

OBJECTIFIED

The Female Form and The Male Gaze

February 15–July 7, 2019

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Representations of the nude female form are as old as art-making. Some of the earliest prehistoric images are fecund female figurines, and many ancient cultures around the world depicted the female nude. Portrayals of nude women are pervasive throughout European and American art, from historicizing images that seek to honor an ancient past to modern images that were intended to shock with their unabashed realism. Even the subject of 'the artist and his model' became a sub-genre of art from the early modern to modern periods. The associations linking female/model with male/artist are so strong, that 'male model' and 'woman artist' are linguistically marked terms. Many images of the nude allude to eroticism, not only because of some subject-matter (e.g. love affairs of Classical mythology), but largely because of men's privileged gaze and the subjection of women to that gaze. Objectification of the female form occurred as the figure was studied and represented, and is perpetuated each time these images are viewed anew.

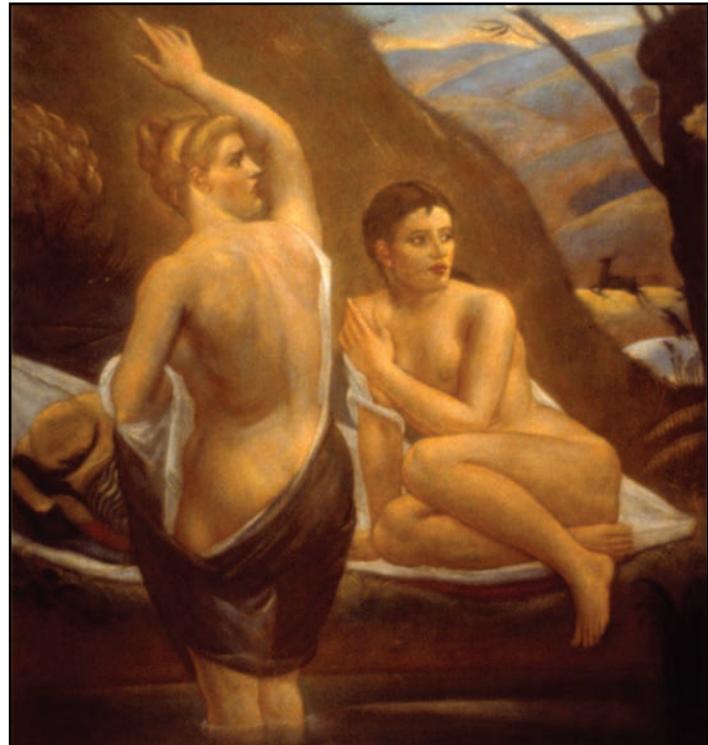
This exhibition will consider how we historically contextualize and personally respond to depictions of nudes and the artists who depicted them. Questions about how these historical/cultural and present/personal reckonings are at times consistent and other times at odds with one another will be investigated in light of feminist, queer, and intersectional perspectives on the history of art. The exhibition will feature early modern, modern, and contemporary works drawn mainly from the Museum's collection. A focal point will be a new acquisition by Katherine Sherwood: an expansive acrylic and mixed media creation, *Blind Venus (for G)*, which reimagines the idealized Renaissance beauty as presented by Titian in his *Venus of Urbino*, ca. 1534 (Florence, Uffizi). The image is painted on the back of sixteen famous artwork reproductions from the art department at the University of California-Berkeley, where they were used as instructional aids. Other works in *Objectified* include nudes by Goya, Fantin-Latour, Picasso, Matisse, and Pearlstein, as well as a highly finished preparatory study by Thomas Hart Benton for his painting of *Susanna and the Elders*, 1938 (Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco).

Johann von Halbig (German, 1814–1882)
Bathing Nymphs, 1867
Carrara marble

Purchased with monies from the Unrestricted Development Fund, MU (80.218)



Expect numerous conversations surrounding this exhibition. Public and online programs that create opportunities for expression of personal and shared stories and critical consideration of narrative patterns will be developed with university and community partners. As the world continues to examine the issues that have generated social and cultural movements to equalize the position of women in society, such an exhibition as *Objectified* is opportune in its presentation and subject matter. Hopefully, patrons will view and interpret the artwork presented in a deeper and more socially conscious framework. ■



Katherine Sherwood (American, b.1952)
Blind Venus (for G), 2018
Acrylic and mixed media on recycled linen
Gilbreath-Mclorn Museum Fund (2018.7.1)



Red Grooms, Alexander Brook (American, 1898–1980)
Whistler, 1976
Etching on paper
Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (80.205.1)



Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973)
Untitled, 1971
Etching
Gift of MU Student Fee Capital Improvements Committee (92.7)