FOLK NETWORKS, CYBERFEMINISM, AND INFORMATION ACTIVISM IN THE ART+FEMINISM WIKIPEDIA EDIT-A-THON SERIES

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores how the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon event impacts the people who coordinate and participate in it. I review museum catalogs to determine institutional representation of women artists, and then examine the Edit-a-thon as a vernacular event on two levels: national and local. The founders have a shared vision of combating perceived barriers to participation in editing Wikipedia, but their larger goal is to address the biases in Wikipedia's content. My interviews with organizers of the local Eugene, Oregon, edit-a-thon revealed that the network connections possible via the Internet platform of the event did not supersede the importance of face-to-face interaction and vernacular expression during the editing process. The results of my fieldwork found a clear ideological connection to the national event through the more localized satellite edit-a-thons. Both events pursue the consciousness-raising goal of information activism and the construction of a community that advocates for women's visibility online.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ADDRESSING AN OLD PROBLEM

"The question 'Why have there been no great women artists?' has led us to the conclusion, so far, that art is not free, autonomous activity of a super-endowed individual, 'influenced' by previous artists, and, more vaguely and superficially, by 'social forces,' but rather, that the total situation of art making, both in terms of the development of the art maker and in the nature and quality of the work of art itself, occur in a social situation, are integral elements of this social structure, and are mediated and determined by specific and definable social institutions, be they academies, systems of patronage, mythologies of the divine creator, artist as he-man or social outcast."

–Linda Nochlin, "Why have there been no great women artists?" (1971)

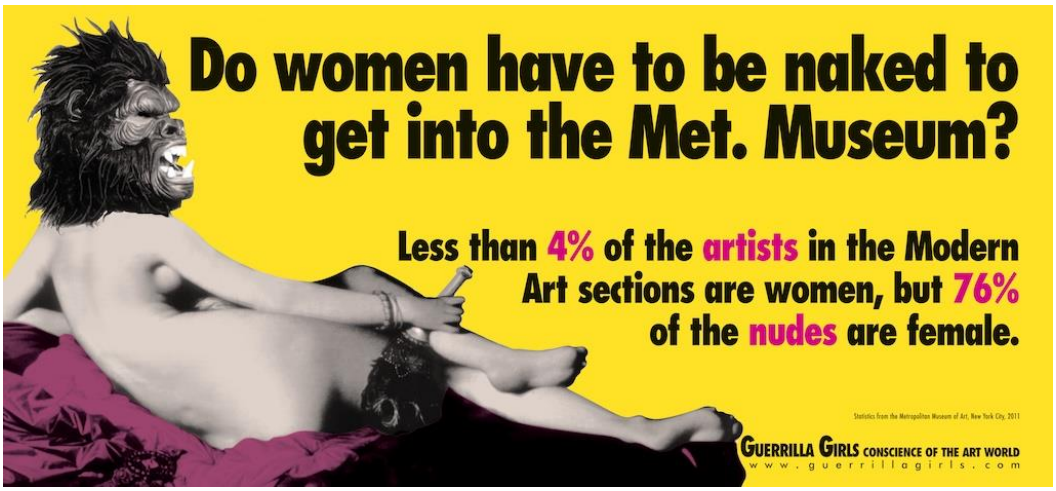


Figure 1 / The Guerrilla Girls, counting women artists at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012.

Can you name five women artists? Off the top of your head, no Googling or asking a friend. Put that smartphone away, please. No cheating. Take a minute. It is okay if their names do not fly to the forefront of your mind immediately. If you can name five women artists, go ahead and do something for me. Bring that phone back out and tweet, Instagram, or post to Facebook (or whatever social media company is trending right now) their names using the hashtag #5womenartists. Challenge others to do the same. See what the results are, count how many of your friends and family members can name five

women artists without looking them up. Toss the question into conversations. Surprise attack people with it. Try, “the service at this restaurant was great but I wish the food had been better. By the way, can you name five women artists?” or “I love you, too, but can you name five women artists?” Notice who they choose, who they name. Do you have 14 Frida Kahlos and 9 Georgia O’Keefes? Has someone impressed you by pulling out a contemporary women artist like Kara Walker or Amy Sherald?

I ask in part because the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington, DC wants to know. The “Name 5” challenge is posted on their website, part of an invitation to join the conversation around the celebration, promotion, and awareness of women artists. Founded in 1987, NMWA is an art museum completely focused on women artists. Their permanent collection contains over 4,500 objects that are 100% by women artists. In the “*About*” section of their website, the museum explains their mission in one sentence: “NMWA is the only major museum in the world solely dedicated to recognizing women’s creative contributions.” But why is this important?

A popular question feminists in the academic realm of art history often ask when reviewing the power and prevalence of women artists has been: “Why haven’t there been more great women artists throughout Western history?” (The Guerrilla Girls 1998). Every so often, the Guerrilla Girls reevaluate the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The Guerrilla Girls—feminist artists and art activists—quantify how many artists represented in the collection are women and how many of the nude artworks are female. Their latest survey (see fig. 1) was in 2012 and found that less than 4% of the artists were women but that 76% of the artworks depict nudes *of* women. The numbers have not changed much in 30 years (Baumann 2017).

The Guerrilla Girls are just one group of art/artist activists fighting for the representation of women in the art world. In 2013 a small group of four friends came together to form the web-based organization Art+Feminism to address the lack of representation of women on one of the most visited websites in the world: Wikipedia. They harnessed information activism—a movement started by librarians to promote and protect access to information—to incite change in an area where they saw an absence of female representation in articles on science, art, and history, among others. This movement took the form of a Wikipedia edit-a-thon series, in which satellite locations across the country organized training and collective editing sessions towards the dual purpose of writing women into Wikipedia, and encouraging women to write for Wikipedia. Since its beginning in 2014, the Art+Feminism Wikipedia edit-a-thon has become an annual event which has grown in popularity and impact, ranging from a beginning number of 600 participants to over 2,500 in 2016 (Evans 2015) and expanding to include other informally organized and grassroots activities, such as marching on the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) to demand greater inclusion and representation of women in the museum exhibits and collection. Art+Feminism worked with the Director of Education at MoMA to organize the edit-a-thon at the museum. This problem is circular. There is a lack of representation of both women as contributors on websites like Wikipedia and of articles about women artists on Wikipedia. The consequence is that women are perceived as less valuable culture-makers, and their lack of visibility on public research platforms like Wikipedia serves to reinforce this idea. Through the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, the feminist art activist tradition is being harnessed to address this paucity. By organizing face-to-face meetings—rather than just

online meetups—a new community of editors is emerging in an otherwise scattered digital landscape.

Relevant Scholarship and Theoretical Framework: What's Going on Here?

My work—both field and literature review based—is informed by the work of scholars in folklore, anthropology, sociology, art history, digital humanities, and other related fields who have focused on the Internet, feminism, and activism. In providing an overview of key theories, definitions, and findings relevant to my thesis, I hope to situate my own interdisciplinary work in a broader context. At this point it might be useful to define some of the terms I will be using throughout this thesis. According to the *Encyclopedia of New Media*, the term *Cyberfeminism* can be used "to describe the work of feminists interested in theorizing, critiquing, and exploiting the Internet, cyberspace, and new-media technologies in general." I use it primarily to situate the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon event in feminist scholarship and ideology. *Information activism* is a term borrowed from library sciences, and refers to the practice of advocating for the right to information (Berry III 1997). I realize this definition is opaque in that it includes the term itself. The idea is that people have a right to information, and libraries are institutions that still (for the most part) retain the public trust. Therefore, they are ideally situated for this type of advocacy and work. For the purpose of this thesis, *information activism* refers to the practice of providing and advocating for access to information through a digital means. I connect it to Wikipedia and critical thinking, an understanding that no information is neutral and that users have a right to know where their information is coming from. The term *edit-a-thon* describes the event of coming together and editing

or creating new texts. While an *edit-a-thon* is not specifically coded as Wikipedian, I use it solely in reference to editing and creating articles on Wikipedia. Likewise, *satellite* is used to refer to edit-a-thons that are connected to the Art+Feminism platform but are not organized by the founders. The founders established an annual edit-a-thon at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and I refer to every other event as a *satellite.* These are usually created by local groups or organizations (universities, museums, libraries, etc.) who voluntarily take part in the Art+Feminism edit-a-thon on or around the same weekend of March.

There has been a large body of scholarship around both Wikipedia's gender gap and the conceptualization of cyberfeminism in digital space. In her article "On Cyberfeminism and Cyberwomanism: High-Tech Mediations of Feminism's Discontents," Anna Everett argues that current technological and cultural changes are changing the role of women in public/private life, locally/globally, and inside/outside the academy. Through her case studies, Everett argues that women could organize and mobilize to great success using technology and the Internet. She concludes her findings by saying that "the point is that feminists of all stripes have found the Internet especially productive for reconfiguring and reimagining the public sphere and mass publicity" (Everett 2004). Sohail Inayatullah and Ivana Milojevic advocate for using the Internet as a way to start and nourish global conversations to better contribute to cultural pluralism, especially helpful in the U.S., which is a heterogeneous cultural landscape. One of their primary concerns, however, is that the Internet magnifies the focus on those who have access and diminish the attention focused on those who do not. They explain that the information age is not a global measure of time and modernity, but rather open only to

those who have enough privilege to access it. They bring critical analysis to the problem of silence and exclusion, claiming that women—especially non-English speaking women—are being silenced, pushed out of the frame, by the increasing interest in Internet community creation. Information is not communication, but the Internet could be used to transform it, as long as critical consciousness and caution are practiced in its use (Inayatullah and Milojevic 1999). Christina Vogt and Peiying Chen also address the barriers to Internet activism and participation. Their study addresses the problem that the Internet is not available to everyone, and by taking to this platform for feminist activism, women who are less advantaged might get left behind. However, they argue for the potential trickle-down effects of the Internet, explaining that information and resources have the potential of disseminating quickly and across great geographic spaces. They conclude by stating that the Internet defies hierarchical order because of its lateral structure and that it can accommodate interactions across status, location, and time (Vogt and Chen 2001).

Collaborative explorations and case studies of Internet space are also crucial to understanding cyberfeminism. Faith Wilding and the Critical Art Ensemble explore the frontier of the Internet as a place for women to "settle." They mention concern that strategies and tactics for feminism might need to change in order for feminism to establish a foothold "in a territory traditionally denied to them" (Wildling 1998). They argue that the Internet is a vehicle crucially different from anything previously available to feminist movements and therefore provides new opportunities for organization and communication. The Internet complicates dichotomies of public/private and allows for gathering and organizing across geography, allowing women to recognize one another as

similar actors in the world. Wilding and the Critical Art Ensemble highlight the importance of public action and rebellion, and claim that cyberfeminism is facing territorial identification, as well as feminine subjectivity, separatism, and boundary maintenance. They see this as an emergence because "historically, feminist activism has depended on women getting together bodily" (1998), and Wilding sees Cyberspace as a new frontier where women are shaping culture in a territory usually denied them. They argue that the tech-ness of the Internet stipulates a space only for men, and that cyberfeminism is often viewed as a threat to an otherwise male-dominated—however virtual—space (1998).

In the introduction to *Folk Culture in the Digital Age*, Trevor Blank follows others in arguing that folk is a natural part of cyberspace because people are participating in it. The Internet—and Web 2.0—would hardly be a phenomenon if no one used it. Blank argues that technology serves as a tool, even conduit, for expression and communication. People are now adding the Internet and its digital pundits to their cultural repertoires and spaces, adding opportunities for vernacular expression and broadening what that can mean. Blank goes on to provide a few examples of how to approach digital culture, claiming that creativity and organization are enhanced by the Internet, not endangered by it (Blank 2012).

In her article "Envisioning Folklore Activism," Debora Kodish spells out what she thinks public interest folklore should embody: a "grassroots and community-based folklife practice inspired by a vision of progressive social change, addressing inequalities, and working for the common good" (Kodish 2011). She sees Folklore as a discipline that understands grassroots activism and that offers resources to activists. More than just

observing, documenting, or framing activist efforts in scholarship, however, Kodish (along with other folklorist activists like Elaine Lawless and Linda Pershing) sees folklorists *as* activists (2011). In the tradition of Bernice Johnson Reagon, who worked both as a folkloric scholar and performer with the famous musical ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock, folklorists should not always stand on the periphery of a movement. Scholarship alone does not a radical activist practice make. Folklore scholars strive for a reflexive relationship with respondents and content, which often means that folklorists become involved with and invested in the communities or forms of expressive culture that we study. Much like Kodish suggests, one of my methods in this work is the participation in the activism that I research. Marsha Robinson, in her book *Women Who Belong: Claiming a Female's Right-Filled Place,* focuses on women as strategic actors in patriarchal systems, rather than resistors depicted as victims. Her recently published volume is an attempt to search for women's power in otherwise patriarchal systems and events, placing emphasis on the subjectivity of women's lived experiences. Women, through their narratives, are depicted as maneuverable and subversive, working within a system to change it (Robinson 2013). This connects to previously explored ideas of how women coordinate activist efforts in contested territories, carving space within already existing structures of power in order to change them. Working within a system to change it is exactly what the women (and men) in the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon are doing.

The process of bringing people together in physical space to edit Wikipedia collaboratively created what could be considered a folk space based on a simplistic idea of the folk. Alan Dundes' well-known definition of a *folk group* is "any group of people

whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (Dundes 1965) suffices to prove this point, as Wikipedia contributors all share the common factor of Wikipedia. While other scholars have developed a myriad of definitions for folklore and its subsequent ideas of "group," Dorothy Noyes' work is particularly applicable to developing a deeper understanding of how to conceptualize "group." Alongside more traditional descriptions of folk groups—by occupation, geographic location, shared forms of cultural expression—arguing that editors of Wikipedia constitute as a folk group may initially seem like a stretch. Noyes' definition is more nebulous, she writes that "[a group] can be ad hoc or short-lived, and need not be grounded in a historical identity" (Noyes 1995). This suggests a potential for spontaneous folk group emergence, the possibility of folk groups coming together in one event in time with no prior connection or community in place. For Art+Feminism edit-a-thons, participants can gather and connect during one—usually annual—event and thereby constitute a folk group, however briefly.

The Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon has spurred satellite events (edit-a-thons) across the world, in every continent except for Antarctica. Across a geographic distance, people have been able to come together virtually and physically to collectively combat the lack of representation of women on Wikipedia. This action mirrors how Noyes intellectualizes the idea of group. As she says, "We may say of collective identities generally that although they are often reactive, responding to external ascriptions and oppression, they become realities with the taking of collective action" (1995). This is true of the Art+Feminism events, where people come together as a reaction to external problems impacting Wikipedia. Noyes' use of the term *network* is particularly productive to help negotiate the space between traditional definitions of folk

group and this more nebulous, loose connection of temporary collective action held together by a more networked connection. She describes this as "a network model, with individuals and geographic communities as nexuses in a variety of relationships and social ties, some intimate and long-lasting, others temporary but influential" (1995). The folk network created and sustained by the Art+Feminism platform has multiplicitous structural iterations. Some contributors already have localized networks of people they regularly edit Wikipedia with, some are completely new and stepping into the editing positon for the first time, some have not edited before but may know the organizers or people who are also participating, etc. There are also different hierarchies within this network, from seasoned organizers and editors to complete novices, people who are experts in feminist art to those who took one art history class in college years ago but still want to contribute. What holds this network together is the collective act of responding to an external threat. Noyes is apt in contextualizing how networks form and are maintained, saying that "instead of defining this network type as the structure of the traditional community, define it as the product of a desire for tradition, a closing of ranks in conditions of threat" (1995). Wikipedia is not a traditional community.

Folklore scholars have argued that Wikipedia can be considered a community, most prominently William Westerman, who considers the common collaborative activity of Wikipedia to be a catalyst for the emergence of folk traditions (Westerman 2009). In his digital ethnographic work with the userbox[1] community of Wikipedia, he writes that "what is most significant is that a mutually understood system of knowledge production has emerged within a few years, along with an evolving epistemology—or

[1] Userboxes are like textual avatars and can be modified by the user to showcase political or nonpolitical ideologies. They are visible.

epistemological methodology—that is shaped by the community and that has been archived in the continually-being-edited pages of the site" (2009). Westerman also brings up the critique leveraged against this idea that Wikipedia constitutes a folk community, citing such objections as the anonymity of members, the lack of verification of academic expertise, and the general idea of trust. What Westerman seems reluctant to address, however, is the problematics of the insider/outsider relationship between the hierarchical structure of moderators and self-titled Wikipedia editors and the actions of newcomers to the Wikipedia interface—like the Art+Feminism network—who are trying to edit or contribute new material into Wikipedia's articles. Westerman playfully refers to this as "a community of knowledge-producers jointly develop[ing] effective practice[s] while schooling new members in the ways of the community" (2009). This sounds all well and good. Established editors and contributors help newcomers adjust to the folk community. This paints Wikipedia as a democratic digital community and platform, where all voices have the opportunity to engage in expressive culture and knowledge making. However, Wikipedia does not always work this way.

Robert Glenn Howard complicates this relationship between the vernacular and the institutional in digital spaces like Wikipedia. He addresses the idea of shared meaning-making in online communities, saying that "In online communities, the feedback loop of shared and individual imagining can go on independent of geographic proximity. Unlike geographical communities, online communities are often based solely on the discursive behaviors that express these social relationships" (Howard 2008). This fits nicely with Noyes' conceptualization of network, expressing the idea that there can be a community or group connection through digital media, but that online space is

inherently complicated by the prevalence of hegemonic institutionality, Howard explains that online, folk and institutional forces coexist in digital space, even Wikipedia. Vernacular expressivity needs the institutional to exist—through hybridity, wherein both the vernacular and institutional cohabit, Wikipedia comprises both. Howard seems excited that the Internet is mundane—it is no longer a passing fancy of the populace but a technological fixture. However, he also cautions his audience not to ignore the substantive power that the Internet is capable of supporting, even promoting. If the Internet is everywhere, then how are Web-savvy institutions influencing people who come into constant contact with them in their daily lives? How does the Internet empower and at the same time disempower? Even online, the vernacular voice is still monitored or framed by the institutionalized power, and forced to work within its boundaries. As Howard stipulates, "vernacular voices can emerge in participatory media only in the ways that institutional interests have enabled" (2012). The Internet—indeed, Web 2.0—is inherently hybrid because it relies both on an institutional operational structure and vernacular engagement to perpetuate both the relevance of a user-based web and limitations how digital space is conceptualized and controlled. To solve this problem, Howard calls for unabashed vernacular use of the Internet for expressive freedom, while cautioning for a watchful eye on the institutional players lurking in the background (Howard 2015).

Having anonymous individuals who participate in the editing of Wikipedia does complicate Westerman's assertion of Wikipedia as a folk community, but not for the reasons he states. He defends Wikipedia rigorously by calling for scholars to descend from their ivory towers and accept the radical activity—the *folk* activity—of knowledge-

making without formal training. He says, “Where Wikipedia is epistemologically most radical and most like folklore—and, to many, frightening—is in the de-centering of authority away from those necessarily having academic credentials and prestige and in the elevation of trust as a social basis for epistemology” (2009). This, however, is not the only reason anonymity could be a problem. Users who choose to keep anonymous are masking their identity from the group. They may project and create true or false masks of identity, but this impacts the way they engage with the community and the way that they may feel empowered to oppress or pressure others.

There is inherent hybridity in Wikipedia, a tension between the vernacular and the institutional, coupled with a practice of oppression often directed at the edits by women-appearing users. This hybridity of who gets to edit or delete comments and whose edits are subsequently deleted complicates the democratic appearance of Wikipedia. That, coupled with the gender disparity in contributors (only 10% of Wikipedia editors identify as women, roughly 1% identify as non-gender binary) and the fact that Wikipedia's very interface is not overly accessible further complicates the idea of Wikipedia as a democratic digital space. What *can* develop as a folk group is the perhaps brief face-to-face edit-a-thons that take place around the country during the month of March, these temporary folk groups strengthen the Art+Feminism network on a more long-term basis. The edit-a-thon is trying to add and diversify the content about women to counter these problems, and in doing so is making the process more democratic. The edit-a-thon itself is bringing people together in collaboration—in this physical bringing-together, it is doing some of that democratizing work.

Methods

This thesis explores how the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon impacts the people who coordinate and participate in it, as well as what the project is attempting to accomplish. What does it mean for people to be part of this event, to participate in the act of editing public history together? How do their experiences reflect larger societal issues in cyberfeminism and art? And, perhaps most critical, how do folk groups expand into networks and use traditional folkloric practices to combat issues of representation, feminism, and equitable participation in otherwise contested spaces? I attempt to answer these questions by looking at the event on two levels: national and local. Through interviews with the founders of Art+Feminism, I have learned that the event itself is designed as a pedagogical tool to correct misrepresentation and bias on Wikipedia. The founders have a shared vision of combating perceived barriers to participation in editing Wikipedia, but their big-picture goal is to address how Wikipedia is biased in its content, despite how culturally embedded and accepted the website is becoming as a research tool. On the local level, I have interviewed five people who helped to organize, coordinate, or participate in the University of Oregon's 2016 Wikipedia Edit-a-thon satellite. These interviews took place with coordinators and participants of a local satellite edit-a-thon event held in March 2016 at the University of Oregon. From these conversations, I saw that the network connections possible via the Internet platform of the event did not supersede the importance of face-to-face interaction during the editing process. I also participated in a face-to-face group at the satellite event I attended in Washington, DC. on March 25, 2017. There is a clear ideological connection between the national Art+Feminism event and the more localized satellite edit-a-thons like the University of

Oregon's through the conscious-raising goal of information activism and through the construction of a community that advocates for women's visibility online.

To provide context and connect the issue of representation to tangible conventions, I delve into unpacking how institutions like museums contribute to the lack of visibility for women artists. This is a crucial component of my thesis because it allows me to reframe the problem that Art+Feminism's Wikipedia Edit-a-thon is trying to address. I reviewed museum catalogs, specifically publications illustrating the museum's permanent collection, and analyze how many women artists are included. These catalogs are recent publications and come from lauded institutions (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Phillips Collection, the Museum of Modern Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art, and the Brooklyn Museum). I also traveled to large, historically prominent museums mostly in New York and Washington, D.C. to walk through the galleries and search for women artists. The experience of walking through museums to search for women artists is important to understanding the subtleties of visibility, and I will relay one of those experiences as part of my fieldwork. The museums I chose to visit are some of the nation's most respected and visited museums of art, and thus the big powerhouses in the field. I also look at "art" in what is considered a *fine art* sense. The scope of this project means that art is considered primarily as work that an art museum would have in its galleries. This definition of art has historically been perceived as elitist and marginalizing, which is why projects like Art+Feminism have gained prominence in helping to break down barriers of access to information about art and women artists.

It was not possible to review every catalog recently published within an American museum, or to interview each person who organized or participated in a satellite Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon in 2016. I selected the museums I did because they were within my ability to access and they have strong legacies and reputations as highly trafficked and influential institutions. I chose art museums specifically because the Art+Feminism platform focuses on art, and because my own experience has been primarily with art museums.

Once the problem is clearly defined via museum-based research and a review of relevant scholarship, I move on to the **ethnographic** method to determine how this problem is being addressed. My **interview** with the founders of Art+Feminism helped situate the event on a national level. My interviews with five coordinators of the University of Oregon's Art+Feminism Edit-a-thon in March of 2016 illuminated how these issues and structures work out on a localized level. I focused on the University of Oregon's satellite Wikipedia Edit-a-thon event because I am at the University of Oregon and have easiest access to those coordinators and participants, and felt that I could best understand the local concerns of my neighbors versus those who live far afield from familiar ground.

My third method is two-fold. On one side, I apply what I have learned to **improving pedagogy** surrounding the way college students use and interpret Wikipedia. Using my Graduate Teaching Fellow position and the lower-division Art and Gender class I was a teaching assistant for during the 2016-2017 academic year, I developed a pedagogical activity with 70+ students each quarter where they researched women artists in small groups and edited Wikipedia together in a small class-based edit-a-thon. I then

collected feedback from my students about the activity. On the other hand, I participated in one of the 2017 Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon satellite events and recorded my experiences as a **participant observer**. Timing and travel restricted my ability to attend satellite edit-a-thons in Oregon, but I was able to attend one on March 25, 2017 at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) in Washington, DC. Both the experiment in improving pedagogy and my participation in the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon at SAAM are discussed in Chapter 5.

Overview of Chapters

In **Chapter 2: Searching for Women**, I begin with a narrative of my attempt to "search for women" in the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art respectively. I then provide an overview of results from reviewing museum catalogues for art by women and position this information within the Art+Feminism context, and explain why museums are important institutions for the valuation of art and the dissemination of knowledge about art. I record walking through the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) in New York City with my husband and a mutual male friend. They helped me search the galleries for artwork by women artists, and provided some of their thoughts about the experience. I also provide an overview of looking through all the catalogs and the ratio of women artists represented therein.

In **Chapter 3: Art+Feminism and Wikipedia**, I explore the founding of Art+Feminism, how the Wikipedia Edit-a-thon was started and what other edit-a-thons exist around similar goals, convey research statistics indicating the percentage of women

participants contributing to Wikipedia, and discuss why these numbers are problematic. I also address the limitations of Wikipedia's nebulous structure, explore the hybrid identity of Wikipedia as both institutional and folk, and ultimately argue that the Wikipedia edit-a-thon is a "folk" event. Once the problem is clearly defined via museum-based research and fieldwork and a review of relevant scholarship, I move on to the ethnographic method to determine how this problem is being addressed. I explain the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon event and its impacts, looking at a grassroots organization's attempt to address the inequity of women on Wikipedia, both as artists and as contributors. I also touch on Wikipedia as a moderated, or even policed, digital space.

In **Chapter 4: Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, National Level**, I provide an overview of the goals of Art+Feminism, how they organize and run the event, what I learned from interviewing the founders of Art+Feminism, and discuss the impact of the event on a national level. I analyze and provide an overview of interviews conducted with the founders of Art+Feminism to shed light on this event's effectiveness and efforts on a national level and potential goals for the future. How do the founders measure success? How do they determine impact? My interview helps to provide some of this context. Chapter 4 also includes a brief example of backlash against Art+Feminism Edit-a-thons, supporting the idea that Wikipedia is a contested space.

In **Chapter 5: Local Level and Pedagogy**, I describe and analyze what I learned from interviewing five coordinators and participants of the University of Oregon's Art+Feminism satellite Wikipedia Edit-a-thon and situate it within relevant scholarship. I also provide an overview of how using the Wikipedia Edit-a-thon event in a college classroom setting can address information pedagogy. During the 2016-2017 academic

year, I held a fellowship with the Arts and Administration program. Part of this fellowship position involved serving as a graduate teaching fellow for a 200-level Art and Gender course, where I was able to implement a pedagogical activity for 70+ students each quarter. Students were introduced to the problem of Wikipedia's gender gap and bias and did research on women artists, then edited Wikipedia. This also includes documentation of my experience as a participant observer at the satellite event I attended, in Washington, D.C. at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in March of 2017, and explores potential impact at a local level.

In the final chapter, **Conclusion: "Our Task for the Future,"** I conclude by tying together my fieldwork, scholarship, and case studies to reaffirm my findings; provide suggestions for further research; address the relevance of my work; and end with a call to action.

CHAPTER II

SEARCHING FOR WOMEN

Figure 2 / MoMA's Lobby, New York City. Picture by La Citta Vita.

Walking into the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City is a quick and overwhelming reminder that people do, in fact, still visit art museums. Several inexplicable lines wound around the lobby and it took several minutes of reading signs and tracing people back from the ticket counter to figure out where we should stand. MoMA is located in Midtown Manhattan, surrounded by tightly packed buildings that normalize its tall glass walls and mass. The museum has a growing collection of roughly

200,000 works of art in varied mediums and welcomes about 3,084,624 visitors annually, positioning it within the top 100 most visited museums in the world (The Art Newspaper 2016). MoMA was packed on Labor Day Weekend, 2016, when I visited with my husband Joe and our friend David. Before conducting research for this thesis, I had not noticed how few women artists were represented in art museums, both ones I frequented and ones that I was exploring for the first time. If I—a feminist scholar with an art museum background—had blithely walked through dozens of museums without realizing the now obvious disparity of art by women versus by male artists, how would the experience of trying to find art by women go? I wanted to see what my experience of the galleries would be when I was focused on walking through them on a mission to find artwork by women. Joe and David accompanied me—I wanted help seeking out physical evidence of this lack, and they were on hand to visit MoMA with me. I had one goal, which I had recruited their help in accomplishing. We were searching for artwork by women.

Art pieces by women were few and far between. The featured exhibition was a solo retrospect, *Bruce Connor: It's All True*, celebrating the life's work of one of America's postwar artists. No women there. We moved on, trying the museum's permanent collection galleries, which primarily used a chronological exhibition style. We walked through the *Collections Galleries, 1880s-1950s* and read through all of the labels. My husband and our friend helped me search the extensive galleries, letting me know when they found a work of art by a woman. There was only so much we could ascertain by looking at the name printed on each label. When in doubt, I pulled out my cellphone and looked artists up online to see how they identified. Women artists were there, lightly

peppered in like seasoning. “I never realized how few women were represented here,” David said. He and my husband agreed that they had not previously noticed how wide the gap was between the number of artworks by women and those by men until they were actively searching for women artists in the galleries. Neither had I. It is one thing to read or be told that there is a disparity in the representation of work by women artists in art museums, and quite another to walk through and continuously find label after label with male names. The simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of women artists in institutional spaces speaks to a long history of devaluing women as culture producers and privileging collecting habits that denote men, often white men, as more historically relevant and important shapers of Western art and culture than we women. Scholarship in the fields of art history, anthropology, arts administration, and museology have addressed these issues. As Janet Marstine says in her introduction to *New Museum Theory and Practice,* “Feminist theory has shown that museums are also a gendered space, where women’s production and history are under-represented and oversimplified and where the masculine gaze has colonized the female body” (Marstine 2013). Exploring MoMA’s galleries with the purpose of finding women artists helped my two male companions to better understand the problem of representation in this major art museum.

The question, however, is more complex. Why did my husband and our friend react with surprise? The surprise implies an interrupted sense of normalcy, a puncture in the hegemonic discourse of Western culture as reflected in art museums. To MoMA’s credit, we did notice that upon moving from the *1880s-1950s* galleries to the *From the Collection: 1960-1969* galleries, more women artists appeared. This suggests that, at least beginning in the heavily pop art and minimalist infused 1960s, women artists were valued

slightly more than they had been. What we saw in the *1960-1969* galleries at MoMA was subtle evidence that the women's movement of the '60s and '70s was, indeed, beginning to impact institutions, as a greater visibility of women artists in museums like the Whitney and MoMA occurred.

MoMA was founded in 1929 as an institution with the purpose of subverting traditionally valued aesthetics in art. With an emphasis on modern art, MoMA became a wild success. MoMA was able to establish itself as a behemoth within the first 10 years of its life, expanding in 1939 into to their Midtown Manhattan location, where they still sit today. At the time of its founding, museums were regarded as shrines of art and culture, sacred spaces within which scholarship and the object reigned supreme over ideas and engagement with the world outside the museum's walls. As Janet Marstine says in her introduction to *New Museum Theory and Practice*, "the expertise of the 'museum man' (the expert is always a patriarchal figure) gives an assurance that museum objects are 'authentic' masterpieces that express universal truths in an established canon or standard of excellence" (2013). In her 1989 article, "The MoMA's Hot Mamas," Carol Duncan explored the collections and exhibitions of MoMA and critiqued its focus on sexualized depictions of women, warning that the museum experience had been designed for the male gaze. More specifically, Duncan asserts that the museum as shrine model so prevalent before the *post museum*—the post museum model being one which focuses on sharing power with its communities and highlighting the visitor experience (2013)—institutional era was focused on the male spiritual journey, saying:

> Silently and surreptitiously, [MoMA] specif[ies] the museum's ritual of spiritual quest as a male quest, just as they mark the larger project of modern art as primarily a male endeavor. If we understand the modern-art museum as a ritual of male transcendence, if we see it as organized around male fears, fantasies, and

> desires, then the quest for spiritual transcendence on the one hand and the obsession with a sexualized female body on the other, rather than appearing unrelated or contradictory, can be seen as parts of a larger, psychologically integrated whole (Duncan 1989).

This relationship to the galleries is what Joe and David were experiencing. It feels normal and rational, even, to see the great masters of modern art in MoMA as mostly men. They expected Pablo Picasso and Vincent Van Gogh. It could be argued that the constructed binary of man as culture and women as nature plays a part in this expectation, a hegemonic assumption that has filtered into multiple realms of human life. Primarily a Western concept, and one dating back to Greco-Roman culture, women have been affiliated with nature and men with culture. In "Third Wave Feminism and the Need to Reweave the Nature/Culture Duality," Colleen Mack-Canty expands on this idea by saying, "In the nature/culture dualism, man was seen as representing culture, and needing to be unconstrained by and to have domination over natural processes, both of a nonhuman nature and of human embodiment" (Mack-Canty 2004). It would be expected, then, to see Paul Gauguin's modernist *The Seed of the Areoi*, an 1892 oil on burlap painting of a nude Tahitian woman sitting on a blanket, the natural beauty of Tahiti's mountains, water, and trees framing her in backdrop, flowers in her hair. In her hand is fruit, as if in offering to the viewer. Gauguin's search for "recovering a 'pure' subject, closer to nature" (MoMA) led him to depict a nude woman. Herein one problem lies; if woman is nature, then man is culture, and man creates culture by creating art. Bringing women artists to the forefront in institutions called (and still calls) for a radical transformation of hegemonic values. If woman makes culture, too, then man must share his power.

Women have been creating art for centuries. While sociocultural stratifications

have separated women's art from men's art in several ways, this discrepancy in prestige is steeped in ideas of historicity. The Guerrilla Girls address Western barriers historically stacked against the professionalization of women as artists as far back as the 6th century B.C.E., clarifying that "until this century, women were rarely allowed to attend art schools, join artists' guilds or academies, or own an atelier. Many were kept from learning to read or write" (The Guerrilla Girls 1998). What women *could* paint was also controlled by hegemonic currents of access, education, and social expectation. In Western art historical tradition, painting people or figures (gods, myth, etc.) was seen as more significant work than still lifes or landscapes. Paintings of massive historical or mythological scenes were lauded as the most prestigious and important, often requiring multiple artists, money to hire models, and space to work. The Guerrilla Girls point out the implications of this system of valuation for women artists, saying "While the male academics were of painting 'important' subjects of war and the gods, most women artists of the 17th and 18th centuries kept the home fires burning, perfecting the areas where they were allowed to excel: still life and portraiture" (1998). The field of art history has only recently begun to publish on why women artists have not historically been valued as much as their male counterparts. For decades, art historians claimed that women artists were not as prestigious or successful because the objective quality of their artwork was not perceived to be as good as that of their male counterparts—the deep history of women artists in Western traditions is much more complex. There is not space in this thesis to do justice to the history of women artists in the Western world, as much scholarship on the topic exists and could constitute multiple theses. It is important, however, to understand that women artists were by no means afforded the same access to

the art world as male ones. Whitney Chadwick, in her extensive volume *Women, Art, and Society*, provides more context by saying, "as the division between the Man of Reason and the charming but submissive woman widened, women had less access to the public sphere which governed the production of art. … The demand that women artists restrict their activities to what was perceived as naturally feminine intensified during the second half of the century, particularly in England and America" (Chadwick 2012). Through work like Chadwick's, it becomes clear that women artists have faced an uphill battle for recognition for centuries. Not only did women artists need to navigate multiple barriers to an education in art, affordance of models and supplies, and recognition in male-dominated circles and schools, but they also had to actively subvert hegemonic monikers of femininity to participate in the creation of visual culture making.

The next day I brought my husband with me to The Metropolitan Museum of Art (fondly nicknamed The Met) in New York City. The Met is the largest art museum in the United States and has one of the highest annual number of museum visitors in the world (The Art Newspaper 2016). A domineering façade greeted us as we walked over from Central Park, weaving our way through the multitude of hot dog stands spread out as tourist offerings. We climbed the large staircase spilling out from the museum doors, getting stuck in a line near the entrance. The Met is massive. Its original 1874 Beaux-Arts building supplemented by additions to house its collections, includes well over 440,000 objects. There was no feasible way that we could see everything in the time that we had—a careful work-through of the exhibitions would have taken days. We had to choose our galleries carefully, trying to see as much of the permanent collection as possible. Museums are typically able to accommodate exhibiting about 10% of their permanent

collections at any given time. Institutions like The Met usually display about 5% of their permanent collections within their galleries (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). We did not focus on permanent exhibitions of ancient art, as many of the objects classified as part of antiquity do not have artists or makers attributed to them. For the purposes of my research, I needed to see art contemporary enough that the artist was known. This is more commonly reflected in art made in the Medieval period and forward. The Met's galleries are extensive, ranging from exhibitions on Arms and Armor to Egyptian Art to Photographs. My husband and I chose the Modern and Contemporary Art galleries, taking a cue from our experience at MoMA and trying to see if we could find more women artists represented after 1960 than before. According to Duncan, this would align with popular protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. She explains, "A series of events in late 1969 and early 1970 led to the first protests against racism and sexism in the American art world; out of these interventions, and the growing Women's Liberation Movement, came the feminist art activities of the 1970s" (Marstine 2013). If a spurt of feminist art occurred in the 1970s, alongside a demand to be taken more seriously as artists, then it would make sense for collections to procure more art by women from around this time period. Artwork by women of color has also been severely lacking in representation in many museum collections.

Walking through The Met was simultaneously thrilling and disappointing. We marveled at the immensity of the galleries, the impressive collections, and the carefully displayed and organized artwork. But each room reaffirmed the importance and primacy of male artists. My husband, while looking through the modern art galleries, was surprised at both how few pieces by women artists were represented, and *what* was

displayed when they were. “The only artworks that had more than a tiny chance of being made by a woman were the kitchen appliances. The fact that just as many objects like coffee pots were made by women as paintings should tell you something,” he said. Quickly, the museum’s representation of women artists translated for him as a “chance,” or luck issue.

The Guerrilla Girls, feminist art activists, have been highly critical of The Met, claiming in 2004 that less than 3% of the artists in the museum were women. They have monitored these numbers, but in 30 years of activism (1985—Present) have seen little change. The Guerrilla Girls look at art museums and critique them, calling for more representation of women artists in institutions. They claim that the history of art is the history of power, and that to balance power museums need to equitably represent artists from all backgrounds, ethnicities, and genders.

During the summer of 2016 I also traveled to Washington, D.C. and went to The Phillips Collection, The National Gallery of Art (NGA), and the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA). I procured catalogues from them, in addition to catalogues from The Met, MoMA, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Brooklyn Museum. My selections were based on the museums’ popularity, reputations as stewards of art and culture, and my accessibility to them. For example, in their 2016 Annual Report, The Met reported a membership base of 138,834. Their report also states that in the 2016 fiscal year, “We presented 31,824 events that drew a total of 847,429 participants, a seven percent increase over last year” (The Metropolitan Museum of Art 2016). They also reported their visitorship, indicating how many people visited the museum in the 2015-2016 year. “During fiscal year 2016, the Museum drew 6.7 million

visitors, the highest number since we began tracking admission statistics more than forty years ago" (The Metropolitan Museum of Art 2016). These numbers show that The Met continues to attract a huge amount of traffic, and that it is a trusted institution.

No data is neutral. Museums simply cannot provide unbiased information. When lauded institutions that collect and curate cultural art and artifacts publish catalogues and organize exhibitions, the curators and board members choose what they consider to be culturally valuable and important, and then pass their implicit valuing on to the millions of visitors who walk their galleries every year. With this critical lens, I examined the catalogues of The Met, MoMA, LACMA, NMWA, The Phillips Collection, the National Gallery of Art, and the Brooklyn Museum (see Figure 3). I searched the catalogues of permanent collections and museum highlights for art by women. The result was worrisome. MoMA's *MoMA Highlights: 350 Works from the Museum of Modern Art*, New York had 60 works of art by women out of 350, 17%. MoMA's recent catalogue, *Painting and Sculpture of The Museum of Modern Art*, presented MoMA's masterwork paintings and sculptures and featured 43 works by women artists out of 211, 20% of their catalogue. While these numbers seem low, they are actually higher percentages than museums like The Met or The Phillips Collection. The Met released an updated catalogue in 2016 of their masterpiece paintings, which catalogued 500 works of art from its permanent collection. Out of these 500, only 14 were by women artists, a dismal 2.8%. The Phillips Collection boasted the same rate of representation with 3 women artists featured out of 106 in their master paintings catalogue (see figure 3). LACMA's 2012 catalog featuring their Janice and Henri Lazarof Collection, *Envisioning Modernism*, featured 44 artists, 3 of which were women (6.8%). The National Gallery of Art's

Highlights from the National Gallery of Art, Washington contains 425 artworks, 24 of which are by women (5.6%). The Brooklyn Museum catalog, *Brooklyn Museum Highlights*, included 146 artworks, 23 of which were made by women (15.75%). It should be mentioned that the *Brooklyn Museum* Highlights catalog includes a great many works of art from antiquity, and therefore the identities of many artists are simply unknown. The NMWA's catalog of their permanent collection, *Women Artists: Works from the National Museum of Women in the Arts*, unsurprisingly, boasts 100% representation of women artists.

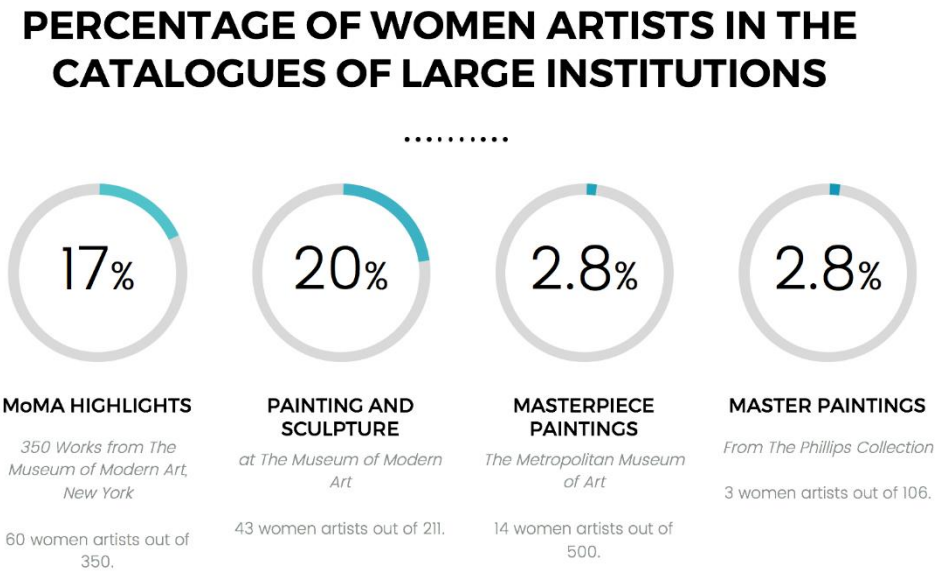


Figure 3 / Percentage of Women Artists in the Catalogues of Large Institutions, chart by Sarah Wyer.

These findings are disconcerting because museums (in the post museum era, anyway) often claim to be community-focused, and insist that (especially large and public) institutions belong to multiple people and communities, and thus are relevant to multiple constituents. A dialogue between visitor/community and the museum is

necessary to not only perpetuate a museum's relevance, but also to present power and decisions around what is important to display and support as shared. Collection acquisition practices are key here. If museums commit to collecting practices that are more inclusive of women artists, non-gender binary artists, and artists of color, then they can actively participate in a more equitable representation of art that reflects our diverse, multiplicitious world. People like to see themselves in artwork. If a museum's collection features predominantly white, male artists, then how is everyone else going to respond to and connect with that institution? As Sharon Macdonald explains in her introduction to *A Companion to Museum Studies*, creating a balance between prioritizing objects and visitor experience can provide "…an increased claiming of the museum form, and existing museum space, by different groups; and of a changing museum—society relationship in which museums have come to be seen less as offering up preferred or superior culture and more as responsible for representing society in its diversity" (Macdonald 2006). Museums leverage support for what is considered valuable or important art based on their collections and what they choose to display. To reiterate, if museums wish to represent the diverse populace of the United States, then they need to change their collections practices to reflect their constituents. Women who walk into museums and are confronted with more paintings of nude women than of paintings by women artists (or even just artwork featuring women in a non-sexualized way) may not relate to the museum's exhibitions as readily. There is a deep history in the Western world of depicting women as objects of the male gaze in art, rather than as subjects. While this has been addressed by scholars like John Berger and Whitney Chadwick, seeing one's gender identity constantly depicted as an object for the pleasure of others is

not usually empowering. Diversifying collections to include more art by women artists and more artwork that rejects the female body as an object might help to address the lack of representation that exists not only in museums, but also by extension on public digital spaces like Wikipedia.

The museum collections of most large art institutions in America have been overwhelmingly accumulated by wealthy, white, male philanthropists and inescapably reflect what these collectors have decided are valuable or representative of culture (Macdonald 2006). However, as highlighted by Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg in *Cities, Museums and Soft Power*, "women comprise the majority of museum workers but have still not achieved equality in the executive offices or in the boardroom" (Lord and Blankenberg 2015). This being said, Lord and Blankenberg argue that women are now two-thirds of service workers and thus becoming more powerful in the cultural sector. The issue, then, of rectifying the gross misrepresentation and lack of representation of women artists in large art museums in a complex one, aided by efforts both within the institutions and by the hegemonic discourse outside them. Efforts must be made by an increasingly female museum professional pool to achieve gender parity in permanent collections with new acquisitions, make board positions more accessible to the non-wealthy, and seek out traveling exhibitions and retrospectives that fairly represent artists of all genders. Outside the institution, the lack of information about and support of women artists is finding different outlets for rectification.

CHAPTER III

ART+FEMINISM AND WIKIPEDIA

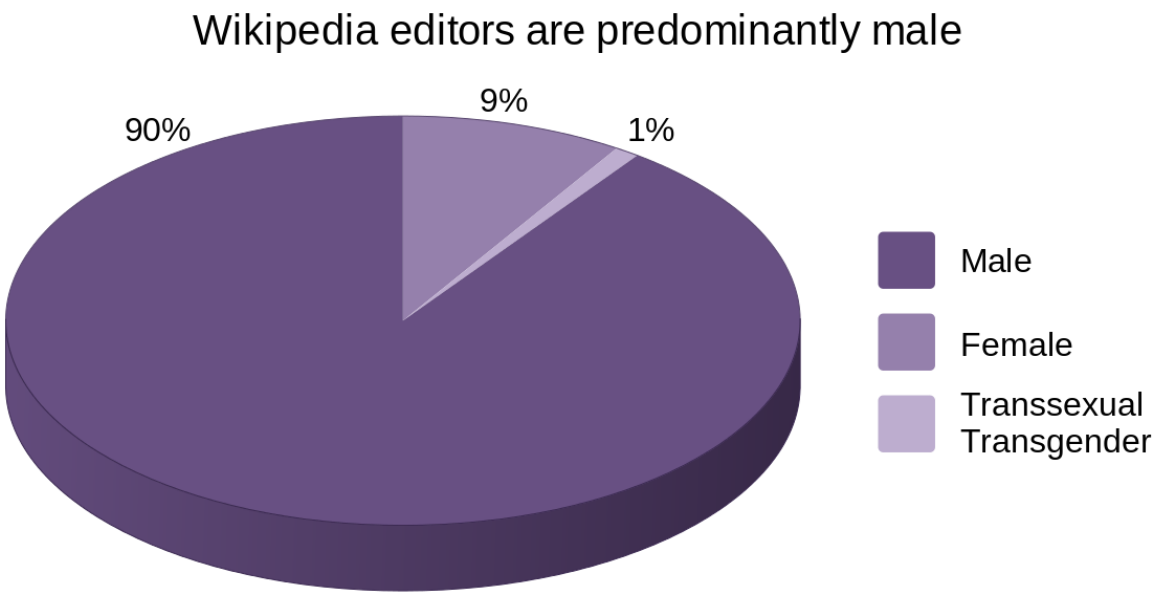


Figure 4 / Gender Gap in Wikipedia, chart provided by Goran tek-en.

In this chapter I will provide a background of the Art+Feminism organization, why it was founded, the process of the Wikipedia edit-a-thon, and a framing of the problem that inspired this event's creation. The Art+Feminism's website provides a brief overview of the organization's background. Its focus is on ushering people to participate in the Wikipedia edit-a-thon event and become involved with the process. As a result, the founders do not actually stipulate what Art+Feminism *is.* It is a website. It is the title of the Wikipedia edit-a-thons that it organizes. It is the marriage of two words ("art" and "feminism") that state the focus of the founders. For the purpose of being able to discuss

it in this thesis, I call it an organization or a platform, but it is most often depicted simply as an idea worth rallying behind.

The Wikipedia website describes itself as "a free online encyclopedia, created and edited by volunteers around the world and hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation" (Wikipedia). The prefix—*wiki*—comes from the Hawaiian word for "quick," and *pedia* comes from the Greek word *paidea*, meaning "education." At its basic linguistic level, Wikipedia serves as a "quick education" on anything that anyone considers important enough to write about. Wikipedia is often the first result when searching the Internet for a topic and many people reply on the site for learning about almost anything. Wikipedia is global, and the website exists in several languages, but it began in English. Wikipedia is contributed to and edited by anyone, whether they make a user account or not. No one who edits Wikipedia is paid—the website runs entirely on a volunteer basis. While free, easy access to an online encyclopedia of public information is a wonderful product in our Information Age, the idea that Wikipedia is democratic is problematic. Wikipedia promotes confidence in the neutrality and notability of its content—this falsely implies that the information on Wikipedia is unbiased and moderated fairly. As I endeavor to explain throughout my thesis, it is not, and Art+Feminism tries to address this bias by both encouraging more women to edit Wikipedia and by facilitating the creation and editing of more articles about women artists.

The Founding of Art+Feminism

Four friends (Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, and Laurel Ptak) founded Art+Feminism in 2013, first as s tumblr to better facilitate communication

with other people who might be interested in their work, and then expanding to build a comprehensive website at a later date. They came together as librarians, curators, artists, and art workers to try to address the imbalance of available knowledge about women artists, primarily on Wikipedia (Art+Feminism). A report published by the Wikimedia Foundation in 2012 claimed that roughly 10% of Wikipedia contributors identified as female (see figure 4) which spurred a call to action. This, coupled with the "American Women Novelists" problem (which I will explain shortly), inspired Art+Feminism's to launch an information activist, feminist response. In a talk at Cornell, the founders provided Wikipedia's "American Women Novelists" article as an example of why their work was needed. Wikipedians were actively separating women out of the article "American Novelist" and placing them instead in a separate "American Women Novelists" one. The idea of "women artists" faces the same problem of separation. In *Women, Art, and Society* Whitney Chadwick explains that "The category 'woman artist' remains an unstable one, its meanings fixed only in relation to dominant male paradigms of art and femininity" (Chadwick 2012). As long as people consciously separate women artists out and frame them as a different, or at the very least a subset category, we perpetuate the idea that women should be valued separately from men as cultural producers. While it can be argued that women artists are framed within their own category (apart from "artists") in an effort to give them much needed visibility, in the long run it has the effect of marginalizing women artists as being at the margins of cultural creators.

Many Wikipedia users were upset by the "American Women Novelists" occurrence, but did not seem to realize that they could go and shape the conversation

itself as contributors directly on Wikipedia. What started as an attempt to provide a rallying banner blossomed into a national and then international event. At a February 2016 talk given by one of the Art+Feminism founders, Jacqueline Mabey, at Cornell, she described the project and discussed the roots of the edit-a-thon event, reporting increasing numbers of participants and their hope that places hosting satellite edit-a-thons would embrace this project as their own. As of the 2017 Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, 7,100 participants have created or improved over 11,100 articles on Wikipedia directly about women artists. This includes basic biographical information, lists of exhibitions, information about artistic style, documentation of notability, and greater presence on Wikipedia. Since its inception over 480 satellite locations have participated in the event, which is usually set for a weekend in March. The growing popularity of the event proves that it is timely and relevant.

The Wikipedia Edit-a-thon

Art+Feminism founders used listservs and social media to organize what they called a Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, using digital technology to create a folk network that brought grassroots advocates from all over the world under their unifying banner. Co-founder Jacqueline Mabey said in a March 2015 interview with ArtNews that "We've always said that this is an intervention as feminists but also as artists, art workers, art historians, and art librarians," orchestrated by varied ideological backgrounds—library science, art, feminism, art history, etc. (Reilly 2015).

Art+Feminism has mobilized women across the nation (and now internationally) to edit Wikipedia to produce more information about women artists and their creations. It

continues to facilitate the yearly event from New York City. They credited a rhizomatic effect of their project, where people are organizing under the banner of Art+Feminism, but are holding monthly meetups of their own, or already participating in the editing of Wikipedia. As Sarah Mirk of BitchMedia—a nonprofit feminist media organization and publication—says in her article covering the Art+Feminism's 2014 event, "The goal of the upcoming 'Feminism and Art Edit-a-Thon' is both to raise awareness about the need to intentionally create and improve Wikipedia pages for female artists, as well as to equip hundreds of new people with the concrete skills to edit Wiki pages on their own" (Mirk 2014). The Wikipedia edit-a-thon integrates feminism into Wikipedia to challenge the bias inherent in an online forum with a contributorship of 90% males. It also advocates for more women to learn the skills necessary to navigate this technology.

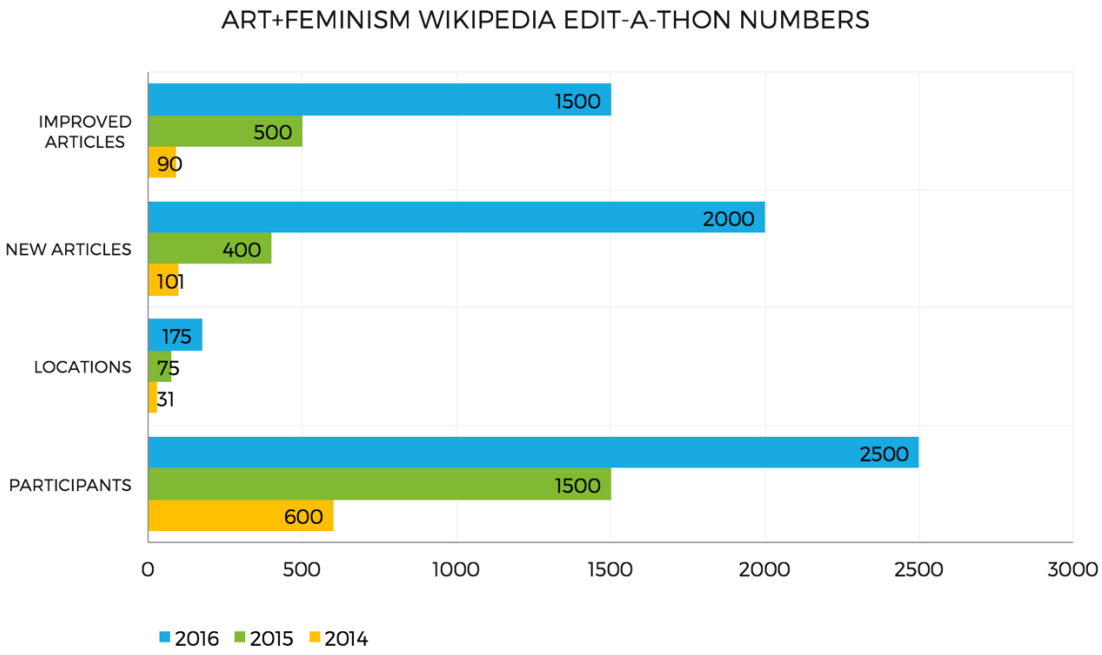


Figure 5 / Chart of Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon Numbers from 2014-2016, chart by Sarah Wyer.

Framing the Problem

The Wikimedia Foundation has conducted and published the results of surveys designed to address contributorship in Wikipedia editing. Their most recent study (2012) reports that only 10% of Wikipedia editors are women. This study shows a gender gap, and the Wikimedia Foundation wishes to address the gap. They have provided Art+Feminism with grants for their work. What it does not overtly show are the implications of the gender gap. A result of Wikipedia's overwhelmingly male contributorship is that articles about women tend to be more difficult to find, or they are less detailed. This in itself is not necessarily malicious—it simply means that men are less likely to write about topics that are seen as feminine or associated more strongly with women. The Oregon Daily Emerald article on the University of Oregon's 2016 Wikipedia edit-a-thon spells it out clearly, saying "The gender imbalance means that women-centric pages receive relatively minimal handling, while male-related articles can undergo elaborate, comprehensive drafts" (Malone 2016). The result is that women are underrepresented both as contributors and in the content of Wikipedia.

The Art+Feminism founders have tried to minimize putting blame on Wikipedia or the Wikimedia Foundation. Instead, they attempt to bolster women (and men) to write women artists into Wikipedia. When asked about this imbalance of representation at the flagship 2015 edit-a-thon at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), for example, Art+Feminism co-founder Jacqueline Mabey, said "we would never say that all Wikipedians are misogynists because we have so many helping us here today who are kindred spirits and want to see us succeed." While encouraging more women to contribute to Wikipedia is one of the main interests of Art+Feminism, their other

prerogative is to increase the visibility of women artists on Wikipedia. People of all genders can assist as allies in this process.

The Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon is not without its detractors. The idea of organized feminists editing—and making—public is seen as disruptive in other online communities like YouTube. Unfortunately, for cyberfeminists, this is not a surprise. As Faith Wilding and the Critical Art Ensemble anticipate in their article "Notes on the Political Condition of Cyberfeminism," "From the beginning, entrance into this high-end technoworld (the virtual class) has been skewed in favor of males. … When females manipulate complex technology in a productive or creative manner, it is often viewed and treated as a deviant act that deserves punishment" (Wilding 1998). Cyberfeminism focuses on principles of the inclusion of women and women's voices on the Internet and Web 2.0. Susan Luckman defines cyberfeminism in her article "(En)Gendering the Digital Body: Feminism and the Internet*,"*

> Cyberfeminism refers to a diverse range of practices and discourses all generically identifiable by their commitment to exploring non-oppressive alternatives to existing relations of power through the manipulation of information technologies. Ideologically, cyberfeminist practice retains as a basic tenet a commitment to feminist principles of gender equality (Luckman 1999).

Art+Feminism uses cyberfeminist principles in both its organization of digital bodies (which then meet in real, physical space through satellite events) and its focus on information activism online. Wikipedia is also a moderated space, where new content can be contested and deleted. Moderators are volunteer positions, and becoming one requires an active membership for at least five months, and a record of at least a few thousand edits (wikiHow[2]). As Everett posits, "feminists of all stripes have found the Internet

[2] http://m.wikihow.com/Become-a-Wikipedia-Administrator

especially productive for reconfiguring and reimagining the public sphere and mass publicity" (Everett 2004). Wikipedia is part of that public sphere, and the information that is accessible and available on Wikipedia reflects a particular idea of public priorities and interests. Through cyberfeminist efforts, organizations like Art+Feminism can challenge hegemonic structures of institutionalized digital spaces like Wikipedia and work to democratize public spaces—both online and off.

Is Wikipedia Folk?

Wikipedia began on January 15, 2001 as the world's first free online encyclopedia. Founders Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger followed the credo of Richard Stallman's concept of a "free-as-in-freedom" online encyclopedia, meaning that no institution should be able to monitor or control content and editing. Wikipedia sprung from an earlier project of Wales and Sanger's, Nupedia, which was a collected online encyclopedia by experts. As the experiment for a truly open encyclopedia progressed, people quickly took to contributing at the rate of roughly 1,500 articles per month for the first year alone. Today, Wikipedia is the sixth most popular website in the world and boasts a monthly readership of about 495 million, with 117 million unique visitors from the United States alone (Wikipedia[3]).

The process of editing Wikipedia is complex, presenting barriers of access to people who are not familiar or comfortable with coding or html language. Wikipedia's goal is clearly explained in the editing tutorial on their website: "The goal of a Wikipedia

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia

article is to create a comprehensive and neutrally written summary of existing mainstream knowledge about a topic" (Wikipedia[4]). Wikipedia values neutrality (unbiased writing emphasizing facts, not opinions), secondary source material (which determines notability), online sources that are easily hyperlinked, and constant revision subject to democratic scrutiny. It may seem odd, especially to the academic world, that Wikipedia does not accept primary source material or original research. Their reason is because notability is a requirement of every article, meaning that something must be notable enough to have secondary sources—usually newspaper articles, academic or institutional (museum, etc.) publications and website content—about it in order to qualify for placement in the online encyclopedia. The information must already be part of an existing network. That said, Wikipedia *wants* contributors. The gender gap is an unintended consequence of Wikipedia's structure, and one that the organization is trying to correct. In an examination of the gender imbalance in Wikipedia, one paper found that the most likely cause of such a small percentage of women contributors was what they described as "a culture that may be resistant to female participation" (Lam et. al. 2011). Wikipedia's multiple forums and user "Talk" pages are particularly hostile to women, decreasing the likelihood that women will participate in a digital space that routinely targets their contributions for deletion or critique (see figure 6). The Wikimedia Foundation is the organization that did the study that reported that less than 10% of contributors identified as women. They also provided Art+Feminism with a grant to address this disparity.

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia

Hypothesis	Supported?	Description
H1a *Gap-Exists*	Yes	Wikipedia has relatively few female editors, and they leave Wikipedia sooner than males
H1b *Gap-Shrinking*	No	The gender gap has *not* been shrinking over time
H2a *Focus-Differences*	Yes	Females and males focus on different broad content areas
H2b *F-Coverage-Worse*	Yes	Coverage of "female" topics is inferior to coverage of "male" topics
H2c *F-Social*	Yes	Females are more likely to participate in social- or community-oriented areas of Wikipedia
H3a *F-Uncontentious*	Reversed	Articles with high female editor concentrations are *more* contentious
H3b *F-Reverted-More*	Yes	Female newcomers are reverted more than males
H3c *F-Reverted-Leave*	No	Being reverted as newcomers has the same apparent effect on males and females
H3d *F-Blocked-Less*	Reversed	Females are *more* likely to be indefinitely blocked

Table 7: A summary of our hypotheses and findings.

Figure 6 / "WP: Clubhouse? An Exploration of Wikipedia's Gender Imbalance," (Lam et. al. 2011) table of findings.

Actions like this position Wikipedia (via the Wikimedia Foundation) as a conscientious platform. Wikipedia and the Wikimedia Foundation are not accepting and settling comfortably into the status quo of their contributors, but rather working to address the unequal participation on their platform. There are negotiations of power in Wikipedia, especially because the information that people share becomes mediated and rewritten and goes through a process of acceptance or rejection on the website. This lends itself to the argument of whether Wikipedia is a "folk" space. In *Toward a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Folklore and the Internet,* Trevor Blank argues that folklorists need to look at the Internet in order to carry the discipline into the digital age. He offers a new definition for Folklore, stating that "Folklore should be considered to be the outward expression of creativity—in myriad forms and interactions—by individuals and their communities" (Blank 2014). Note that many folklorists have taken to the Internet to observe and develop scholarship around digital forms of expressive culture (Robert Glenn Howard, Tok Thompson, Anthony Bak Bucitelli, Lynne S. McNeill, Elliott Oring, Simon J. Bronner, Elizabeth Tucker, Bill Ellis, and Montana Miller, among them).

This idea is predicated by Robert Glenn Howard, who (as mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis) describes the Internet as a hybrid space. Howard focuses on the community process of creation and communication, leading to shared meaning and meaning-making. He argues that hybridization—a sort of inbetween, almost liminal area that borrows or shares between "institutional" and vernacular culture—is relevant in the field of Folklore. He mentions non-geographic community formation happening in hybrid spaces. Howard presents the vernacular as needing institutionality to exist, so perhaps there is a spectrum leading from vernacular to institutionalized, not a binary? Hybridity does not equal syncretic, however. Howard says that "the vernacular is powerful because it can introduce something other than the institutional into an institutional realm" (Howard 2008). Based on the scholarship of Howard, among others, it can be argued that the Internet is folk because it is where people and communities are expressing themselves. The institution/vernacular relationship is still happening on the Internet, especially in places like Wikipedia.

CHAPTER IV

ART+FEMINISM WIKIPEDIA EDIT-A-THON, NATIONAL LEVEL

Figure 7 / 2015 Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon participants, MoMA.

On February 1, 2014, the first Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon took place at the Eyebeam Art and Technology Center in New York City (Art+Feminism). This first event was organized by the Art+Feminism founders: Siân Evans, Art Libraries Society of North America's Women and Art Special Interest Group; Jacqueline Mabey, the office of failed projects; Michael Mandiberg, an artist; Laurel Ptak, Eyebeam Fellow; and Richard Knipel and Dorothy Howard, the Metropolitan New York Library Council of Wikimedia

NYC (Wikipedia). This event, plus the contributing satellite edit-a-thons, saw 600 participants in 31 locations, numbers that have been steadily rising in the years following the first event.

While, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Art+Feminism partially formed around this response to the "American Woman Novelists" criticism, the event's conception also took notes from STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) edit-a-thons focused on the inclusion of women. Some examples of these events include Women-in-STEM Edit-a-thons, Women in Science Edit-a-thons, and the Ada Lovelace Day Edit-a-thon. Edit-a-thons also exist to highlight the work of women biographers, women novelists, and women in music. Art+Feminism is part of a larger effort to increase the contributorship of women on Wikipedia and to increase visibility of women in the content on Wikipedia. As the founders do not subscribe to a binary definition of gender, they do not specifically tell participants what to write about, but often the articles created and edited are focused on women artists. The Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon is a response to the people who were frustrated at the lack of female representation on Wikipedia, but who did not seem to realize that they could go and shape the conversation itself by becoming Wikipedia contributors.

Since the inaugural one, the flagship national events have been held in 2015, 2016, and 2017 at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), indicating institutional support of what is slowly transforming from a subversive act of representation to an encouraged practice of visibility. But while MoMA has provided space and resources to events and initiatives like Art+Feminism's, it still falls short of systemic change in its collections practices.

How Do They Do It?

The organization of the first Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon relied heavily on social media and listservs (Mabey and Mandiberg 2015). The organizers created Facebook events, used Twitter to spur outreach, sent out calls for participation on listservs, and created a tumblr blog. They reached out to curators and educators at museums, librarians and art faculty at universities, and the staff of art galleries and organizations all across the world to generate interest and promote the event. The goal was to create "autonomous nodes," where Art+Feminism could provide the overall structure of the edit-a-thon and pave the way for a nationally multinodal, continuous, self-sustaining event. At a talk hosted by Cornell University on February 25, 2015, "Improving Content and Increasing Participation," Art+Feminism founder Mabey discussed the organization's strategy to create a rhizomatic project, a banner for others to rally behind. She explained the hope that, at some point, even the foundation of Art+Feminism might be able to melt away, the localized events surging on without direct influence from the parent event. Mabey continues to perceive this as a very real possibility. Many smaller groups already have monthly meetups to edit Wikipedia, and there are plenty of people editing independent of any overarching organizer.

To get things started, the founders needed help. Knipel, from Wikimedia, and Wikipedian-in-residence[5] at METRO, Howard, helped Art+Feminism set up training

[5] A Wikipedian in residence (WiR) is an editor active on Wikipedia, "who accepts a placement with an institution, typically an art gallery, library, archive or museum, or institute of higher education, to facilitate Wikipedia entries related to that institution's mission" (Wikipedia). This can be seen as problematic because Wikipedia has a strict conflict of interest requirement for editors—they are not supposed to edit or create content for organizations they could potentially have a conflict of interest with.

opportunities for satellite locations by coordinating with experienced Wikipedia editors. It is important to mention that Art+Feminism is not operating subversively on Wikipedia, however closely cyberfeminism and insurrectionary Internet infiltration are tied together. Wikimedia reacted progressively to their initial 2010 study revealing that 8.5% of Wikipedia editors identified as women. The advocacy work of loose organizations like Art+Feminism is encouraged by the leadership of Wikipedia. The Wikimedia Foundation[6] even awarded Art+Feminism a grant to assist with the edit-a-thon efforts. Art+Feminism now has a digital Organizer's Kit on their website and training materials accessible by visiting their Wikipedia Meetup page. The digital toolkit is easily downloadable and include: a 38-page PDF introducing the core values of the event and a detailed how-to for adding satellite events to the main website, suggestions for how to do outreach for satellite events, training videos, how to run the event, and promotional materials.

A huge challenge for the Art+Feminism team was how to jump the hurtle of inexperience. They could not just coordinate a yearly event and leave attendees (and often first-time contributors) to figure out Wikipedia's complex interface on their own. Attendees had varying levels of experience with editing Wikipedia, so providing a way to initiate them into the ranks of contributors required the assistance of experts, access to research materials, space within which to teach and learn, and training opportunities.

[6] Art+Feminism founder Jacqueline Mabey clarified the different between Wikipedia and Wikimedia in comments about this thesis on May 31, 2017, saying: "Wikipedia and the Wikimedia Foundation are two separate things. The Wikimedia Foundation keeps the servers running, keeps the wiki itself up-to-date, but Wikipedia, its content and guidelines, are dictated by the people who edit. And the desire or agenda of each are not always aligned. Further, there is not a single Wikipedia, but each (e.g. French language Wikipedia, German language Wikipedia) has its own culture and rules."

Art+Feminism had to create a physical space that coaxed first-time editors into participating in changing the representation of women on the world's largest public encyclopedia. In the talk at Cornell, Mabey said that the experience is about community-building. "We all have to work together and teach each other," she said, stipulating that they "organize horizontally, speak as multitude, [and] make decisions collectively" (2015). They also need to provide the bare bones of ideological structure, and are therefore explicit in how they hope groups will come together, and encourage a feminist approach to editing and creating content. They try to make the event explicitly intersectional, beginning from a standpoint of inclusivity and equity in both who represents, and who is represented. When I reviewed museum catalogs, art by women of color was scarcer than art by white women. When I attended a satellite edit-a-thon in Washington, D.C. in March of 2017, however, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, we were explicitly told that the museum strives to collect art by African American artists. True intersectionality is difficult to propagate, however, when barriers to access exist.

The largest barrier for potential contributors depends on a sliding scale of means, time, and knowledge. To edit Wikipedia, you need three things: stable access to the Internet and a computer to use; the time to research, write, and edit content; and the knowledge of how to use Wikipedia's system of editing and adding articles, as well as knowledge about the content you wish to edit or create. Hobbyists who edit Wikipedia regularly may not be experts on a topic, but rather experts on how to navigate Wikipedia. Scholars who study women artists may not know the first thing about navigating the public encyclopedia's user interface. The edit-a-thon is not about one type of expert.

Rather, as Mabey said, “Art+Feminism belongs to everyone. Our materials and our methods are meant to be shared. … We envision this project as an intervention, both as feminists but also as librarians, professors, artists, and curators, and art lovers…” (2015). Trying to be everything to everyone is dangerous territory, but the organization’s openness is an asset here. All Art+Feminism can do is provide that banner to rally beneath, and disperse their digital toolkit for beginners as far as possible.

The Interview

In late 2016 I reached out to the four founders listed on Art+Feminism’s website: Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, and Laurel Ptak. Evans, Mabey, and Mandiberg replied as one, and were very communicative and willing to talk with me. The three of them are primarily based in New York City and are usually working on separate projects which take them all over North America. Due to the difficulty in pinning them down altogether, my interview was email-based. After multiple exchanges via email discussing my thesis topic and requesting an interview, Mandiberg suggested that it would be most convenient to send them interview questions over email that they could then spend some time pouring over and answering. When I refer to my interview with *the founders*, I mean Evans, Mabey, and Mandiberg, as they were the only people I was able to interact with. Mandiberg and Mabey were particularly responsive, and I emailed back and forth with both of them as my points of contact.

The goal of Art+Feminism, according to the founders, was simple: “to improve content on women and the arts on Wikipedia and to increase female participation on the encyclopedia.” But while the Art+Feminism founders have been trying to build the

groundwork for autonomous editing, they also admit that the importance of the event is "to improve Wikipedia's gender bias both because it is one of the keystones of our digital commons and because it's becoming one of the content backbones of the Internet: many other popular sites pull in content from Wikipedia's APIs[7]." For the founders, editing Wikipedia has become about more than just starting a movement. The importance of the event is to address these larger issues of reliability and visibility on the Internet, and to do so with backup.

As the founders said, "Absences on Wikipedia ripple across the internet." The absence of women artists takes up the same digital space as representing them. A lack of women artists on Wikipedia sends the message *women artists just don't create as much, or as well, as their male counterparts.* The founders are deeply aware of this. They state, "This is more pressing than when we started, as Wikipedia's content is more visible and more trusted. More people [are] using Wikipedia as a platform for teaching research and composition, more librarians are describing it as a research tool." This shift in thinking about Wikipedia as unreliable (which is still often the case in academia) to considering it a viable resource is troubling to Art+Feminism. The founders described the problem:

> Google search pulls its biographical sidebar information from Wikipedia, and MoMA's website now pulls from Wikipedia content. This is the marker of a cultural shift with regards to how Wikipedia articles are viewed in the art world and in research in general, making our work more pressing. Wikipedia has strengths and weaknesses, and the arts have not been one of its strengths. We believe that art is important, something that is fundamental to thriving societies. Art+Feminism is envisioned as an intervention as both feminists and artists/art workers/art lovers. A contribution of our specific knowledge to the Commons. Yes, it's about representation as women, but also representation of art histories.

[7] API stands for "Application program interface," and essentially lays out the process for building software applications (Webopedia).

Art+Feminism is creating and editing content about women artists on Wikipedia because to *not* do so would be a threat to public understanding and conception of art and art history. The purpose of Art+Feminism becomes epistemological, pedagogical, and participant focused.

And they have accomplished a lot. When asked about what they had achieved, their response was quantitative. "Since March 2014, over 4600 participants at more than 280 events around the world (on every continent except Antarctica in 2016) participated in Art+Feminism's Edit-a-thons, resulting in the creation and improvement of more than 4600 articles on Wikipedia." Quantity is an easily determinable goal for measuring success. Art+Feminism uses the Wikipedia interface to track each satellite event, as well as the main one in New York, and is able to watch their contributorship rise with each passing year. With such a seemingly unending goal (to increase, indefinitely), one might think that attempting to host multiple edit-a-thons throughout the year would be the quickest way to reach success. Hosting digital edit-a-thons would be even easier, cutting back on costs and volunteer hours needed to run in-person events.

I asked the founders why, then, they thought it was important to organize opportunities for people (often strangers) to come together face-to-face, usually during one single weekend nationally and internationally, to edit. They responded, "Our work is focused on improving the coverage of women and the arts on Wikipedia. Of course, in doing so, we do highlight the existing gender imbalance in the art world, which has been so eloquently discussed in the past by people like Linda Nochlin and the Guerrilla Girls." They expanded on how they do what they do, as discussed earlier, by adding, "we do concrete work: adding citations to pages, expanding coverage of women in the arts in the

'largest repository of human knowledge' in the world." In doing this, they are endeavoring to evaluate knowledge. But because their evaluation is moderated by a multiplicity of networked communities, their work becomes part of a common, Internet-based project. Art+Feminism's edits and contributions do not exist outside of Wikipedia, or separate from it. In doing this, it becomes "folk." Wikipedia is itself, after all, the result of a community-created epistemological methodology (Westerman 2009).

Art+Feminism has a dual purpose in its work. First, as mentioned above, they do "concrete work," detail-oriented editing and writing, meticulous research and training in Wikipedia information technology. This work speaks to actionable change, where people frustrated by the misrepresentation and lack of representation of women artists online and on Wikipedia can actually *do* something about it. Additionally, Art+Feminism carries an ideological message in its practice. As the founders acknowledge, "But, we also understand these events as platforms for consciousness raising and hopefully strategies for change emerge from that." The national level of Art+Feminism's Wikipedia Edit-a-thon has a nationalizing effect:

> Just by the act of gathering together, we are creating communities of people interested in ameliorating the gender gap on Wikipedia, in the art world, in technology, and so on. We feel very fortunate to be a part of something that lives both as a concrete form of activism, while it opens a space for a more nuanced and inclusive discussion of issues around representation, digital labor, and being a woman online.

Community-building (a key component of face-to-face edit-a-thons and events) contributed to the creation of a network of people that, without digital mediation, may not have ever connected. The national level-ness of Art+Feminism also provides a node, or hub, where disparate members of this information activism network can touch base, engage, and express their response to a frustrating lack of visibility of: women artists.

This message is not hidden from participants. Art+Feminism is transparent in their purposes.

But do people agree? “From the larger internet community, the response has been overwhelmingly positive, minus a few trollish sub-reddits here and a confused Guardian article there.” Barriers to editing Wikipedia exist in many forms, and only some of them can be addressed by organizations like Art+Feminism. The Internet is rife with users who are unfriendly towards and distrusting of women editors and female-focused content. This is visible when looking up “feminism and Wikipedia” on a website like YouTube. The first two videos that pop up are attacks on the idea of feminists editing Wikipedia,

Figure 8 / Screenshot of Kraut and Tea's videos, the first two results of a YouTube search for "feminism and Wikipedia."

where YouTube user Kraut and Tea (an individual who appears to identify as male) goes over the Art+Feminism founders’ webpages and Wikipedia meetup pages, mocking the idea of organized edit-a-thons and proclaiming that feminists are attacking the free and open Wikipedia with their politically correct rhetoric and man-hating ways. His videos are lauded in their comments sections by YouTube users who responded with statements like “Looks like good, intelligent people are going to have to waste their time undoing the

trouble caused by another feminist circlejerk," "They are like societal weevils, or termites. Slowly, but very definitely steadily, gnawing at the foundation of Western Civilization," and "All they can ever do is edit history, never add to it." One of the YouTube commenters proposed attending one of the edit-a-thon events and taking notes about what occurred then reporting to the comment feed, an offer which received responses like "Nice one. It certainly would be very useful to have eyes and ears at such a gathering. This shit apparently is getting quite ridiculously out of hand. Worryingly so." Indeed, feminists are portrayed as *rewriting* Wikipedia in these video critiques, not adding to it or trying to better represent women in global art and history. It is difficult to characterize this response as anything other than the fear of women's voices, representing a disruption of the historic silencing of women. It also reinforces the unspoken idea that Wikipedia is a space for men, not women, and that bias only seems to come from an other, never oneself.

As Mabey has mentioned, intersectionality is an intentional pursuit of the Art+Feminism organization. On June 9, 2017 Mabey answered a follow-up question about the organization's efforts around creating an intersectional event, saying:

> As the number of events increased and became more international, we moved away from the crowd-sourced list of suggested topics and moved to encouraging folks to look to their specific institutional holdings and communities. We never explicitly tell people what to edit but most folks come to the project motivated to edit material pertaining to feminism, art, gender, sexuality, women artists, etc. That said, we encourage organizers to focus on the work of historically marginalized groups, both in the subjects edited and the folks that make up an organizing committee. For organizers, we provide materials about horizontal, feminist organizing and anti-oppression strategy.

These efforts are evidenced by looking at each satellite's Wikipedia MeetUp pages, where they keep track of who participates and what is edited. These MeetUp pages

connect back to the umbrella organization of Art+Feminism and help satellite events feel connected to the "hub" at MoMA. Many satellite MeetUp pages maintain a list of articles that need editing or creating, often focusing on local women artists from the community or region.

The Art+Feminism founders are encouraging of Wikipedia's efforts to correct its gender gap. Not only are they attempting to help democratize Wikipedia, but their efforts and institutionally supported. "By in large, we've been really supported by the Wikipedia community. Wikimedia chapters in NYC, Washington DC, Peru, France, the UK, Egypt, Spain, Mexico, Austria, and elsewhere have been integral in helping us realize the node events on all inhabited [continents]." There is a discrepancy in truly global representation, as most of the world's artists are not recognized *as* artists, and therefore have very little presence in Wikipedia. The conceptualization of "artist" is predominantly westernized and does not take into account the multitude of people who create art but might not label themselves as artists. It is also important to mention that Wikipedians are not all, in general, resistant to Art+Feminism's efforts to address the gender gap on Wikipedia. As they told me, "We rely heavily on the experienced Wikipedians who attend our events and support our trainings and are incredibly thankful for their input. Over the past few years, as we've become more involved the community in general, we've garnered an increasing number of leading Wikipedians who have championed the project." Through utilizing existing editors and collaborating with the interface and organizations that already exist, Art+Feminism attempts to build upon an already existing community to bring in new participants and help satellites thrive.

Outcomes

In 2015, Evans, Mabey, and Mandiberg published an article focusing on the outcomes and success of the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon. In *"*Editing for Equality: The Outcomes of the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thons," the founders argue for a verdict of success built off of two factors: (1) networked collaboration, and (2) the increased awareness of the need for gendered activism online. The Internet was dubbed a place dominated by men, thusly in need of feminist attention, by the cyberfeminism intervention in the 1990s (Luckman 1999). By cyberfeminism standards, the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon has succeeded in fulfilling the "commitment to exploring non-oppressive alternatives to existing relations of power through the manipulation of information technology" (Luckman 1999). Wikipedia, a digital, public *space* on the Internet, provided a perfect forum within which to combat "technologically mediated structures of power" (Luckman 1999). This of course begs the question *why not sooner?* It is important to pose, although answering it is beyond the scope of this thesis, and as such it will have to be examined at a later time, perhaps by a different scholar.

CHAPTER V

LOCAL LEVEL

In 2016, the University of Oregon hosted a satellite Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon event at the Allied Arts & Architecture (A&AA) Library. Although I did not attend this event, I was able to interview five of the coordinators/organizers, including both University staff and community members. The only satellite event I could attend, due to timing and availability, was the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon hosted by the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) on March 25, 2017 in Washington, DC. Although my interviews and most of my fieldwork are based around the local University of Oregon satellite event in Eugene, I thought it was important to attend and participate in an Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon to see it in action.

The Interviews

During the Fall 2016 term, I interviewed five of the coordinators for the University of Oregon's satellite Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon event. I asked a series of questions about what motivated my respondents to particiapte, what the event achieved, and why the digital event was held in a physical space. I learned that the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon was an event that most of them had been familiar with, even if they had not participated in editing beforehand. From these interviews, a few consistent themes emerged: face-to-face interaction, barriers to participation, lack of focus on local artists, recognition of the gender bias on Wikipedia, the idea that digital

connectivity does not replace community, and the existence of a problem with the lack of documentation about women artists.

Face-to-Face Interaction

Perhaps the most important takeaway from my interviews with Eugene's local event organizers was the assertion that digital does not replace face-to-face interaction. Participants considered the edit-a-thon to be a living event, and thought that the barriers to participation in a complexly structured platform like Wikipedia were best overcome in a physical meeting space. A few respondents mentioned that having a face-to-face gathering also provided and reinforced accountability, as well as a connection to the larger national level of Art+Feminism. As AA&A Librarian Sara DeWaay said in an interview on October 21, 2016:

> I sign up for a bazillion digital gathering things, and I don't go … there's something about a physical space that makes people a little bit more accountable, and it makes it more real. … I also think that part of it is just this idea that we are doing this together. I don't know how to do it and there is going to be someone there who can help me, and they can help me with my actual questions, because even though I know Wikipedia has a ton of stuff up there about how to get help and 'look at this tutorial!', that isn't how I process information. This maybe goes back to earlier Internet theory, like I remember this idea where people were like 'We're so connected! We never have to do anything outside of the computer!' and what I remember feeling and thinking was this idea that we're so alone.

DeWaay was not the only respondent who advocated for meeting in a physical space. Tannaz Farsi, interviewed October 31, 2016, is a professor in the university's Art Department and one of the lead coordinators of the edit-a-thon. She added that "Different things can happen when people are in a room—research often done in a private space—people respond to each other, you don't have to be idea generators." Farsi described the physical space as an opportunity to build relationships with other people. For her,

relationship-building happened on two levels: Democratizing of public space, and working with other university faculty and staff she otherwise might not have met.

This idea of community building was also echoed by Sheila Rabun, a folklorist and former university staff member who participated in the event and whom I interviewed on November 15, 2016. She said that "face-to-face interaction for learning and connecting with others…[provides] motivation to participate. Meeting new people reinforces what we should be doing in the online environment." Like DeWaay, Rabun brought up the idea of face-to-face events as an accountability tactic. If there are real people expecting your participation (not that online people are not real—rather, usernames tend to seem less real than a person sitting next to you), then you are more likely to show up. Shelley Harshe, Executive Assistant to the Dean of Libraries at the university's main library, agreed in an interview on October 27, 2016 with this idea, saying "Virtual is great, but it is easy to forget that people are people." These responses indicate the importance of face-to-face interaction. Many of my respondents also equated this with the idea of building better connections with one another and a stronger network with already existing university staff.

Sheila Rabun, during our interview on November 11, 2016, also reflected on the face-to-face aspect of the event. When I asked her why meeting in a physical space, in person, was important, she replied:

> Face-to-face interaction is crucial for learning and connecting with others. It provides motivation to participate, and becomes a social idea as well. We could help each other and learn together. Meeting new people reinforces what we should be doing in the online environment. It contributes to the feeling of being involved and giving people a platform.

Vicki Amorose, a community member who participated in the event, explained in an interview on October 7, 2016 that the choice of a physical event space over a virtual one was an important distinction. “We are living in a time where we need to choose why we use the internet,” she said. “It does not replace community. We are hard-wired to communicate face-to-face.”

Overcoming Barriers to Participation

Holding the event in a physical space was also a more comprehensive way to address imbalances in access. DeWaay mentioned that the AA&A Library, where the 2016 satellite event took place, is tied to the University’s internet network. While the wi-fi network was accessible to any participant, accessing the various databases and journals that the institution was subscribed to and the resources that the library has were only accessible through institutional permission (a log-in). While participants affiliated with the University have regular access to the available scholarly resources, community members had a more difficult time. There were two public access computers in the library, one on the third floor and another on the second floor, and participants needed to take turns using them, potentially walk down from the third floor where the main event (and coffee) was, and then take the information they gained back to their own ‘stations.’ The AA&A Library is located inside Lawrence Hall and is three stories. The first floor (see figure 8) contains several university computers and tables, while most of the books and periodicals are on the second and third floors. The edit-a-thon event itself was held on the third floor, where additional tables can be laid out and group work rooms could be used for small training sessions that would not impact other participants.

Amorose told me about her experience prior to this edit-a-thon trying to write an article for the Nuclear Beauty Parlor, a San Francisco-based artist activist group protesting the nuclear freeze movement in the U.S., a public protest movement in the 1980s calling for the disarmament of nuclear weapons. It took multiple efforts of researching, writing, and putting together a Wikipedia article before it was accepted by moderators and fellow editors. Part of Amorose's trouble with writing her article was the lack of documentation of print sources. "Lots of important performance art magazines and articles are gone," she told me during our interview. "Art organizations didn't have the resources to digitize them. There is this lost pocket of *good* art, experimental art." This lack of documentation of women artists persists retroactively in women's history of Western art, and makes it difficult to add content about them on Wikipedia.

Figure 9 / University of Oregon's AA&A Library, First Floor. (Image from University of Oregon Libraries.)

Copyright is another barrier to information activism that editors encountered. Rabun mentioned that during the University of Oregon's edit-a-thon, participants had a video-chat session with a copyright lawyer who explained the importance of complying with copyright law when uploading materials to Wikipedia. Rabun said that the context was valuable, especially for participants who many not have known about all the potential licensing issues of images and information. Additionally, Rabun mentioned that there were pragmatic barriers to participation, such as the lack of childcare options for people who might not be able to show up for the event if they could not find someone to look after their children.

Information is Not Neutral

Data is never neutral, and it is often ambiguous. We often hear data talked about as if it is irrefutable, concrete, and definitive. But, as Christine Borgman so succinctly puts it, "Data do not flow like oil, stick like glue, or start fires by frictions like matches. Their value lies in their use… Data have no value or meaning in isolation" (Borgman 2015). Data only have meaning when they are connected to something else—this very assertion implies that there is no meaningless data, and, thusly, no neutral data. A fact sitting alone without context is meaningless. If I presented the number 2.8%, my reader would not know why it was important or what it meant until I mentioned that it represents the percentage of women artists included in The Met's most recent catalogue. But this number did not stand alone. I did not pluck it from The Met's catalog, certainly—I had to go through the catalogue, count how many works of art were represented, find and record the number of artworks by women, and then do some math. 2.8% is not neutral, it is a percentage I calculated based on my bias going into the catalogue. I did not think there

would be very many women artists represented and I was correct. The 2.8% is representative of my interpretation of the catalogue. But just 2.8% by itself? It means nothing.

Do feminists have a feminist bias? Absolutely. Everyone does. Bias is inherent, and every view is a view from somewhere. Wikipedia, despite its attempts at information neutrality, cannot escape this. The illusion of neutrality is part of what gives Wikipedia its democratic reputation, and part of the problem that the Art+Feminism founders are concerned with and seeking to address.

Lack is also illustrative of neutrality. If information were neutral, then it could be argued that there would be a more equitable representation of women on Wikipedia. That there is not speaks to the bias of contributors—editing is voluntary, and people will edit and write about things that are of interest to them. Hundreds of years of hegemonic reinforcement that women are not valued as artists and visual culture makers is reflected in the content on Wikipedia. As Amorose said during our interview, regarding the lack of documentation about women artists, "the patriarchy is insidious. This is institutionalized exclusion. Women are cut off from documentation."

Another point of difficulty in editing Wikipedia is that women artists are not encouraged to promote themselves as much as their male counterparts. This is an area where the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon can help. Amorose pointed out that "A great deal of ego is required in the art world and women are trained to have less. Wikipedia helps encourage women to get over it."

Localizing the Edit-a-thon

Most of my respondents thought that the local event's goals to align with the national Art+Feminism goals for the edit-a-thon. Harshe said that the local event did not feel like part of a larger international project on the day-of because so many people needed training and the coordinators were so focused on making the satellite event successful. Harshe mentioned that she would like to see future events have more of a tie-in with the collections that already exist on campus. "The university has a lot of resources already," she said. Amorose, specifically, wanted to see more of a focus on Eugene and Pacific Northwest artists. She mentioned that she was working on the Wikipedia page for Wendy Red Star, a Native American (Crow) artist from Montana who works primarily in the Pacific Northwest. She mentioned that in future edit-a-thons, she would like to see more emphasis on local goals and support for local women artists. Farsi, who is a professor, also wanted to see local goals, although her interest was more educationally focused. "I would like an event like this built in with curriculum," she said during our interview. DeWaay wants to focus on Eugene artists more, but she brought up the problem of documentation and Wikipedia's requirement for secondary sources. Rabun said she would like to see a "focus on women artists in Oregon, people we have collections about. There are feminist women artists in our own community—if we edited them into Wikipedia then people could feel more connected to their own community."

Measures for Success

My respondents had varying measures for success. Some of them thought the event was successful, others preferred to lay out what they thought requirements for success would be. Farsi, for example, said that success would mean having participants "do research before they get there. A social space is not necessarily a thinking space." Harshe

measured success by the number of people who showed up to edit—there were more than she anticipated. DeWaay wanted to see more promotion of the event and felt that the event's success was marred by the lack of community outreach. "Can we pay for advertising?" she asked, also mentioning that there is a lot of potential for connecting with other organizations on and off campus. DeWaay also said that she would like to see the event restructured to better facilitate training for first-time editors. Amorose thought the event was successful in that she "appreciated that people showed up to be vulnerable and ask questions," and "several men showed up, which is great." Nonetheless, she would like to see more emphasis on local artists. Rabun had a more personal approach to measuring success. While she agreed with DeWaay's assessment that there could be more community outreach, Rabun also said that "seeing your own personal contributions is confidence-building."

Applying Pedagogy: Editing Wikipedia in College Classrooms

Figure 10 / Screenshot from Wyer's powerpoint for students. Painting by Irene Hardwicke Olivieri.

It is 8:30 AM and the lecture hall is filled with college students collaborating in small groups. They are busy with laptops, tablets, and books, searching for information about women artists to add to Wikipedia. At the front of the classroom several catalogs and art books are spread out, and every so often a student walks up and flips through them. The projector points a message at the board:

> Women's history is history. Women's art and culture is part of our collective art and culture. Just like the institutions in our talk about museums last week, Wikipedia plays an important role in visibility. Its content should reflect the rich, varied, lived experiences of our world, for people of all gender identities, ethnicities, and nationalities. Wikipedia is a public forum that (research shows) sees around 13.29 million visitors per day. Equity is created by your participation.

The sound of typing and conversation sweeps across the room. In their small groups, many students work with peers for the first time. Shared documents for the search engine Google filled with information about the artists assigned to them glow on laptop screens next to open windows of Wikipedia's source editor.

To test some of the knowledge and results from my interviews, I decided to see how a mini edit-a-thon could be used in a classroom setting to inform pedagogy. Using my position as a Graduate Teaching Fellow in the University of Oregon's Arts & Administration Program, I took a week out of each of three 10-week terms in the 2016-2017 academic year to present the problem of how women are represented in art museums to my Arts & Administration 252 Art & Gender class (usually speaking to an average of 70 students). After my presentation, I had students draw the name of a woman artist from a proverbial hat and research that artist in groups of 2-3. I selected women artists with the assistance of the research guide that librarian Sara DeWaay created for the 2016 Eugene Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, as well as the input from several colleagues who study English, Folklore, Art History, and Arts Management. I felt that is

was important that the women artists selected for the pedagogical activity not be selected just by me. The students were expected to return to the next class period having done research on their artists and ready to edit Wikipedia.

The editing process was difficult to teach—and expect immediate application of—in such a constrained amount of time (1 hour and 50 minutes). I tried a few different methods, including watching an instructional video at the beginning of class, assigning training videos as homework "reading," and problem-solving as hiccups in the process occurred with individual groups. I hoped that Jacqueline Mabey's statement during the Wikiconference (USA, 2015) rang true, that "a good teacher who is new to Wikipedia is better at training than a good Wikipedian without teaching experience" (Mabey). The classroom setting provided a few of the basic amenities for an edit-a-thon: physical space within which to meet and knowledge of the subject matter. I requested that students bring a laptop to class, or that at least one student per group bring a laptop. I would recommend arranging for a computer lab if this pedagogical exercise is replicated to ensure that each student has access to participating. The last necessary component to the edit-a-thon, Wikipedia expertise, was presumably supplied by me. This project was a learning experience, and my own expertise with Wikipedia steadily grew with each new term, but was nowhere near what a seasoned Wikipedian could contribute.

The challenge in selecting women artists was in picking people who were well-known enough to warrant a Wikipedia page (addressing Wikipedia's notability requirement for articles), but not so well-known that students could not add anything (whether it be resources or information) because the information was already there. I used the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) online collections database to find

artists accomplished enough to be collected by and shown in a national museum, then looked through their Wikipedia pages to determine if my students (within the given one-week timeframe) could effectively edit or contribute to their pages. Students who were given artist Kara Walker could only add a reference to her Wikipedia page, for example. In a couple of rare cases, students had to create a Wikipedia article for their artist. In all of these instances, the article was deleted by Wikipedia moderators shortly afterwards. Articles can be deleted if not enough information is included in them, but deletion is often an issue of notability and the number of sources included. Wikipedia has a "Sandbox" page for each user and recommends drafting new articles in the sandbox and uploading them all at once rather than trying to create a new article in "real time" that can be easily deleted before anything substantial has been added. This led me to question what Wikipedia moderators truly define as "notable"—is not the presence of an exhibit in a museum notable? Is a published catalog of their artwork not notable?

Student feedback was crucial to crafting a sustainable pedagogical activity. I asked all my students to respond to the Wikipedia edit-a-thon experience and let me know how the process went for them and whether their artist would be good to use again in a later term. I received a lot of feedback speaking to students' surprise that Wikipedia has a bias, which they realized when comparing the articles on women artists to their general Wikipedia knowledge and experiences. One student was appalled at the way her assigned artist was represented, while another student commented on her artist's local connections:

> Researching this artist was a really interesting, and eye opening experience while some of the results weren't terribly surprising they were a little disconcerting. My group researched [Berthe] Morisot, and because she was married to Eugene

> Monet[8] whose brother was Eduord [Manet] (whom Morisot heavily influenced in his artwork) the male artists seemed to be more heavily discussed in an article that was meant to discuss Berthe. One of my group members even found a shocking statement in a scholarly article that stated had Morisot not married Eugene, she would not have become as a successful or widely known artist. In relation, something I noticed in the Wiki article was that there are simply two short paragraphs that actually talk about Morisot's art and her style of painting, and in the section immediately after, there are at least four decently longer paragraphs about the [Manets] and Morisot's relationship to them. Overall, I enjoyed the experience and learning about how specifically gender is represented in Wikipedia. In high school, we were always taught that Wikipedia was a resource that should be mostly avoided, but it was never presented to us as something that we could contribute to, so that was really fun to see and participate in.

> This activity was interesting! It was fascinating, yet of course sad to see the under representation of women artists online, and especially in Wikipedia. I had Maude Kerns, which I was especially excited to research because she is from the North West, and the Maude Kerns Art Center was named after her. It was somewhat difficult to find information about the artist, and I kept getting my information deleted which was somewhat frustrating, so I advocate one person editing at a time to avoid an "editing conflict." I also hope in the future to see more female artists. I'm glad the class got to collectively add to the information about female artists on a media platform!

Other students expressed surprise that editing Wikipedia was accessible to them:

> I felt that the Wikipedia experiment went really well. It created an opportunity for ourselves to go into depth and really get to know the artist. As well as finding out that we are capable of editing Wikipedia and give our own input. Getting the chance to have our input approved was a cool experience, because before this project, my thought was that only a small percentage of individuals were able to add to Wikipedia, opposed to anybody. It was a great learning experience.

> This activity was actually really eye opening in term of what kind of sources we use. I never realized how easy it was to edit a Wikipedia article. I had always wondered why teachers said not to cite Wikipedia, but after having the opportunity to edit an article myself I feel like I truly understand where they are coming from. It was also kinda of stressful to edit just because so many people look at Wikipedia for answers. It was interesting to also see that there was not much information listed about my artist, but my artist's husband had so much

[8] She was married to Eugene Manet, not Monet.

> information posted. It really shows how [there are] problems with sexism on Wikipedia.

Students were connecting with the idea that they could contribute to and edit Wikipedia, and that they could use their research skills to address an inequity. Students who had their edits deleted were often confused, but not discouraged. I was careful to speak inclusively in my presentation of this activity to my class. I did not want my male students to feel like editing women artists into Wikipedia was "not for them." While one of Art+Feminism's goals is to increase the percentage of women contributors to Wikipedia, anyone can help with adding information about women artists.

This feedback helped me better prepare for future classes. The evaluative component of this exercise was crucial, because it allowed me to switch up artists as needed and get a feel for how my students were responding to the activity. Where were the barriers? How many of my students connected to the idea of inherent bias? Karen Keifer-Boyd explains the importance of pedagogical activities and tactics in the cyberfeminist realm, saying that to learn from one another's lived experience is a form of curriculum. She defines a feminist pedagogue as someone who asks students to use their lived experience to question the neutrality of knowledge (Keifer-Boyd 2012).

Students also commented on the ease of editing Wikipedia and how they had not previously realized that anyone—even people who are not experts!—can contribute to Wikipedia. The lack of documentation about women artists was mentioned by several of my students, which reinforces the comments I received from my interview respondents. Students mentioned:

> The Wikipedia activity turnout more insightful than I thought. My artist had so little on their Wikipedia page, and me and my partner found a lot to add! We

> noticed it had not been edited since 2013, so clearly it had not been explored enough recently. But while searching through my artists work, I found that I really loved her paintings. Julie Heffernan paints these really beautiful and metaphorical see-portraits that have a bigger meaning connecting to issues in todays society. After seeing them, it then made me sad that she had such a weak Wikipedia page because she deserves way more recognition than she is getting. It is also interesting in the "Personal Life" section, the only information is that she has a husband, when I think there is probably more things about her life that are important along with her husband.

> The Wikipedia Edit-a-thon taught me much more than I expected. I was able to see how easy it is to utilize websites such as Wikipedia and to contribute to something that someone else will learn from. I never realized how simple and convenient it is to be able to edit within Wikipedia. I like how there are also many women in our class, and us contributing to the website I think is a positive message for the people who do use Wikipedia and knowing that we are trying to change the statistic between male and female editors on Wikipedia. My artist, Helen Searle, was difficult to find information on, so my group was only able to add a couple sentences to her page. But it was interesting the amount of hyperlinks that were on her page, especially on still life paintings. I hope in the future more women will edit on Wikipedia and contribute to its overall website!

Helping my students understand the problems with relying on Wikipedia for research was a rewarding experience, and also made me more fully understand the concerns of the Art+Feminism founders when they talked about critical research and pedagogy.

Wikipedia's structure for editing can be overwhelming for newcomers. They have an intensive compilation of training videos and articles, a community-help discussion forum, and suggested first steps. I created my own PowerPoint presentations for my students in order to better connect the event to the class material. I discovered that guidance was necessary to my students' feeling like they could access and participate in editing Wikipedia. I was not able to fully appreciate the challenges of being thrown into editing a Wikipedia article until my own experience at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon in March of 2017.

Smithsonian American Art Museum Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon

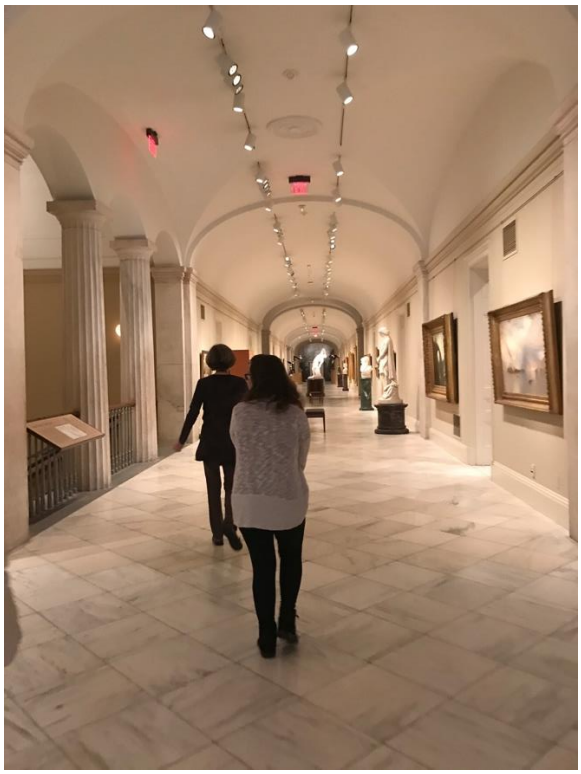


Figure 11 / Tour during the SAAM 2017 Art+Feminism Edit-a-thon. Photo by Sarah Wyer.

On March 25, 2017 the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) hosted an Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon from 10 am—3 pm. The event required pre-registration through email, an attempt to manage limited space. Before the museum opened at 11:30 am, we gathered outside in scattered numbers, unsure of where to go. Tentatively, we moved through the revolving brass doors, looking around the lobby for someone with a badge. A SAAM staff member was waiting in the lobby and brought us on a winding path through the enclosed courtyard with its Cherry Blossom Festival arrangements. A giant pink flower floated above our heads towards the glass ceiling, still amid the human fluttering of preparation. We walked further though galleries of

American landscape paintings against green and gold walls and into a room with curved ceilings and tables arranged into a chevron shape. People slowly filtered in.

We were given the internet name and password on a large projector screen at the head of the room, tail of the chevron. There were clearly some people who had participated previously—staff chatted amiably with participants about "this time the password is…" and "I've been editing artists lately…" People looked around their seats for plugs. One person brought in a little brown box and started eating something deliciously pungent from it, reminding me that I had skipped breakfast, had not even thought about it. Staff started setting art books and catalogs onto the front-most table, where I was sitting. Books with titles like *Female Gaze: Seventy-Five Women Artists, Pilgrims and Pioneers: New England Women in the Arts,* and *Women in the Arts in the Belle Epoque.* Conversations buzzed as coffee was set up by catering staff, soda cans organized into neat, color-coordinated lines.

One participant shadowed the organizing staff member, asking questions and wearing a bright yellow "ASK ME" button. The lanyard around his neck was thick with buttons and a nametag dangled from its end. He wore smiles and had bright eyes, seemingly excited to be at an edit-a-thon event. His accoutrements made him easy to select as a Wikipedia expert, a culture-bearer of editing Wikipedia. He spoke to the SAAM staff member who was setting up laptops and cords, muffled slips of words like "Wikicon" and "Montreal" pigmenting their casual conversation.

At 10:30 am a SAAM docent came into the room and gathered us up for a tour. For 40 minutes, she lead us through the labyrinthine museum galleries to various artworks by women, describing the history of the artist and the reception of the work. We

only had time for about eight or nine artists, the docent said briskly, mentioning that she was going to take us in a chronological journey because that was how she preferred to do things. One of the women near me whispered to her friend that the Smithsonian American Art Museum docents went through a two-year training process, to which the response was: "That's like a master's program!" They allowed us to take pictures of anything from SAAM's permanent collections. At the time of the tour we numbered 14 women and two men. To reinforce my earlier work on lack of documentation and how that has contributed to the problem of the representation of women artists, I think it is relevant to include some of the information our docent provided us with during the tour. Understanding more about these artists will help contextualize the work that the Art+Feminism Edit-a-thons are doing, and the problems they are contending with.

Edmonia Lewis was our first stop. An American sculptor from the 19th century, Lewis studied marble in Rome—that is where you needed to go if you wanted to be a sculptor then; that is where the marble was. Lewis did all of her own sculpting and did not employ anyone to assist her, which was commonly done. We looked at "The Old Arrow Maker," a sculpture of two Native American people working on making arrows and nets. Lewis—who was half African American and half Native American—portrayed her subjects at work, not as a dissipating, vanishing race. Our docent told us that SAAM has made a commitment to collecting art from African American artists and has the largest collection of African American art anywhere in the United States. We also looked at 19th century still life painter Helen Searle. The docent explained that still lifes were cheap to paint because the artists did not need to hire a model, which is one of the reasons women artists in the 19th century often painted them. According to our docent, art

history's hierarchy of artworks stipulates that the number of people in the artwork denotes the importance of what is painted. Lily Martin Spencer was a self-taught artist and an immigrant born in 1822, settling with her family in Ohio before traveling to New York to marry and paint. Spencer painted everyday scenes, genre paintings, and portraits, often of lower-middle and working class people. Her husband took care of their children so that she could make a living as a painter. In SAAM we saw "We Both Must Fade," where a finely-frocked woman gazes at herself in the mirror, holding a rose whose petals are drifting to the floor. It represents a self-aware subject, rather than showing a woman who is framed for the male gaze; this painting depicts a woman critically gazing at herself and knowing that, like the rose in her hand, her beauty will fade. "We Both Must Fade" challenged the notions of female respectability at the time, positioning a woman artist who was still painting at the edge of propriety. Cecilia Beaux was next, a rather famous artist comparable to John Singer Sargent. Beaux went to a Paris academy to study art for 19 months, then returned to the U.S. as a premier American portrait artist. She became a full faculty member at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts and painted figureheads like Eleanor Roosevelt. She never married, as women who married were not taken seriously as artists and usually socially pushed out of having a career. Maria Oakley Dewing is an example of such an artist wife. She married Thomas Dewing, a famous painter, and helped him with some of his commissions but never received credit for her work. From the 19th century galleries we moved into a new wing of modern art, looking at abstract expressionist paintings by Joan Mitchell and Helen Frankenthaler. Abstract expressionism was considered a very masculine genre, but some women were

able to break into it. We looked at a story quilt featuring a fictitious Harlem Renaissance Party; the middle panel was painted and the rest of the quilt is fabric piecemeal.

We snapped our pictures and returned to the chevron room. Then Sara, one of the SAAM staff, started a tutorial PowerPoint. It was a concise presentation, prepared and disseminated by the Art+Feminism organization to teach participants about the gender gap on Wikipedia and how to edit as activism. Sara mentioned offhandedly that she usually preferred to make her own presentations, but that the Art+Feminism tutorials had improved over the years. She asked everyone to introduce themselves—I discovered that one of the other SAAM staff members was an alumna of the University of Oregon, small world—and highlighted a table of participants from Wikimedia DC[9], a local chapter that organized general events in DC around how to edit Wikipedia. Sara received her initial training from these members, learning how to edit from unofficial experts.

Sara introduced Wikipedia as a free online encyclopedia entirely written by a robust community of volunteers—there are no paid editors. Really, Wikipedia is a tertiary source, not quite secondary and purposefully not primary. We discussed the trickiness of Wikipedia's notability requirement for creating new articles. This presents a barrier to writing about historical women artists because there are not a lot of source materials written about, for example, 19th century women artists at the time of their practice. As mentioned, women artists have historically been less documented. Addressing this reminded me of my interview with Vicki in Eugene, when she discussed how difficult it is to find documentation on experimental arts publications and history in San Francisco. It can be difficult to find the Wikipedia-approved sources required to create an article for

[9] WikimediaDC.org

artists who were not as heavily publicized, written about, or documented. Nevertheless, Wikipedia favors encyclopedic writing, which requests summarizing rather than interrogating.

Sara walked us through the steps of making an edit to Wikipedia using the source code (html language) or the visual editor (where you do not see markup). After every edit, Wikipedia prompts the user to leave an edit summary to both promote transparency and justify the edit. All versions and revisions are stored and users can look through the progression of edits. Sara talked about creating a user name for Wikipedia and warned that we could use our real names, but that once we did that information was relinquished to the Internet. Using our real names means that we give up our privacy. We looked at the sandbox editing area of our Wikipedia user pages, areas where one can practice and store edits. Users can crease infinite sandboxes where articles can be prepared. Sara mentioned that writing new articles in the user sandbox was the best way to go because users can take their time during the creation process. She advised against copying entire articles and pasting them into the user sandbox to edit, however. Wikipedia is a live, living thing on the Internet and other people may be editing at the same time, changing content at a similar rate. When she finished going through the powerpoint presentation, Sara directed us to the SAAM 2017 Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon page to add our usernames as participants in the event. Even as Art+Feminism edits Wikipedia, the organization keeps track of their process and progress. As our fingers began to spring across keyboards, Sara made a small joking complaint about Wikipedia's editing interface. The Wikipedia expert with the large yellow button snickered, saying cheerfully "If you don't like the interface, wait a while. It'll change."

We all logged onto a web-based real-time editor that can accommodate multiple users simultaneously called PiratePad. SAAM had created a PiratePad to keep track of who was working on what, and we typed in our names and the artists we were working on in Wikipedia. I decided to create a page in my user sandbox for the artist Irene Hardwicke Olivieri, who had a featured exhibit in the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art on the University of Oregon's campus a couple of years prior. Olivieri had no Wikipedia page, despite multiple exhibits and a catalog recently published by Pomegranate (a publishing company). As I scoured the Internet for articles about Olivieri, finding them in online art magazines and one piece by someone at the Los Angeles Times, I chatted with the fellow editors at my table.

We joked about the PiratePad name SAAMaf, standing for "Smithsonian American Art Museum Art+Feminism," rather than the popular abbreviation for "As Fuck," which we agreed would have made an excellent hashtag (a coded word of phrase preceded by the symbol #, usually searchable). The Art+Feminism statistics came up around usernames, and we talked about how usernames that sound feminine are more likely to have their articles deleted (Lam 2011). I joked that I should make my username "IAmAMan" so that my new article on Olivieri would have an increased likelihood of being accepted. Mercifully, they laughed. There were a few times where someone needed help and turned to another participant at our table instead of reaching outside to the Wikimedia DC members. The fact that some of us could not be overly helpful did not seem to matter as much as building a sense of camaraderie at our table.

The act of writing my article on Olivieri on Wikipedia's user interface was less challenging than I had anticipated. Once I found my sources and determined how to write

careful, encyclopedic sentences backed up by citations, I was left only with trying to figure out how to properly format an article page. What should the headings be? There was a shortage of guidelines for formatting. I did run into the problem of a lack of facts in the documentation on Olivieri. None of the magazine articles stipulated her birthday, for example, or her age. Writing a Wikipedia article for her changed how I did research. I scanned online sources for dates, facts, and definitive information. This—coupled with the preferred Wikipedian tone of neutrality—also limited the amount information I could write about her.

When considering the descriptions of the University of Oregon's 2016 Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, I realized that the satellites (of course) could be organized according to their resources, schedules, and coordinators. They would all be different. Whereas the Oregon event took place in a campus library with university resources, was organized to be drop-in/drop-out, had training sessions every hour for newcomers, and offered campus computers for people without laptops, the SAAM event was quite different. At SAAM, we had to RSVP because the room we were situated in could only hold 45 people. We started with a tour of some of SAAM's relevant artworks, had one thorough training session, and were not given special resources that would have otherwise been inaccessible to the uninitiated (like a university library). The University of Oregon's edit-a-thon, by contrast, required no RSVP (it was drop-in, drop-out), did not provide a tour, and were provided with university resources to assist in the editing process. This flexibility of the event further assisted its ability to mold to individual satellites and their resources. The event is not stagnant, it can remain both consistent and

changeable. When I left the SAAM edit-a-thon, it was with directed goodbyes to all the people at my table, and promises to return next year.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION:

"OUR TASK FOR THE FUTURE"

> *"Now, more than ever, we need to be aware not only of our achievements but of the dangers and difficulties lying in the future. We will need all our wit and courage to make sure that women's voices are heard, their work seen and written about. That is our task for the future."*
>
> —Linda Nochlin, "Why have there been no great women artists? Thirty Years After" (2006)

The Folklore field engages with and studies tradition, a social process made possible by the dual workings of continuity and change. In order for a tradition to continue—to survive—it needs to be adapted to suit the context of subsequent practitioners. These practitioners can manifest according to the linear progression of time (family traditions passed down through generations), or via geographic dispersion (bringing cultural traditions into a new country), but they will continue a tradition by changing it slightly until it fits into a new contextual reality.

Using this loose understanding of tradition, I would argue that feminist art activism is an emerging folkloric tradition. The Guerrilla Girls started advocating for more museum representation of women artists in the 1970s and have been continuing their method of activism for over 40 years. Their activism has mainly stayed consistent, but their method of calling institutions out—their tactics—have changed over time. Where posters used to be the primary way to get the word out, the Guerilla Girls in recent years have taken to filming short YouTube videos where they disrupt institutional spaces to critique their collections and advocate for the increased representation of women artists. Technology has changed within the last 40 years, and so the Guerrilla Girls have

adapted to it to effectively bring visibility to their advocacy tradition. The Guerrilla Girls are also anonymous and pass down their masks and pseudonyms (in public they use the names of famous women artists like Frida Kahlo) to emerging activists who carry on their tradition of feminist art activism.

If we consider The Guerrilla Girls' advocacy a folkloric tradition, then the Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon is a continuation of this tradition. Perhaps more closely related to Dorothy Noyes' idea of a network, where groups spread connections across distance and social class, reaching for a shared *something*—tradition, value, community, event, etc. Rather than looking at a group as a nexus of people with a specific, shared culture, I consider this digitally networked folk group as straddling the spectrum somewhere between what Noyes describes as "the empirical network of interactions in which culture is created and moves, and the community of the social imaginary that occasionally emerges in performance" (Noyes 1995). While Noyes does call for a distinction between these two ideas around the notion of folk group, I think that we cannot fully separate them in instances of digital community. The Art+Feminism editors are creating and performing a set of shared codes and values. As demonstrated by my exploration of two separate satellite events, these edit-a-thons are not inherited, unchangeable and unchanging, from the founders' "main" edit-a-thon event at MoMA. The shared values and codes are inspired by the founding organization, but the performance of them varies from satellite to satellite.

In my field work, I did not attend to just the brokers—"those accustomed to dealing with outsiders and representing the inside to them" (Noyes 1995)—of the edit-a-thon events, or Wikipedia. The brokers were there, representing Wikipedia experts like

the Wikimedia DC group, or providing polished information on how to break into this territory and edit like the founders of Art+Feminism. Through my layered approach in exploring the problematics that the event was designed to address, talking to the founders and looking at the national level, interviewing coordinators and participants at the local level in Eugene, and participating in a satellite edit-a-thon event, I was able to examine this folkloric event from several perspectives.

Another consideration lies in reciprocity, or reflexivity. By participating in an edit-a-thon, I became part of the folk network of editors. I gave back via participation, and by trying to address the problem that lies at the heart of this global community of editors—that of representation, information activism, and visibility.

Wikipedia's notability requirement necessitates documentation, but it also demands access. Small arts publications, especially ones printed prior to the Internet age, are like needles in a haystack. Finding them, digitizing them, and archiving them for use on Wikipedia takes time, access, and—often for smaller organizations or groups sitting on decades of undigitized materials—money. Wikipedia has been named and characterized as a free, online encyclopedia of public history and knowledge, but even with the open source access that anyone with an internet connection has, Wikipedia is still constrained by archival rules. Wikipedia provides knowledge for everyone who can access the Internet, but the matter of whose words and information gets contributed is a matter of initiation. Just as Arlette Farge, in *The Allure of the Archives*, describes a dusty building with old, fragile manuscripts and historical documents organized by archivists and silently perused by "the initiated" few who know how to use and understand the archives (Farge 2013), so too is Wikipedia's content dominated by a similar dichotomy.

The initiated create and edit, marking for deletion with surgical precision those articles that do not quite check all the boxes of neutrality, notability, and verifiability.

There are still barriers to participation, not only in the crucial matter of Internet access, but also in the culture of Wikipedia and Internet territory. As mentioned in the article "(En)Gendering the Digital Body: Feminism and the Internet," "Feminists … have long identified the Internet as an important social institution dominated by men and hence in need of feminist attention" (Luckman 1999). The Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thons provide *some* of this much-needed attention. By harnessing the network ability of the Internet, Art+Feminism assists in breaking down barriers of participation and increasing the voices and visibility of women online. Whether through editing women into Wikipedia, or initiating women editors, this folkloric event uses the innovation of Internet technology to create a nexus of cyberfeminist information activism. With events like these in the arts and beyond, folk networks of women and allies can puncture a space and narrative primarily dominated by oppressive hegemony.

I have focused on both museum and Wikipedia because I think that there is a reciprocal relationship between what institutions purport as culturally and socially valuable and important and how that information is disseminated through platforms like Wikipedia. While getting more art by women on the walls of museums is not Art+Feminism's specific focus or goal, it is something this thesis advocates for. The Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon has been successful in raising awareness of the disparity of representation on Wikipedia, as well as in encouraging more women to contribute to Wikipedia and combat a seemingly gendered reluctance to participate online. As mentioned previously, Art+Feminism does not subscribe to a binary definition

of gender (thus Art+*Feminism*, rather than Art+*Women*), and it should be said that getting more women to participate on Wikipedia does not mean that more articles will be about women.

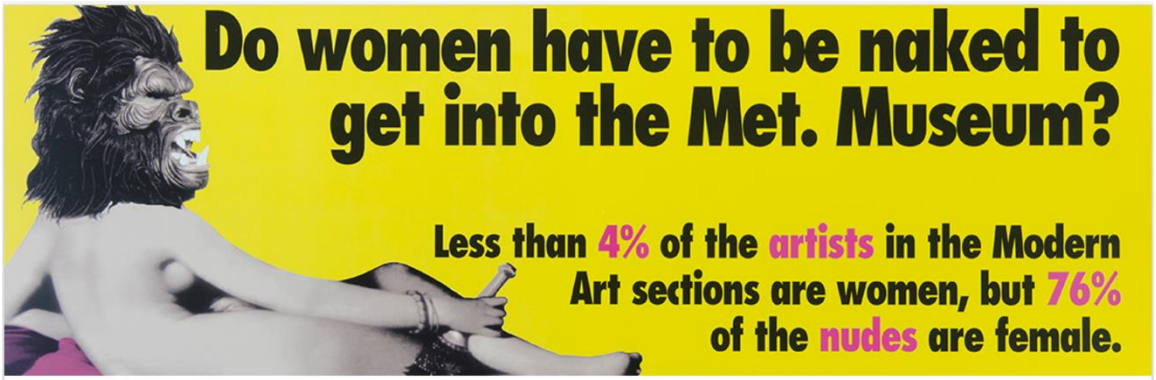
What Now?

Throughout this thesis I have pointed out institutional failings to equitably support the representation of women artists and art activists. This does not mean that I dislike museums, or Wikipedia. Rather, I believe that there is great opportunity for institutionalized spaces that serve as cultural stewards and authorities to address these inconsistencies of representation. With folk networks like Art+Feminism assisting in the growth of a global community of Information and art activists, museums and Internet-based structures of power like Wikipedia have a clear path to promoting involvement. Gathering digitally has allowed these activist networks to take direct action, but it also provides visibility and solidity to an otherwise disparate group. As Noyes—and many prominent folklorists before and, indeed, after her—discusses, folklorists have tied performance to identity. In performing the ethos of an Internet or cyberfeminist activist by editing Wikipedia, the folk network therein develops felt community. If museums are willing to change their inherited patterns of collecting to include a more equitable and diverse range of artwork that better reflects our multiplicity of cultures, then perhaps they, too can participate in supporting and building community. The practice of democratizing participation in Wikipedia has many barriers, as discussed: lack of documentation about women artists, hostility towards women in online territory, lack of

awareness about editing Wikipedia, and the digital process of editing is not enough to build community.

APPENDIX A

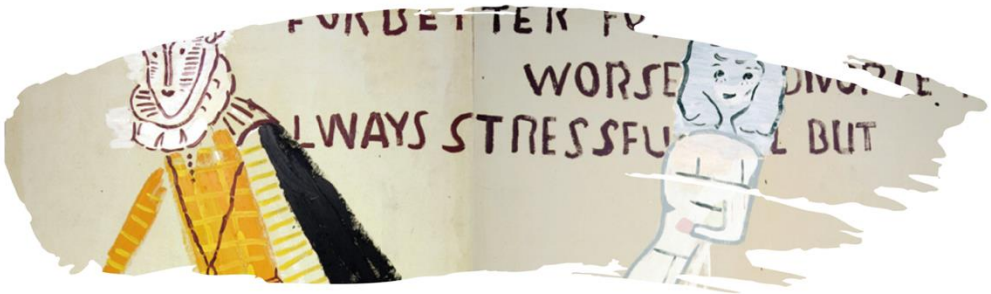
POWERPOINT PRESENTATION ON ADDRESSING THE PAUCITY OF REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN ARTISTS FOR AAD 252 ART & GENDER CLASS, CREATED BY SARAH WYER



SEARCHING FOR WOMEN

::::::::::

by Sarah Wyer
AAD 252 Art & Gender GTF



WRITING ACTIVITY

::::::::::

Get out a sheet of paper and write down the names of 5 women artists, off the top of your head.

ONLINE CHALLENGE

The National Museum of Women in the Arts has two online challenges for you to raise awareness of women artists:

1. Use the social media #5womenartists to share your picks!

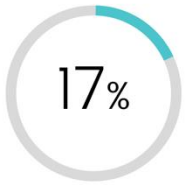
2. Go to your local gallery or museum and search for artworks by women, then:

Use the social media #nmwagetlocal to share your findings!

CASE STUDIES: WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

- The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- The Phillips Collection
- The National Museum of Women in the Arts
- The National Gallery of Art

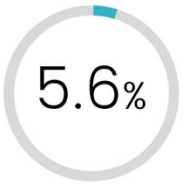
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE CATALOGUES OF LARGE INSTITUTIONS



MoMA HIGHLIGHTS

350 Works from The Museum of Modern Art, New York

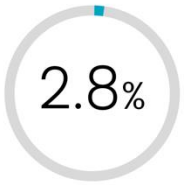
60 women artists out of 350.



NGA Highlights

at The National Gallery of Art

24 women artists out of 425.



MASTERPIECE PAINTINGS

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

14 women artists out of 500.

MASTER PAINTINGS

From The Phillips Collection

3 women artists out of 106.

51% of visual artists today are women; on average, they earn 81¢ for every dollar made by male artists.

Work by women artists makes up only 3–5% of major permanent collections in the U.S. and Europe, and 34% in Australian state museums.

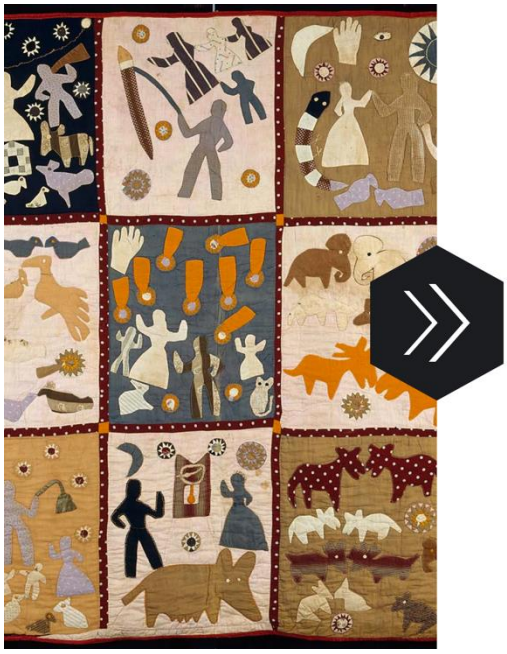
Of 590 major exhibitions by nearly 70 institutions in the U.S. from 2007–2013, only 27% were devoted to women artists.

Only five women made the list of the top 100 artists by cumulative auction value between 2011-2016.

No major international exhibition of contemporary art has achieved gender parity.

"The men liked to put me down as the best woman painter. I think I'm one of the best painters."

—Georgia O'Keeffe



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

MUSEUMS IMPLY VALUE

Museums are institutions that act as stewards. In the case of art museums, they are stewards of art and culture. What an art museum chooses to exhibit or include in their catalogues tells visitors which artwork has value. Including primarily male artists tells people who look to the museum as an authority that artworks by men are valued more highly than those by women.

CONNECTIONS TO OUR COURSE READING

How do you think this might relate to our reading assignments? Ore, Wagner, etc. Do you see relationships between the content here and topics like **intersectionality, acessibility, context, marginalization,** and **representation**? Discuss in small groups, prepare to share.






PICK YOUR ARTIST

In groups of 2-3, you will research the artist you pick from the super sweet bag I have up here. Find your group (they will have a piece of paper with the name of the same artist you have). Look up the artist together using resources AA&A Librarian Sara DeWaay showed us.

FOR MONDAY

Come to class on Monday with some secondary source information about your artist and a one-page write-up. You will be getting into your groups and learning how to edit Wikipedia. You will look up your artist and edit or add to their Wikipedia page. So...

Bring your laptops!



SOURCES

Amy Sherald, They Call Me Redbone but I'd Rather Be Strawberry Shortcake, 2009; Gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in honor of the artist and the 25th Anniversary of NMWA https://nmwa.org/works/they-call-me-redbone-i%E2%80%99d-rather-be-strawberry-shortcake

Rose Wylie, Lords and Ladies, 2006; Gift of UK Friends of NMWA in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the museum https://nmwa.org/works/lords-and-ladies

Kara Walker https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/b4/e8/86/b4e886bf6e087f3d48078184b5a21bbf.gif

Crochet by Jo Hamilton http://www.johamiltonart.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/JoHamilton_SelfPortrait_Crochet_23x25_2009.jpg

Augusta Savage with sculpture https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b6/Archives_of_American_Art_-_Augusta_Savage_-_2371_CROPPED.jpg

Aya Takano https://www.perrotin.com/images/2016/05/03/aya_takano_across-two-hundred-years-we-send-our-blessings_w800_030835.jpg

Berthe Morisot http://blistar.net/images/photos/0724e232fc7dcfed8570b2b7789e1772.jpg

Irene Hardwicke Olivieri http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-8MAiNfzyqok/UJE50crakSI/AAAAAAAASPw/UrNBhTKGctc/s1600/Irene+Hardwicke+Olivier+(4).jpg

"Pictoral quilt" by Harriet Powers http://mfas3.s3.amazonaws.com/objects/SC178482.jpg

Alice Neel http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-PwrzxjcDzZM/UX78J881aiI/AAAAAAAABb0/YIfCCCvmjyo/s1600/alice+neel1967.jpg

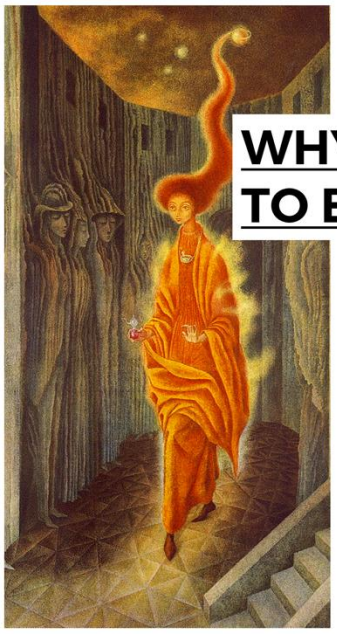
"Isabel Oliver" http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/ey-exhibition-world-goes-pop/artist-biography/isabel-oliver

APPENDIX B

POWERPOINT ON EDITING WIKIPEDIA FOR AAD 252 ART & GENDER, MADE BY SARAH WYER:

EDITING WIKIPEDIA

By Sarah Wyer
AAD 252 Art & Gender GTF



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO EDIT WIKIPEDIA?

- Wikipedia is a free, online encyclopedia. Anyone can edit Wikipedia. It is representational of a public history that people contribute to and refine.
- There is a gap. Less than 10% of Wikipedia contributors identify as cis or trans women.
- The gap extends to the content of Wikipedia as well.

KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

Facts not Opinions & Neutrality

Wikipedia is an Encyclopedia, not an academic paper. Keep a neutral tone.

Secondary Sources

Wikipedia does not accept original research or primary source material.

Open Source Pictures

We aren't going to be uploading pictures or images in today's exercise, but if you want to edit in the future, images must be open-source.

GET INTO YOUR GROUPS!

Find your group! Should be in groups of 2-3 and have an assigned artist.

GET OUT YOUR LAPTOPS!

If you are comfortable doingso, have *at least* one person in your group sign up for an account with Wikipedia.

EDIT!

Let me know if you have questions!

YOU HAVE THE POWER!

Women's history is history. Women's art and culture is part of our collective art and culture. Just like the institutions in our talk about museums last week, Wikipedia plays an important role in visibility. Its content should reflect the rich, varied, lived experiences of our world, for people of all gender identities, ethnicities, and nationalities. Wikipedia is a public forum that (research shows) sees around 13.29 million visitors per day. Equity is created by your participation.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF CATALOGS REVIEWED

Brooklyn Museum

Stayton, Kevin. 2014. *Brooklyn Museum highlights*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Brooklyn Museum.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Barron, Stephanie, and Pepe Karmel. 2012. *Envisioning modernism the Janice and Henri Lazarof collection*. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Galitz, Kathryn Calley, and Thomas P. Campbell. 2016. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: masterpiece paintings*.

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.). 2012. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Guide*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Museum of Modern Art, New York

Bee, Harriet Schoenholz. 2014. *MoMA highlights: 350 works from the Museum of Modern Art New York*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), and Ann Temkin. 2015. *Painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

National Gallery of Art

Hand, John, and Nancy Anderson. 2016. *Highlights from the National Gallery of Art Washington*.

National Museum of Women in the Arts

National museum of women in the arts (Wash.), Susan Fisher Sterling, and Nancy G. Heller. 2001. *Women artists: works from the National Museum of Women in the arts*. Washington, D.C.: National Museum of Women in the Arts.

The Phillips Collection

Rathbone, Eliza E., Susan Behrends Frank, and Robert Hughes. 2012. *Master paintings from the Phillips Collection*. London: Giles.

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