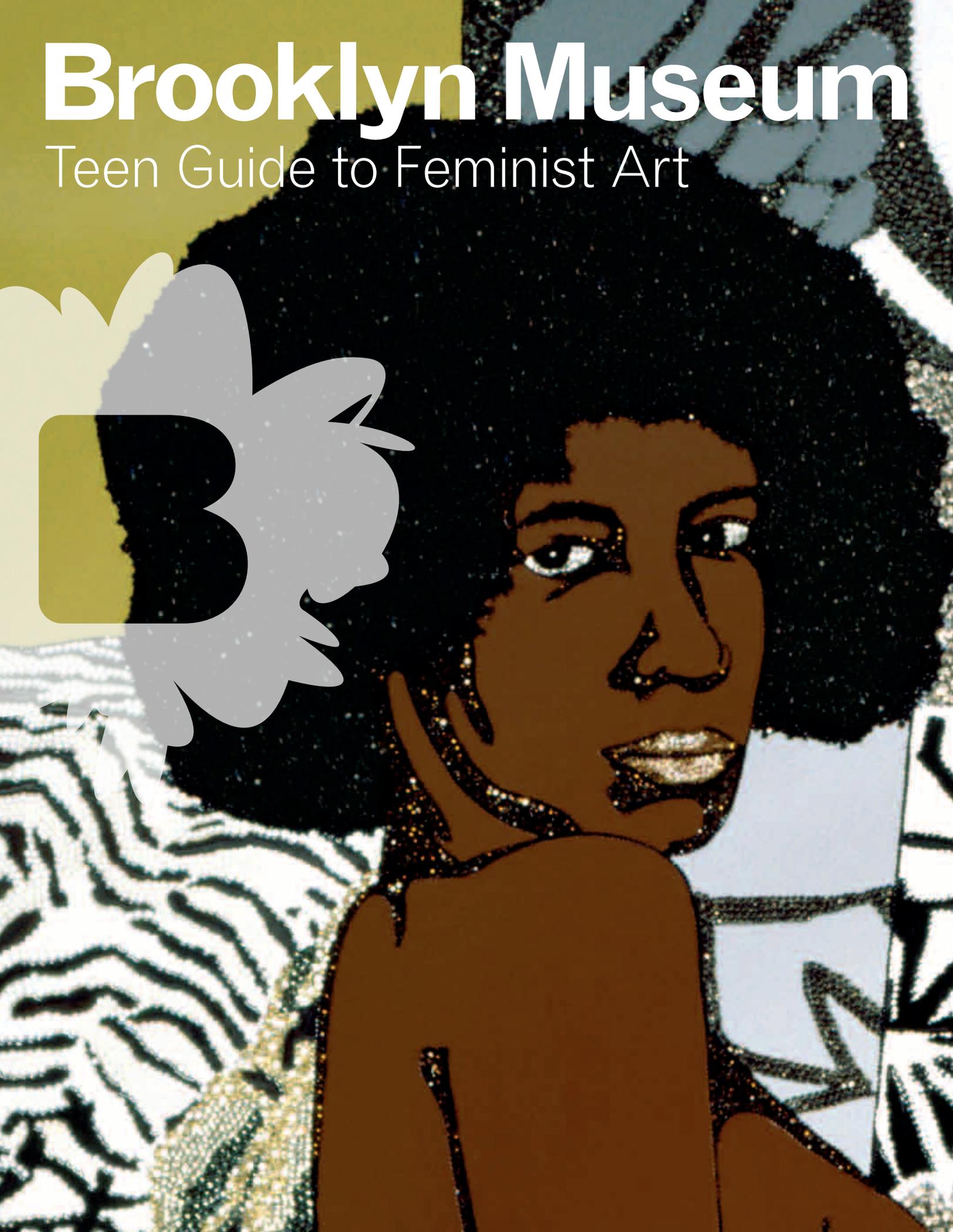


Brooklyn Museum

Teen Guide to Feminist Art



About this guide

Feminism is awesome! Use this guide written by teens, for teens, to help you understand more about feminist art. You can enjoy the guide on your own or with a friend.

This guide includes information and questions to help you:

- Define feminism, feminist art, and feminist art history
- Look at art through the lens of feminist art history
- Consider what you and your peers think about feminism and feminist art

The Brooklyn Museum is known for its important collections of various types of art. This guide highlights artworks created by women or artists whose work connects to feminist topics.

This guide was written by teens in the Sackler Center Teen Leaders Program. We hope it helps you gain a better understanding of how to look at artworks from a feminist perspective.



Above: Sackler Center Teen Leaders. Photo by Ryan Rosa

Cover: Mickalene Thomas (American, born 1971). *A Little Taste Outside of Love* (detail), 2007. Acrylic, enamel, and rhinestones on wood panel, 108 x 144 in. (274.3 x 365.8 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Giulia Borghese and Designated Purchase Fund, 2008.7a–c

What is feminism?

Feminism supports women's empowerment and equality and aims to equalize women in society. Feminism is a response to sexism. Sexism is prejudice toward a certain sex.

Who is a feminist?

A feminist is a person who fights for the eradication of damaging sex- and gender-related stereotypes. Feminists also address problems relating to age, race, and class that contribute to the struggles of women.

What is feminist art?

Feminist art highlights women's issues and advocates for women's rights and points of view. Since there are different interpretations of feminism, multiple points of view are presented by feminist artists. You will see these various viewpoints expressed by feminist artists in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art and the adjacent contemporary galleries. A feminist perspective can be applied to any artwork to explore its relation to sex and gender identity, so this guide also looks at works from other collections and earlier time periods.

The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art

The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art is an exhibition space and education facility within the Brooklyn Museum dedicated to feminist art—its past, present, and future. The feminist art movement began in the 1960s, and artists continue to create artworks with feminist themes. The Center's mission is to raise awareness of feminism's cultural contributions, to educate new generations about the meaning of feminist art, to maintain a dynamic and welcoming learning facility, and to present feminism in an approachable and relevant way.

Fertility Figurines

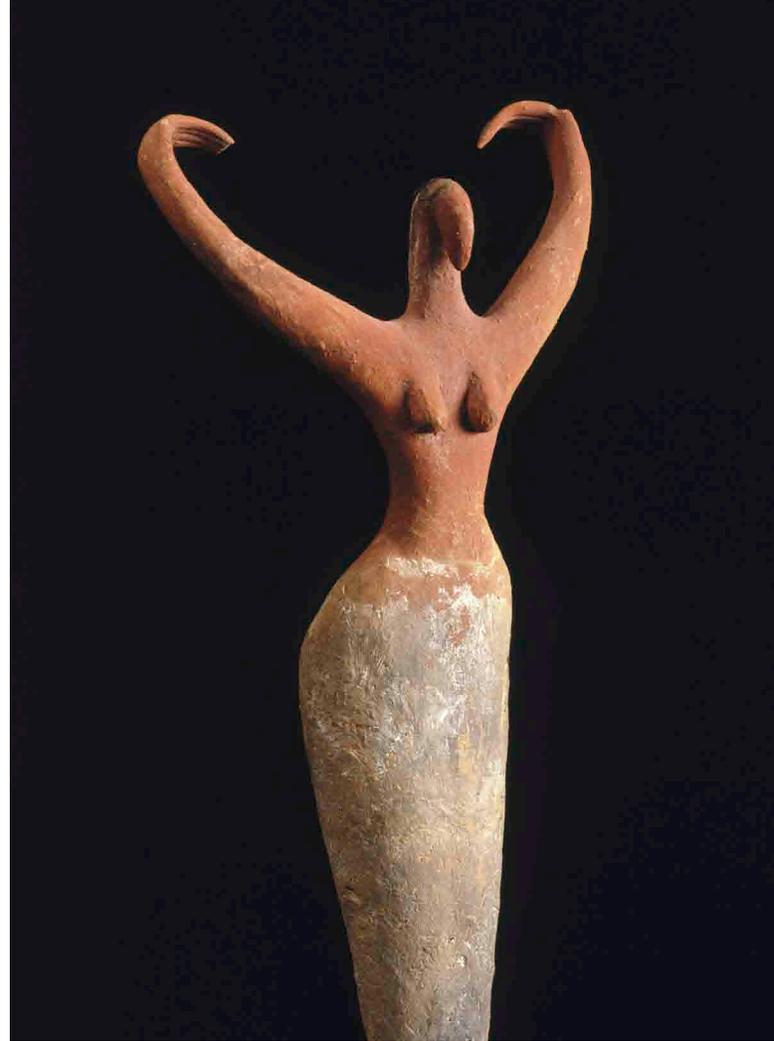
Location: Egyptian Galleries, 3rd Floor

Many of these figurines dating back to ancient times have been found around ancient homes, temples, and burial places. Their abundance in the ancient world suggests that in many cultures women were highly regarded or that societies were matriarchal and led by women.

LOOK CLOSELY: What do you notice about these figurines?

Their exaggeratedly wide hips and buttocks and their sometimes large breasts and rounded torsos indicate the significance of fertility in ancient civilizations. Goddess figurines are appreciated by feminists because they are artworks that elevate and idolize women.

REFLECT: What objects do we use in contemporary society to honor the importance of women?



Blood From A Stone **by Kate Gilmore**

Location: Contemporary Art Galleries, 4th Floor

LOOK CLOSELY: What is the artist doing in the video?

The artwork on the wall is a reinstallation of the artwork you see in the video. In the video, the artist is lifting 75-pound plaster cubes onto shelves lined with white paint.

LOOK AGAIN: What is the artist wearing? Why do you think she is wearing those clothes?

Kate Gilmore is a feminist artist who sets up challenges for herself and then performs them. By putting herself in risky situations, she shows that gender roles are limiting constructs and demonstrates that women possess physical and mental strength comparable to men. Her work is experimental, and she does not always succeed. This artwork represents the strength and resilience of women, because Gilmore completes the challenge without help. The blocks of plaster signify the hardship and obstacles that women often face; her successful arrangement of the cubes on the shelves is indicative of her power and ability as a woman.

REFLECT: What emotions arise when you look at the video? Have you ever challenged yourself simply to prove a point?



The Dinner Party **by Judy Chicago**

Location: Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, 4th Floor

Created over the course of four years, from 1974 to 1979, *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago pays homage to women in history, celebrating their achievements and contributions to Western culture.

LOOK CLOSELY: What do you notice about each place setting on the dinner table?

Each place setting honors a specific woman and contains a plate, runner or placemat, eating utensils, and a chalice. Symbols on the plate and runner allude to details from each woman's life and the time period in which she lived. Each plate includes a reference to the female body. Most notably, there's a vulva motif, which may also evoke flowers or butterflies. These symbols celebrate women's sexuality, growth, and freedom.

LOOK AGAIN: Can you find the place setting honoring the Fertile Goddess?

Judy Chicago created her own goddess figurines and sewed them into the runner of the place setting.

REFLECT: Why do you think Judy Chicago felt it was necessary to create an artwork like this? Do you agree? Why or why not? If she were to create this piece today, would its themes still be relevant?



A Little Taste Outside of Love **by Mickalene Thomas**

Location: Contemporary Galleries, 4th Floor

LOOK CLOSELY: Have you seen paintings with a woman posed like this before?

Mickalene Thomas's artwork is a twist on eighteenth-century European paintings featuring Caucasian female nudes. Posed to look seductive and to represent an ideal form of beauty, these paintings were intended for the pleasure of the male viewer. Thomas depicts a sexy and empowered woman of color. As a woman who identifies as a lesbian, Thomas offers the possibility that female nudes can be pleasurable to women as well as men.

REFLECT: When female artists paint female nudes, is the message different from when male artists paint female nudes? What changes when the sex of the artist changes?



Feminism!

What do you think?

SHEREESE: Feminism is the belief that women are equal to men and also that both men and women should be treated the same and have the same rights.

ALICIA: I don't think people should be threatened by feminism. Everybody, even males, can agree that we have all met at least one woman in our lives who would benefit from feminism. Women are everywhere, and they deserve social justice and equality, which everybody could benefit from.

MANNY: Feminism gives equal rights to both men and women, from diverse backgrounds. I believe that a woman has the same rights as a man, acknowledging that we are all different yet again humans, with the same capabilities to be successful in life.

TESSA: Feminism is the belief that women should have equal treatment or rights as men. Feminism is usually thought to be exclusive to women, but men can advocate this belief also. Feminism is a movement that continues to this day.

ANGELICA: It is not just about empowering women, it's about promoting equality and social responsibility, period. It's not only about women, it's about addressing issues prevalent in society, whether it is sexism, racism, classism, or any form of discrimination.

MAVIS: Feminism is the advocacy for equality and rights for women. Moreover, feminists fight for the rights of all people, pursue fairness, and raise social awareness.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF OR DISCUSS WITH A FRIEND:

- **Why should someone be a feminist?**
- **Can men be feminists? Why or why not?**
- **Is there a difference between art made by men and by women?**
- **Why is it important for artists to address equal rights?**
- **Why is feminist art significant?**

Want to know more?

Visit <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa>.

Acknowledgments

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Teen Writers: Mavis Corrigan, Tessa Lee-Thomas, Manuel Leyva, Angelica Modabber, Alicia Prieto, and Shereese Trumpet

Teen Programs Coordinator: Cheri Ehrlich

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We'd like to know what you think about our guide. Please tell us your thoughts at teen.programs@brooklynmuseum.org.

Brooklyn Museum

200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11238-6052
www.brooklynmuseum.org