"Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"
Asks Art Historian Linda Nochlin in 1971, in her essay published in ArtNews, launching feminist art history

Social structures have not allowed women to be artists:

Only aristocratic or upper class women were trained in the arts
Unacceptable for a lady to view nudes, thus it was impossible for her to study anatomy or draw from life
Women’s role was to get married and bear children; this is how they “create”
The “gaze;” the history of the female nude’s objectification in the Western pictorial, and formalist, tradition; always made object to the natural male subject, the male viewer and artist.

Women are always looked at, captured, in the male subject’s gaze; Both women depicted nude are prostitutes, and are assumedly sleeping with the artists.

Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538
More seductive

Manet, *Olympia*, 1863
More ownership of body and gaze
“diaristic gesture” of personal paintings done by almost all male Abstract Expressionists

When an Ab Exer is female….

Helen Frankenthaler, *Mountains and Seas*, 1952

More Landscape-like with traditional figure-ground, less personal “diaristic gesture”

Combining voluptuousness and menace, De kooning’s “Woman” paintings, reflect a stable male subject- a painting made by and for a male subjectivity- in its age–old cultural ambivalence between reverence for and fear of the power of, and as a result violence to, the feminine.
Vito Acconci, *Conversions*, 1970, Body art, Performance art, Postmodern beginning

Film documentation

In these three exercises, Acconci plays with trans-gender illusions, manipulating and altering his own body parts to suggest sexual transformations. For example, he burns the hair from his chest with a candle, then attempts to create the illusion of having female breasts.
First Generation, or First Wave, Feminists wanted to, finally, speak for themselves and control their own representation - reclaim ownership of their bodies and their sexuality, and celebrate their feminine powers of birth and connection to the earth.
Carolee Schneemann, *Eye Body*, from thirty-six transformative actions for camera, 1963

Feminist Performance art, Body art, Postmodern beginning

Critiques the “diaristic gesture” “I do not trust men who only talk to themselves” and this “natural male subject” talking can only consider Schneemann a “dancer” when she is really a choreographer, artist, filmmaker, etc.
Ana Mendieta, *Tree of Life Series*, 1977, performance at Old Man’s Creek, Iowa City, Iowa. **Performance art/ Early feminist art**- it showed the equivalence between femaleness and natural processes that perpetuate life; biology accounted for most of the differences between women and men, specifically that through natural cycles of their bodies, women might be closer to the rhythms of the earth.
Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1979, mixed media and triangular table on white tile floor. **Early Feminism/installation**

This work was a collaboration of many women (and a few men) organized and directed by Judy Chicago over a period of five years. The cooperative venture was itself a political statement about the supportive nature of female experience as opposed to the frequently competitive nature of the male.
Performance Art as a critique of art-as-object continued (Ch. 2, pp. 87-93)

Joseph Beuys
-Performance artist
-Roots in Dada inspired Fluxus
Joseph Beuys, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, 1965, Performance art, Postmodern beginning
Beuys explained his performance *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* thus: “In putting honey on my head I am clearly doing something that has to do with thinking. Human ability is not to produce honey, but to think, to produce ideas. In this way the deathlike character of thinking becomes lifelike again. For honey is undoubtedly a living substance. Human thinking can be lively too. But it can also be intellectualized to a deadly degree, and remain dead, and express its deadliness in, say, the political or pedagogic fields. “Gold and honey indicate a transformation of the head, and therefore, naturally and logically, the brain and our understanding of thought, consciousness and all the other levels necessary to explain pictures to a hare: the warm stool insulated with felt… and the iron sole with the magnet. I had to walk on this sole when I carried the hare round from picture to picture, so along with the strange limp came the clank of iron on the hard stone floor—that was all that broke the silence, since my explanations were mute… “This seems to have been the action that most captured people’s imaginations. On one level this must be because everyone consciously or unconsciously recognizes the problem of explaining things, particularly where art and creative work are concerned, or anything that involves a certain mystery or question. The idea of explaining to an animal conveys a sense of the secrecy of the world and of existence that appeals to the imagination. Then, as I said, even a dead animal preserves more powers of intuition than some human beings with their stubborn rationality.”

Beuys considers himself a shaman; he is always fashioning himself in this way
Joseph Beuys, *Coyote: I like America and America likes me*, 1974, performance at Rene Block Gallery, New York that includes the artist wrapped in felt and a live coyote. **Performance art, Postmodern beginning**