**Annemarie Murland PhD**

**Curator, Reimagining the Canon**

The 2018 launch of the #knowmyname campaign has brought national and international attention to the present conversation that continues to surround the underrepresentation of women artists in the Canon of Western art. Taking the passé out of what has become a contemporary global phenomenon, gender inequality in the arts, as framed by the NGA’s current campaign casts a welcomed spotlight on what is a poly-cultural malaise.

Addressing this cultural blight are the 19 women artists from the *Reimagining the Canon collective. A*n international woman in art initiative, curated by Annemarie Murland had its inaugural showing at the University of Newcastle Art Gallery 23 October – 17 November 2019. Taking a well-deserved bow, RtC more than stepped up to the altar in its delivery of a powerful grassroots 'glocal' perspective on how the Canon might look when viewed through a female lens. The artists who participated in the project [exhibition and symposia] were from Australia, Scotland, Ireland and England. A variety of traditional and contemporary works that were medium and post-medium-specific filled the gallery space highlighting the depth of thinking, the scope of issues addressed and an excellence that would be valid in any arena.

RtC punched above its weight in tackling the giant in the corner, and according to Arts Hub Australia, this exhibition was in the top 5 regional exhibitions to see. Over 300 attended the opening where well known Australian artist, Virginia Cuppaidge, lent her support and spoke encouragingly. The exhibition was a huge success with local audiences and was very positively reviewed. In addition to demonstrating how everyday female artists can penetrate a system designed to keep them in the shadows, the exhibition unanimously proved that if you surround yourself with ‘good women and good art’ ‘good things will and can happen’. This is where campaigns like #knowmyname play a vital role in developing and shining a light on women artists and their projects and their contribution to Australian culture. It is my hope that the NGA continues its pursuit of fairness and inclusion of all women artists – particularly in regional Australia where there is a complete lack of representation and acknowledgement of 'local' women artists and their contribution to community and culture.

The #knowmyname campaign was generous in its support of *Reimagining the Canon* through social media representation and an essay by Alison Wright, Assistant Director, NGA that contributed to the exhibition catalogue and endorsed the legitimacy of the project at a national level. The project also received invaluable support from a variety of networks and industry leaders. Curatorial activist, Maura Reilly reinforced her advocacy for women in the arts by writing the preface to the catalogue alongside Professor Pat Hoffie, Griffith University who also provided a seminal essay. The project received overwhelming social media support from artists and art industry investors from, Greece – Egypt – Canada – US – Australia – Ireland – Scotland – England – Holland – Germany – Iraq and the UK. Ultimately, RtC characterised the value of the local and engendered a collective voice in its public redress of the ‘muscular history’ that frames the Canon and its female discontents – an issue that has yet to be resolved artistically.

Alison Bell PhD

Artist and Researcher

Scotland

For me, as a well-established, older woman creative, being offered the opportunity in the first place, to take part in an international exhibition, was key. Being older feels like a barrier to personal and professional growth, whether self-imposed or culturally perceived. Secondly, was the theme of re-imagining a male dominated canon. Being able to reveal that which is usually hidden, in the knowledge that it will be viewed on its own terms - among equals, felt rare. Our strength far exceeds our weakness and I feel that this was conveyed across the exhibition. Finally, the exhibition showed by its depth of commitment from across the globe, the power of our message of difference and equality.

Chris Byrnes MFA

Newcastle

Australia

At times in the past I imagined myself crying, shouting, sometimes screaming out into a vast art landscape; a hollow sound inside a silent invisible voice. Being part of RtC, underpinned by the Know My Name initiative extended my voice into a choir of 19 female voices and audible stories in the gallery space and hundreds more across the world. These stories navigate a range of individual personal voices merged into one collective writing: one that reflects the commonalities of living among the everyday-ness of life as a female artist - being *‘she’* and living *‘she’*. The words of the curator ‘that every woman has a story and everyone’s story matters’, continue to resonate beyond the exhibition, reminding me that my art story matters, and it is louder and stronger now. I was in such fabulous company.

Patricia Wilson-Adams MFA

* It is very encouraging to see that large institutions such as NGA are recognising the work of women so positively.
* However bear in mind that women from the regions are just as aspirational as those at the centre. We don’t want to stay at the grass roots forever so -
* given that most of the women shown in the *Know my name* initiative already have a good profile the platform needs to be expanded. The problem for women in the regions is to even get to a similar point, where their work is recognised beyond the local.
* There seems to be no transparent mechanisms within institutions to further the careers of unknown women artists, no interest on the behalf of curatorial staff to educate themselves about what is happening outside the centres and no willingness or the courage to “give a leg up” to women artists from the regions, for example validating their work by curating them into major shows. To my mind this is prejudice and/or laziness. (Most women from the regions are located here due to family commitments, jobs, lower rents and they certainly find themselves in circumstances that mitigate against networking)
* We can show in wonderful female oriented exhibitions such as *Reimagining the Canon* forever and yet never get to be placed before a wider audience, despite the work being of such a high calibre.

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Newcastle Australia