” Ibid., 273–284; English translation: Jonathan Bennett, 2017, p. 29, <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/pascal1660.pdf>, acc. March 27, 2023.

name is preceded by the name of the wife – but the Hungarian language is agglutinant – although this often means that the wife’s name or separate identity disappears. The drawings betray an angelic gentleness.

Being an unskilled artist – as Antonia – the distortions and disproportions are quite natural. The limbs are staggered throughout the series; in reality they would be unable to support the weight of the human body.

The black-and-white, full-length drawings seem to have been created more with the intention of arousing desire, idealized revelations of an inner fire, while the artist uses colored pencil to depict quite distant, childhood or repressed forms of identity, different role variations and changes of scale. She zooms in on the detail she wants to define, magnifies some elements, while others are only superficially, faintly represented.

Her portraits might be among the hair-do experiments of a woman aged 65–68. An unraveled crown of red hair and a vacant face (Image 3) appear also. One could associate these images again with a strong presence of sexuality. In my reading it could be identified with a character trait that could be considered a *femme fatale*.<sup>17</sup> Red hair also appears in two portraits, a full-length female figure and a multi-figure drawing that remains in sketch. This allows the author to describe the creator of the work as a person who would like to identify with this role. In the sketch folio, which I have dated to the last time it was made, the woman is completely dissolved in her own desire, escapes from view, her personality and her entire existence dissolve, and only the object of wish remains. With her last pencil stroke, she struggles against the dangerous, destructive gaze of her environment. She seems to be a creative and talented artist, whose images are motivated both by the need to leave a mark and to show her own inner fears and identity.

Antonia seems to accept the immutable, the deprivation of individuality in her feminine being, the use of the married name, confinement, disappearance. The only means she uses to express her desire for freedom is sexuality, the absence of space and time. The completely exposed female bodies, barely hidden from the world, do not reflect any emotional involvement. The movement represented, which appears as a

<sup>17</sup> Judit Faludy *Nővész-történet [The title is a kind of wordplay: Women-danger-story]*, Látkép 2021 – Művészettörténeti tanulmányok [Látkép 2021 Conference Papers in Art History] Látkép 09 – Kortárs elméletek [View from 09 – Contemporary theories] (Budapest: BTK MI, 2022) : 481–490.

The nomenclature employed for the present study encapsulates a clever utilization of linguistic devices, notably through the integration of homophonic elements within the titular construct. In the Hungarian language, the terms “nővész” (risk /“vész”/ of women /“nő”/) and “művész” (Artist – Art maker) resonate phonetically due to their analogous auditory manifestations, thereby establishing a semantic interplay that serves as the foundation of the study’s nomenclatural composition. Művészet (Art is also constructed on the base of Art with objectification). Moreover, the conjunction “et”, originating from both Latin and French etymological lineages, assumes a pivotal role by conjoining the thematic constituents, thereby engendering a cohesive amalgamation. The titular composition further embodies an intricate fusion by invoking the domain of “History of Art” and transmuting it into “Herstory”. This linguistic transformation is accomplished through the strategic appropriation of linguistic components, wherein the possessive pronouns “his” and “her” intertwine, subsequently culminating in the neologism “Herstory”. This neologism, as thus constructed, epitomizes the confluence of gendered narratives and historical contextualities, thereby insinuating a revisionist historiographical perspective. Consequently, the titular encapsulation not only alludes to the conventional “History of Art” but also ingeniously endeavors to embrace a more inclusive and gender-equitable paradigm through the reconfiguration of established linguistic and historiographical norms.

repetitive motif reminiscent of dance seems to be symptomatic.

Our contemporary perception is reflecting back at this time of repression, of male dominance in the daily life of such an institution. The drawings are made in a very expressive, probably realistic style, but it is really difficult to categorize them in any of the well-known boxes – while they are representing psychiatric art, nor naive, nor art brut, but a really spontaneous one. This particular form of repetition in empty space may be due to the spread of film in Western culture.

“Not all art comes from sorrow or pain, and suffering is not necessarily a cause of creativity. Art making is not inherently therapeutic or teeming with an inevitable healing function. In some cases, the process of creating things may increase one’s suffering, evoke painful memories, intensify mental illness, and reproduce trauma in harmful ways.”<sup>18</sup>

The exact focus of my research is the intersection between visual art and psychology, art and science, the inner and external world.

In Asian art repetition has an independent meaning since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

By way of an analogy, I would like to mention Suzuki Harunobu’s (1724–1770) engraving of a *Woman Leaping into the Void from the Balcony of Kiyomizu Temple* [*Beauté sautant dans le vide depuis le balcon du temple Kiyomizu*], 1765 (Image 4). We, the observers socialized in Western culture, think of it as a symbol of the hopeless lover. Gisèle Lambert, the curator of the exhibition at the Bibliothèque National de France in 2009 wrote:

Harunobu’s career was brief but very fruitful. In about ten years, from 1760 to 1770, he produced about 1,200 prints, 25 illustrated books and a few paintings. His work is one of the jewels of *ukiyo-e*, not only for its stylistic and technical contributions but also for the poetry that permeates his works and the subtlety of his inspiration. [...] He adopted the artist’s name “Shikojin”, which means “He who reflects the past”. His encounter with circles of poets, scholars, wealthy merchants and samurai, such as Kyosen, decided the direction of his art, which had begun under the influence of his predecessors, including Kiyomitsu. These circles of *amateurs* competed in mind games and sought significant prints, especially *egoyomi* (calendar prints) to exchange with each other.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Wojcik, *Outsider Art*, 36.

<sup>19</sup> Gisèle Lambert, “Image de calendrier. ‘Beauté sautant dans le vide depuis le balcon du temple Kiyomizu,’” <https://essentiels.bnf.fr/fr/image/cd7e6faa-d7c1-466f-8441-c9ad5c53e886-image-calendrier-1>, acc. March 27, 2023. Signed, on the right: “Suzuki Harunobu ga”; on the left: “Takahashi Rosen hori [engraved by]”; On the right, square seal of the commissioner, Kosen no shō; Stamp-calendar (*egoyomi*) carried out for the 2nd year of Meiwa (1765); Nishiki-e. Form chūban. 260 x 185 mm. Source: BnF, département des Estampes et de la Photographie, RESERVE DE-10, J. B. 187

The protagonist of the engraving illustrates a phenomenon supported in that society – here too the young woman is in a subordinate role, she is the initiator of the relationship, she is the one who seeks answers to the almost unasked questions of whether it is worth starting a love affair at all, whether it can continue.

In contrast to Antonia's above-view drawing, the Japanese engraving shows the subject from a slightly underside view, as the momentum of the fall causes the wind to catch under the woman's dress to counteract gravity. Of course, the analogy is flawed in that these drawings were made in a very different cultural context, at a very dissimilar time, with a very diverse purpose and in a very distinct environment by a male artist. The world of poetry, of utterances and observations in the setting of the Japanese engraving is richer than that of the institutionalized woman, who perhaps also presents a more unsettled, uneventful and, above all, hopeless life from the comfort of her own home.

The mundane young woman with a heart full of love courageously leaps into the void. Let's just imagine that she believes she has no more to lose than she has to gain. She hopes for a new, richer, more beautiful life, even if it is an otherworldly one. Antonia's drawing seems hopeless, with no prospects for either the earthly or the beyond. The viewer projects his/her own inner visions onto both graceful, airy, floating figures.

If Antonia's drawings are considered a manifestation of the inner world, it becomes intriguing to concurrently examine a later addition to the visual landscape of Western culture. The ukiyo-e calendar etching from the 18<sup>th</sup> century portrays a similar scene to Antonia's sketch but in a distinct medium, within a dissimilar culture, and with a particular intention. In both works, there is a thematic focus on nothingness, existing between realms, and hovering in an intermediate state (in this case, suspended between life and death). The possibility of drawing a comparison arises solely due to the interpretative framework, as it is highly unlikely that Antonia had encountered the works of the artist who predates her by a significant period. Therefore, we cannot speculate on whether the prints' creator influenced the author of the pieces under analysis. Despite this, there appears to be a mere formal resemblance, as the female figure maintains equilibrium of her parasol in a void. The viewer, disregarding the perils of the fatal descent, anxiously hopes for the protagonist's survival so that, in the subsequent moment, the delicate figure might be embraced by the cherry tree. This daring plunge into the abyss for the sake of love exemplifies the protagonist's audacious defiance of death and eventually leads to a positive resolution for the allegory.

Throughout my analysis of Antonia's drawings, I have endeavored to encapsulate the unique psychoanalytical, social, and aesthetic circumstances that permeate them. In doing so, I have also sought to represent the existence within nothingness, the vulnerability, and the reliance on fate and chance, which are deeply entrenched in the principles of Western cinema and culture. It is plausible that this particular approach, characterized by the observer's non-interventionist identification, elucidates the juxtaposition between the two works.





**Image 1.** Antonia, *Woman in Evening Dress (double-sided)*, sd, paper, graphite, 40,5 cm x 29 cm; Inv.: MTA\_PMGY\_96.9. Photo: Bence Tihanyi and Agnes Bakos





**Image 2.** Antonia, *Woman in Evening Dress with Long, Blonde Hair (double-sided)*, sd, 40,5 cm x 29 cm, graphite, paper, Inv.: MTA\_PMGY\_96.9. Photo: Bence Tihanyi and Ágnes Bakos





**Image 3.** Antonia, *Hair Crown*, 1960. XII. 19. 33x24 cm; coloured pencil, paper, Inv.: MTA\_PMGY\_96.5. Photo: Bence Tihanyi and Ágnes Bakos





**Image 4.** Suzuki Harunobu, *Woman Leaping into the Void from the Balcony of Kiyomizu Temple* [Beauté sautant dans le vide depuis le balcon du temple Kiyomizu], 1765. Estampe-calendrier (egoyomi) réalisée pour la 2e année de Meiwa (1765); Nishiki-e. Format chûban. 260 x 185 mm. Provenance: BnF, département des Estampes et de la Photographie, RESERVE DE-10, J. B. 187

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Article received: April 18, 2023

Article accepted: June 23, 2023

Original scholarly paper