



The Female Nude in Art History

The female nude is one of the most common subjects in art history. From the humble innocence of Eve to the Libertine spirit of the 18th century, it can be found in a wide variety of paintings.

Despite its rarity in medieval Europe, the female nude reappeared in Renaissance painting. The reclining nude became a frequent motif, often idealized.

Art History

Since prehistoric times, artists have been using the female body as a source of inspiration and an aesthetic canon. But it was not always easy for them to depict nude women as a subject without scandal. The Venus of Willendorf, for example, is considered one of the first nude paintings. Then, the nipple became an iconic symbol for the Renaissance, and painters such as Rubens and Parmigianino depicted the Madonna with very visible nipples.

It was the French Rococo painter Jean-Honore Fragonard who revolutionized the art of nude paintings with subjects that are intimate and frivolous. His painting *The Shirt Removed* from 1770 shows a naked woman who confidently looks directly at the viewer. It was not a nymph or goddess, but rather a putto, servant of Venus, in a scene evoking sexual pleasure. Moreover, it was probably the first time that pubic hair appeared in art and not only in mythological or allegorical scenes.

Egon Schiele

The young men and women who modeled for Schiele often appeared as if they had just stepped out of a dream. Their nakedness was both vulnerable and erotically charged. Their

heightened sexuality and tumultuous relationships allowed the artist to explore a range of themes, including the nature of creativity and the inevitability of death on the deepest level.

Schiele returned to Vienna full of creative energy, with his work taking on an increasingly nuanced and sophisticated character. His empathetic and intimate portrayals of his patrons began to attract notice, but his flirtations with the gorgue Edith Harms put a strain on his marriage. He also had to come to terms with his imminent conscription into the army during World War I, a conflict that contributed to his deteriorating health.

Botticelli

During the Early Renaissance, <https://www.freeamateurvideo.org> Botticelli created spalliere—paintings on wood panels to grace wealthy households—that promoted morality. Unlike his soft-focus Madonnas, however, these women are bare-breasted and posed to convey a strong message. “Boccaccio was aware that representation of violence has several effects,” explains Nethersole. It provokes fear, stimulates compassion, and can catalyze change. It’s a strategy that Machiavelli would later endorse in his treatise on power, *The Prince*.

Botticelli’s *The Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* panels were designed to remind women to resist men’s advances and avoid abusive repercussions. The paintings were also intended to spout the artist’s religious philosophies. This particular panel is a tondo—a circular format—and depicts the Virgin Mary pensing the Magnificat, a Christian hymn, while angels crown her. The painting also references the apocalyptic vision of mankind’s demise that Savonarola spouted from his pulpit. This juxtaposition of traditional imagery with his own ideas suspends reality and allows for multiple avenues of interpretation, a hallmark of the best Renaissance art.

The Naked Woman

When Uruguayan novelist Armonia Somers published *The Naked Woman* in 1950, critics doubted a woman writer could be responsible for its shocking erotic content. But the author, writing under a pseudonym, was a feminist and pedagogue who used her art to critique Enlightenment values.

Her story begins with a woman’s thirtieth birthday. Rebeca Linke decapitates herself and repositions her severed head on her neck. After that, she wanders naked through her town,

provoking astonishment in the children and delight in the men, while women shriek with horror.

Morris's anthropological study of the female body is an essential read. He takes the reader on a guided tour of the female form, highlighting evolutionary functions for specific physiological traits and trying to put culture and customs into perspective. It's a classic work that will resonate with readers of Clarice Lispector, Djuna Barnes, and Leonora Carrington.