Women Equal Share Presence in the Arts and Creative Industries
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The current exhibition with a meaningful title announces and at the same time welcomes a new era of women’s creativity. This is also the ambition of the European project Wom@rts.

Ten partners selected 32 female artists to participate in three art residencies. In autumn 2018, the artists have been active in the context of lens-based media in Avilés, in the media of comics and illustration in Grand Angoulême, and in the field of printmaking in Limerick. The task was complex. Firstly, the artists exchanged a wide range of experiences and views, arising from different cultural backgrounds as well as belonging to different generations and to various artistic orientations. The prior reading of Simone de Beauvoir’s work The Second Sex provided an immeasurable spring for reflection. In this extensive work that celebrates the 70\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of its release, the ‘grandmother of feminism’ wondered what is a woman and why her position throughout history have the role of the other sex, and to this end she explored many areas, from biology to myth.

As, unfortunately, the situation of women has not improved since then, the problem remains a topical issue. It is of utmost importance that this interlacement of ideas does not end with the residencies, but that it expands, strengthens, and spreads the message and awareness of the necessity of equal representation of both sexes in society to the general public, through the rich programme of the entire Wom@rts project. The newly born community of 32 female artists plays an important role in this context.

The next task of the residencies was a different one. The artists tackled the issue
through their own artistic creativity and created over 50 works of art. In general each made two works in the fields of printmaking, comics, and illustration, and one work in lens-based media, which we compiled into an exhibition.

In 2019, the first exhibition was conceived at the Maribor Art Gallery, Maribor (Slovenia). Until 2021, the exhibition will be hosted by the partners of the project in various European cities and will therefore be on display to the general public in Vilnius (Lithuania), Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Avilés (Spain), Grand Angoulême (France), Rijeka (Croatia), and Limerick (Ireland). While each exhibition presents an individual appeal by every artist, it is equally important that these works knitted with each other through dialogues, comparisons, constellations. Therefore, each exhibition is also a new opportunity to weave new connections and highlight different contents that will invite visitors to contextualise their experiences and find their own place next to them.

Remarkably, these artists, being aware of the significance of Simone de Beauvoir, derived primarily from their own experiences. Thus, we have received more than 50 stories reflecting on what it means to be a woman, especially a female artist, in today’s context. We are confronted with various appeals, intimate, even painful ones, all the way to social criticism, and humour. The narratives are always complex, so here we can only highlight some common foundations. It is interesting that several female artists compared their situation with their ancestors, either through an intimate connection, for example, with their grandmothers who, despite trying, had very limited possibilities to create; or through the prism of today’s known and dominant mythical characters, who almost all subordinate women to men; or through the fragments of general or intimate history, which manifest the deprivation and restriction of women and girls. All aspects indirectly speak of the double erasure from history, not only of the prohibition on expression, but also of the lacking recognition of meaning and, consequently, the erasure of the female experience, the loss of the other half of civilisation, the other half of creativity and power.
Therefore, it is all the more important for female artists to raise awareness and along with it introduce steps towards progression: the need for new perspectives, interpretations, understanding, recognition of points where the power of a woman is not yet lost or needs to be re-discovered in the present.

These female artists present various aspects of movements. A new female comic character who is able to realise her inner strength speaks about a new feeling; an experimental technological solution evenly burdens and relieves both genders in the field of reproduction; or a small linguistic change that addresses both genders equally. The ‘solution’ also lies in self-realisation, often expressed through performance, a subversive action in public space that traditionally pertained to men, or even through experiment. The artists also put much emphasis on the awareness of the presence, the acceptance here, now, of themselves, offering different reflections, sometimes conceived through intellectual exchange of views, at other times through visual representation, or through an intimate poetic approach.

All in all, we are witnessing 32 stories, which represent a metaphor of the sheer diversity of the women’s community. 32 experiences of being a woman focus primarily on the necessity of avoiding the preconceived interpretations of what a woman is and what is her role. These female artists urge us to accept responsibility and take our destiny into our own hands. They encourage us to wonder about where we want to be, that we put forth our vision, alternatives, and changes.

The exhibition, an important part of the Wom@rts project, in a creative way offers these artists more visibility, gives them a louder voice, and at the same time helps the whole civilisation to understand its half in each of us.

For this opportunity, I sincerely thank all the project partners, and especially all the 32 female artists for their trust and cooperation, for a wonderful sense of connection, and for the exchange of values that have enormously enriched also my experience of being a woman.
Residencia de Arte Digital
Lens-Based & Media Art Residency

Factoría Cultural de Avilés. Fundación Municipal de Cultura.
Ayuntamiento de Avilés. España
10.09.2018 - 16.09.2018
Ana Pečar, Cristina Busto, Hanne Larsen, Lorraine Neeson, María Castellanos, Marija Stonytė, Martta Tuomaala, Mery Pais, Petra Mrša, Shelagh Honan, Stéphanie Cadoret, Teresa Búa
Hanne Larsen
Video Portraits
33'6" (22 retratos)

Video Portraits
33 min 06 sec (22 portraits)
I decided to make a video inspired by my photography background. Instead of photographing portraits I made short videos as prolonged portraits. I filmed women from the same angle for 90 seconds with the same instruction to gaze into the camera. The participants of different ages and backgrounds joined the project through various channels in Spain, Finland and Norway. The shooting places were picked with the intention of filming in real natural environments.

I was inspired by the historical portrayal of women with close bond to nature as something fearful or dark. “The witch” has spurred prejudice and persecution for hundreds of years. I believe that this discrimination is still alive today and needs to be tackled with. I decided to explore the topic by making video portraits of women in nature. By having a neutral and experimental approach to the topic, I filmed the women with as little instruction as possible. Nature itself can be a place for self reflection, a place to rejuvenate and gain strength. A muted video portrait can tell a lot with just a gaze – it speaks volumes. I believe that fighting gender inequality today starts with each individual woman and their relationship with womanhood. In order to gain equality we need to look into the mirror, see each other, come together and discuss our experiences. I hope that my work will create a sense of connection between women. Let us stand together, support each other and distance ourselves from the culture that is troubled by division.
Martta Tuomaala
**Under Pressure**
19' 10", audio

Con la colaboración de Sepideh Rahaa.


Financiado por AVEK (The Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture), Programa Europa Creativa, Nordic Culture Point and Arts Promotion Centre Finland.
Under Pressure
19 min 10 sec, sound
In collaboration with Sepideh Rahaa.
Funded by AVEK (The Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture), Creative Europe Programme, Nordic Culture Point and Arts Promotion Centre Finland.
What does it take to be a feminist today? “Under Pressure” deals with intersectionality and the complexity of privileges and power relations. In the artwork, statistical facts about discrimination against women in Finland are intertwined with metaphorical and fictional storytelling based on real life situations.
Sin título
Técnica mixta sobre papel
100 x 35,5 cm

Untitled
Mixed technique on paper
100 x 35,5 cm
Proyecto / Project

El proyecto ha sido promovido por las siguientes redes de instituciones:

This project was developed by the following network of institutions:

- Ayuntamiento de Santiago de Compostela - Auditorio de Galicia (ES)
- WIFT (Women in Film and Television/Mujeres en el cine y en la televisión), Red Escandinava (FI)
- Viesoja istaiga Vilniaus rotuse – Ayuntamiento de Vilnius (LT)
- Centre audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir (FR)
- Communauté d'Agglomération du Grand Angoulême (FR)
- Limerick Institute of Technology - Limerick School of Arts & Design (IR)
- Hay Festival of Literature and the Arts Ltd. (UK)
- Academy of Applied Arts in Rijeka (HR)
- UGM Maribor (SI)
- Ayuntamiento de Avilés - Fundación Municipal de Cultura-Avilés (ES)

Se han llevado a cabo tres residencias artísticas en: Factoría Cultural de Avilés, Grand Angoulême, Limerick

Artist residencies have been hosted in: Factoría Cultural de Avilés, Grand Angoulême, Limerick

El proyecto europeo Wom@rts, cofinanciado por la Comisión Europea a través de su programa "Creative Europe Programme".

Wom@rts is a project co-funded by the Created Europe Programme of the European Union.

Exposición / Exhibition

Artistas / Artists:


Comisaria / Curator:

Breda Kolar Sluga

Exposición en Avilés: Julio / Agosto 2020

Wom@rts roaming exhibition dates in Avilés: July / August 2020
Catálogo / Catalogue

Edita / Publishers:
Fundación Municipal de Cultura de Avilés

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