

# SCANDINAVIAN PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN OF / IN ART MUSEUMS

Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo

22 May 2026

The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, and the research project The Feminist Legacy in Art Museums (FLAME) are pleased to invite all to a research symposium. In recent decades, art museums have gradually increased their focus on gender, equality, and diversity in collection management, curation, and research. But how do art museums approach the legacy of feminism and deal with their Scandinavian self-image as gender-equal and inclusive? Have we truly moved beyond the masculine genius, or are we simply replacing him with female “pioneers”? What about decolonization, indigeneity, and diversity? How might museums challenge old national and gendered hierarchies that separate art and (art)craft, aesthetics, and cultural history?

The symposium will take place in the auditorium at Nasjonalmuseet. Fee of 200 NOK.

The symposium will be streamed free of charge. Details to be announced on Nasjonalmuseet’s website.

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10.00-10.20	<b>Registration/coffee &amp; tea</b>
10.20-10.25	Welcome: Nora Ceciliedatter Nerdrum Head of Collections, Nasjonalmuseet
10.25-10.40	Short introduction to the symposium: Ulla Angkjær-Jørgensen, Head of the Feminist Legacy in Art Museums (FLAME), Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

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## Reclaiming space 1

Moderator: Ulla Angkjær Jørgensen

10.45-11.15	Keynote Speaker 1: <b>Women of the Rijksmuseum: A Dutch Museum Practice Towards Gender Equity</b> Marion Anker, Chair of ‘Women of the Rijksmuseum’, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
11.15-11.25	Discussion

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## Session 1. Archival challenges in researching women’s art

Moderator: Pernille Zidore Nygaard

11.30-12.30	15-minutes papers <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Where are the Women in the History of Architecture?</b> Birgitte Sauge, Senior Curator, Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo</li><li>• <b>Textiles, activism, and art institutions</b> Sigrun Åsebø, Associate Professor, University of Bergen/ The Feminist Legacy in Art Museums (FLAME)</li><li>• <b>Breakable Plasters and Burnt Letters. To map, collect, and visualize works by women sculptors</b> Linda Hinnert, PhD, Curator, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm</li></ul>
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- **Beyond ‘The female Christ.’ Challenges of doing a monographic presentation of Lene Adler Petersen**  
Birgitte Anderberg, Curator and Senior Researcher, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

12.30-12.40 Discussion

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12.45-13.45 **Lunch**

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13.45-14.30 Group visits to the exhibition *Wenche Selmer. What can you live without?* at Nasjonalmuseet

## Session 2. Decolonizing the museum

**Moderator: Jorunn Veiteberg**

14.30- 15.30 15-minute papers

- **At work in the archive: Potentials for something else**  
Pernille Zidore Nygård, PhD, research archivist, Den Frie Udstillingsbygning, Copenhagen / The Feminist Legacy in Art Museums (FLAME)
- **Women, feminism, gender theory and intersectionality – a journey back and forth**  
Maria Lind, Director, KIN museum för samtidskonst / Kin Dáládáidaga Dávvirvuorká / Nykyaajantaitemyseymmi, Kiruna / Giron
- **Archival Intimacies and Sapphic Fictions: Curating Female Homosexuality in Islamic Art History**  
Noor Bangu, Independent curator
- **Plants as Protagonists - Ecofeminist and Decolonial Perspectives on Danish Painting around 1900**  
Gry Hedin, PhD, Project Researcher, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

14.45-15.00 Discussion

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15.30-15.45 **Coffee/tea**

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## Reclaiming space 2

**Moderator: Sigrun Åsebø**

15.45-16.15 Keynote Speaker 2, online from Cologne:  
**Decentering the Museum for a Post-migrant Society**  
Nina Möntmann, Professor of Art Theory, University of Cologne

16.15-16.45 Discussion and closing remarks

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17.00 End of symposium and social gathering

## ABSTRACTS

### Keynotes: Reclaiming Space

#### **Women of the Rijksmuseum: A Dutch Museum Practice Towards Gender Equity**

**Marion Anker**, Chair of 'Women of the Rijksmuseum', Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

How can the Rijksmuseum – the national museum of the Netherlands – sustainably embed women in art and history? This question lies at the heart of the interdisciplinary research project *Women of the Rijksmuseum*. Over the past 5 years, the team has conducted in-depth research on women makers, women in history, and women in institutional history, and translated their findings into museum practices such as object labels, acquisitions, educational materials, and exhibitions. In this talk, chair Marion Anker outlines the work and methods of the *Women of the Rijksmuseum* project and considers future pathways to sustainably embed gender perspectives within the museum.

#### **Decentring the Museum for a Post-migrant Society**

**Nina Möntmann**, Professor of Art Theory, University of Cologne

To counteract their dwindling relevance in a post-migrant society, an increasing number of museums of modern and contemporary art are seeking ways to decenter their collections, strategies, and infrastructures. In doing so, they can benefit from engaging with the discourses sparked by restitution processes in anthropological museums, as well as from the working methods of small art spaces. In this talk, I will introduce concepts and practices of decentring and how they can be applied in a museum context. I will examine institutional examples that address the intertwining of colonial histories with post-migrant social realities.

## **Session 1: Archival challenges in researching women's art**

### **Where are the Women in the History of Architecture?**

**Birgitte Sauge**, Senior Curator, Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo

Why don't women architects have a more significant place in archives and museum collections? Why are they not included in narratives about the history of architecture? Based on the situation in Norway during the 1900s, Dr. Birgitte Sauge presents some of the reasons and what is being done to raise their profile. Sauge was the curator of the exhibition *Stamina. Kari Nissen Brodtkorb and four predecessors*, the Nationalmuseum, Oslo, Norway, May – October 2025.

### **Textiles, activism, and art institutions**

**Sigrun Åsebø**, Associate Professor, University of Bergen/ The Feminist Legacy in Art Museums (FLAME)

Avant-garde practices and feminism brought fiber, soft materials, and everyday objects to the fore in 1970s art. This paper focuses on the activism of Norwegian textile artists and their quest for textiles to be recognized among the fine arts and included in the art museums. Through boycotts of official art exhibitions, writing relentless letters to the Nasjonalgalleriet, Riksutstillingen, and the Ministry of Culture, the artists made an impact on institutions and concepts of art. How should we understand their strategies? In what ways did they relate to feminism? And what is their legacy in today's art museum?

### **Breakable Plasters and Burnt Letters**

#### **To map, collect, and visualize works by women sculptors**

**Linda Hinners**, PhD, Curator, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

In the late 19th century, several Nordic women trained as sculptors. They went on to work as professional sculptors in their home countries and abroad, within an international art market. During the 20th century, these women sculptors were more or less forgotten, and they were largely absent in art historical overviews of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, recent years have seen several important studies in the field. From 2018 to 2022, the Nationalmuseum conducted a project to bring Nordic women sculptors back into the spotlight. Since their works were missing in the national collections, it was often necessary to resort to unconventional methods, such as advertising on Facebook and searching for lost letters in private archives and broken plaster sculptures in remote barns in the countryside.

### **Beyond The Female Christ.**

#### **Challenges of doing a monographic presentation of Lene Adler Petersen**

**Birgitte Anderberg**, Curator and Senior Researcher, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

Feminist art theory has pointed to the fact that the absence of serious critical monographs on women artists is part of the invisible ceiling, which limits the view of a larger diversity in the art historical canon. But can the 'masculinized monograph', which often tends towards hagiography, be reworked in a productive way from a feminist perspective if the biographic model and chronological structure are kept intact? How we tell and what we choose to talk about are fundamental questions as feminist art historians. In the talk, I will reflect on how to challenge the main narrative of the archive. To the public, Lene Adler Petersen became known in 1969 for walking stark naked, carrying a crucifix through the Copenhagen Stock Exchange as The Female Christ. The image representing the event is striking in its beauty and has become a protofeminist icon of the Danish avant-garde. But how do we get to see the woman artist beyond The Female Christ?

## Session 2: Decolonizing the museum

### **At work in the archive: Potentials for something else**

**Pernille Zidore Nygaard**, PhD, research archivist, Den Frie, Cph/DK/The Feminist Legacy in Art Museums (FLAME)

If Art History and its institutions are reactionary at their core, what is an art historian to do?

The paper will present examples of recent archival work that carefully reworks normative art history through small but decisive shifts in common ways of reading for relevance. With an emphasis on praxis, the presentation proposes different paths through the archives, furthering the notion that there are (and were) ways of imagining different trajectories, from both the past and the present.

### **Women, feminism, gender theories and intersectionality – a journey of back and forth**

**Maria Lind**, Director, KIN museum för samtidskonst / Kin Dáládáidaga Dávvirvuorká / Nykyaijantaitemyseymmi, Kiruna / Giron

Maria Lind has worked across art institutions and borders. She has served as a counselor of culture at the Swedish Embassy in Russia and as a director and curator in Manifesta 2 and biennials in Vienna, Timisoara, and Gwangju. Her career also includes teaching and managing study programs in curating and artistic research, as well as being the director of art institutions and authoring several books. Taking her own professional trajectory as a starting point, this paper reflects on the various approaches to women, gender, and art during the past 40 years.

### **Archival Intimacies and Sapphic Fictions:**

#### **Curating Female Homosexuality in Islamic Art History**

**Noor Banghu**, Independent curator

This paper reflects on *Deviant Ornaments* (Nasjonalmuseet, 2025-26), a curatorial project spanning diverse geographies and temporalities in Islamic art history, as a site of inquiry into archives of sexuality. While evidence of same-sex desire between women is largely absent from these archives, histories of cross-cultural translation and exchange open unexpected queer possibilities within the record. Drawing on the work of contemporary artists Kasra Jalilipour and Rah Eleh, this paper examines how practices of counter-archival speculation and erotic abundance contest the hetero-archival logics that have structured Islamic art historiography, proposing desire itself as a curatorial method to visualize female homosexuality as evidence without a record.

### **Plants as Protagonists - Ecofeminist and Decolonial Perspectives on Danish Painting around 1900**

**Gry Hedin**, PhD, Project Researcher, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

My presentation explores how ecofeminism can open new ways of understanding houseplants as motifs in visual art. Feminist thinkers such as Silvia Federici, Vandana Shiva, and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa have highlighted how climate and biodiversity crises are linked to a worldview that prioritizes resource extraction over life itself. Inspired by this, I analyze how Anna Ancher, Anna Syberg, and Alhed Larsen depict houseplants. Drawing on the exhibition *Plant Fever* at the Hirschsprung Collection, I discuss how these artists portray plants as living beings in a colonized world, and how contemporary art can open these perspectives.