



Annotated models of disciplinary essays

4. Annotated Creative Arts essay

The essay question

The third year Creative Arts essay was written in response to this question:

Discuss the contributions of feminism to contemporary arts, emphasising the work of two or three artists. List the terms used in feminist theory, and provide definitions in your discussions.

Essay outline

This outline forms the basis of the Creative Arts essay

Orientation

Role feminism has played in making women artists visible in art history

Thesis

Feminism's contribution to contemporary art is such that it helped to initiate modernism

Argument

Feminism and the notion of 'privileged vision': challenging male centred culture

Argument

Historical perspective: women's participation in the fine arts should be seen in a social and cultural context.

Argument

Under-representation of women artists may be due to the criteria by which art is judged (i.e. predominantly from a male perspective)

Argument

That art made by feminist women represented a cultural change: that is, the perspective of women was introduced (supporting information: contribution of the Guerilla Girls)

Argument

Artist Barbara Kruger: contributes to contemporary culture by commenting on aspects of our culture

Argument

Artist Judy Chicago: contribution to contemporary culture

Conclusion

Feminism has contributed to contemporary arts, in particular feminist artists Chicago and Kruger

Writer's reflection on changes achieved for women



1. Annotated History essay



2. Annotated Modern Languages essay



3. Annotated Philosophy essay



4. Annotated Creative Arts essay



5. Annotated Management essay



6. Annotated Engineering essay



7. Annotated Sociology essay

Learning objectives

This module will help you to:

- understand how a well written essay is structured
- understand what a well written essay in your discipline is
- use evidence to support and develop arguments
- incorporate references in an essay
- use academic language



Essay annotations

Annotations are provided in the right hand column. These annotations highlight significant features of the essay, such as structure and how evidence for the argument is built up and incorporated. The annotations in 'text boxes' comment on other features such as academic language and referencing conventions. For further information on these features see the relevant self-access module.

Student essay	Comments
<p>Feminism has contributed to all aspects of contemporary life. The perennial debates permeate our thinking consciously and unconsciously. Until the feminist art movement of the 1970's there had not been a voice articulating, or representative of, the female experience. Since feminist historians have begun to address the flagrant absence of women from art history, the arguments and analysis have provoked heated debate. A conundrum now facing women artists could be that now their work is unavoidably read primarily from a feminist perspective.</p>	<p><i>orientation to the topic and writer's reflection on issue</i></p> <div data-bbox="1257 562 1461 808" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>language of opinion and attitude: e.g. <i>flagrant, heated, conundrum.</i> However this language is still formal</p> </div>
<p>Feminist art has had important influences on contemporary art. The feminist historians Broude and Garrard suggest that feminist art and art history helped to initiate post modernism in America. Basic tenets of post modernism such as the understanding that gender is socially and not naturally constructed; the validation of non "high art" forms such as craft, video and performance art; the questioning of the cult of genius and greatness in Western art history; come from the breakthrough of feminism.¹ They argue that feminism challenged the given of the privileged male and forced a re-evaluation of a culture that viewed the world from a white, heterosexual, male perspective.</p>	<p><i>thesis feminism's contribution to contemporary art is such that it helped to initiate modernism; however, this thesis is mainly developed from the perspective of two art historians</i></p> <div data-bbox="1270 1167 1465 1335" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>ESSAY OUTLINE: a thesis outline to aid the reader could have been included here.</p> </div>
<p>Hal Foster, a contemporary social commentator, asks if this position can be shifted in a patriarchal order that privileges vision over the other senses, "for investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men."² Feminist theory has addressed this idea of privileged vision and the way women are represented and objectified in art. Some women artists refuse to represent women in their art as they consider that in our culture it can not be free from 'phallic prejudice.'³</p>	<p><i>argument: feminism has addressed the notion of 'privileged vision' (in context of challenging male centred culture)</i> <i>Supporting information (how)</i></p>
<p>Images and symbols for the women cannot be isolated from images and symbols of the women ... it is representation, the representation of feminine sexuality whether repressed or not, which conditions how it comes into play.⁴</p>	
<p>1 Broude, N. Garrard, M. ed. <i>The Power of Feminist Art</i>, Harr N. Abrams Inc., N.Y. 1994, 11 2 Foster H. ed. <i>Post Modern Culture</i>, Bay Press, London, 1983, 70 3 Ibid., 72 4 Ibid., 71</p>	

Kruger has not only made significant contributions to contemporary art as an artist, but she has also contributed as a writer. Her book *Remote Control* is a collection of essays on contemporary life. A reviewer of Kruger's book described it as, "A feast of insight into gender, sex and contemporary culture, staged as sneak attacks filled with devastating grace, acuity and wit." Kruger asks, *who speaks? who is silent? who is seen? who is absent?* the answers being a commentary on how cultures are constructed through pictures and words.¹⁹

argument: Kruger's feminist perspective is evident in contemporary art both visually and in her writings

Kruger's artwork has contributed and impacted on the contemporary art world. An essay commenting on Kruger's work describes her as an artist with something urgent to say, an artist who speaks directly and powerfully about the complexity of contemporary life. The essayist, a university lecturer in America, says that Kruger has realised the importance of being earnest in an age of "anything goes". He considers that for his students, this straightforward approach is appreciated in the wake of Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, John Cages' chance operations, and Brian Eno's oblique strategies.²⁰ Kruger is an accessible and coherent artist in a world that is complex and where art is frequently incomprehensible.

evaluation of Kruger's contribution to and impact on art world

transitional phrase

Another prominent feminist artist is Judy Chicago, born in 1939, who began studying art from an early age. In her autobiography, she recollects the attitude of male students and teachers in her art classes at university to their female peers. Only the men were expected to have professional opportunities as artists; and her fellow students were antagonistic towards her aspirations to be a serious artist. The two female staff were disregarded by their colleagues and the students.²¹ After some of her paintings, which had references to phalluses, vaginas, wombs and other body parts, were rejected and reviled by her instructors, Chicago abandoned painting. One instructor had reacted to her work by saying, "*lcc-ch, that looks like a womb.*"²²

argument: artist Judy Chicago was discouraged as a female artist in a male domain

In 1966 Chicago had had a one woman show and been in several group and museum shows. She had begun to recognise that her work was contrived to align herself with her male contemporaries, as she felt she would be rejected if she allowed herself to allow her femaleness to pervade her work. Eventually this façade began to crack and elements began to appear in her work that unwittingly betrayed her femininity.²³ Chicago also found support in the early feminist texts which reflected her own struggles and addressed her personal endeavours as a woman artist.

background information: Chicago came to recognise the importance of her femininity and feminism to her work

The art work that has assured her a place in feminist art history, if not in general text, is her quintessential installation,

*discussion of Chicago's major work: **The***

19 <http://www.mitpress.mit.edu/mitp/recent-books/art/remote.html>.

20 Kevin J. H. Dettmar <http://bion.mit.edu/ejournals/b/n-z/PMCC/5/review-5.994>.

21 Chicago, J. *Through the Flower*, Doubleday and Co. Inc. N.Y., 1973, 35.

22 *Ibid.*, 37.

23 *Ibid.*, 40.

The Dinner Party, a history of women in western civilisation. The process towards this work began in 1972 when Chicago began studying the technique of China painting, intending to extend a series of paintings entitled *Great Ladies* into one hundred abstract portraits on plates, each paying tribute to a different historic female figures. Since plates are associated with eating, Chicago wanted to use images of women on plates, the allegory being of women swallowed up by history. China painting on household objects also seemed to be an apt analogy to describe women's domesticated circumstances.²⁴

By 1974 the concept for **The Dinner Party** was beginning to evolve as a reinterpretation of *The Last Supper* from the point of view of women who throughout history had prepared the meals and set the table. Thirteen men were present at the last supper; there were also thirteen members in a witches coven. Chicago saw these negative and positive connotations as appropriate for the duality of women's achievements and their oppression.²⁵

The original plan was thirteen plate settings with the name of each woman embroidered on the tablecloth with a phrase indicating her achievements. The number was soon realised to be inadequate to represent the various stages of Western civilisation. An equilateral triangular table was devised to symbolise a goal of feminism, that of an equal world, with thirty nine place settings. The components of the settings would include embroidered runners, sculpted and painted ceramic plates, flatware and chalices, napkins and cloth. The table was to stand on a floor inscribed with the names of other women of achievement. The women inscribed on the plates were to be seen to have emerged from the foundations laid by those inscribed on the floor.²⁶

Nine hundred and ninety nine women's names were to be inscribed on the floor. The criteria used in selecting the women were:

1. Did the women make a significant contribution to society?
2. Did she attempt to improve conditions for women?
3. Did her life illuminate an aspect of women's experience or provide a model for the future?²⁷

The intention was to symbolise women's history: barriers such as language, fragmented information, limited research skills and personal biases precluded it from being anything more comprehensive.

The project quickly expanded from a modest concept of celebration of women in history to something that took five years to achieve and the commitment of many skilled ceramicists and embroiderers, and researchers. By the time of its completion, some four hundred people had been

²⁴ Chicago, J., *The Dinner Party*, Anchor Press, N. Y. 1979, 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

Dinner Party

influence of China painting and household objects

parallels between The Dinner Party and The Last Supper

description of The Dinner Party

description of The Dinner Party

