

**research papers** | art history | senior seminar | spring 2020

students in art history investigate art practices and their manifold contexts. we engage with art history in the present, exploring research strategies, forms of visual representation, critical thinking, old and new technologies, questions of aesthetics, politics, memory, transdisciplinary developments, new approaches and future directions.



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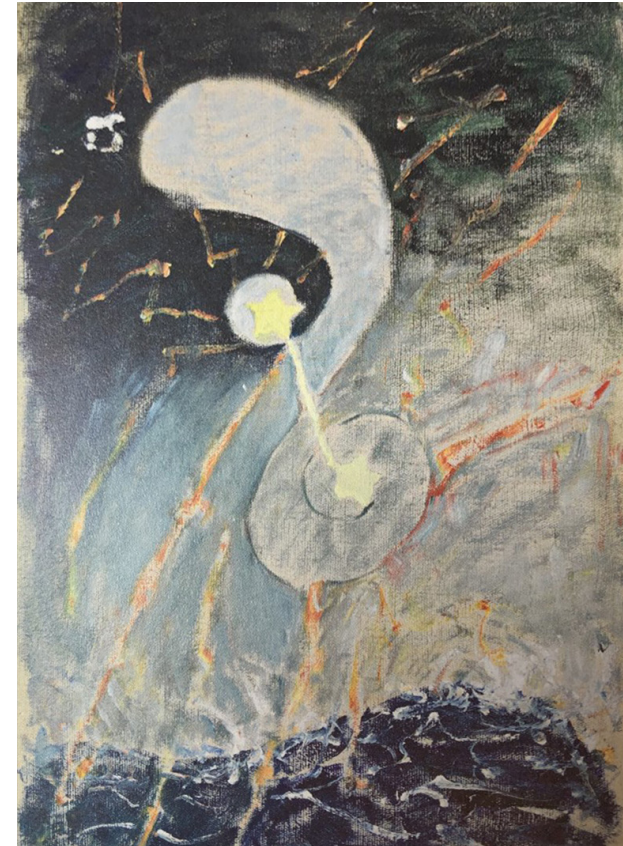
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**amy hamilton**

*Abstraction and Spirituality: Hilma Af Klint's Early Experiments*

**abstract**

In recent years, Hilma af Klint (1862–1944) has been rediscovered as a vanguard figure in the history of abstraction, with solo retrospectives exhibited at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2013 and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2018. Af Klint's works encompass and pre-date many of the abstract movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She painted in secret and her abstract paintings were not displayed until twenty years after her death. This paper examines Hilma af Klint's early experiments with abstraction, focusing on works from four series of paintings from 1906-1915 and highlighting Klint's interest in spirituality. The paintings considered include works from her series *Primordial Chaos*, *The WU/Rose Series*, *The Ten Largest*, and *The Swan*.



Hilma af Klint, *Group I, No. 1, Primordial Chaos*, 1906, Oil on canvas, 53 x 37 cm, Stiftelsen Hilma af Klints Verk

In 1906 Hilma af Klint began her solo experiments with abstraction. She accepted a commission from a spirit guide named Amaliel in 1905 and prepared herself spiritually as well as artistically before beginning what was to become her *Painting for the Temple* series. *Primordial Chaos*, *The Rose*, and *The Ten Largest* are series within the *Temple* series. The *Temple* series can be used to examine shifts in her formal development, ranging from gestural compositions to more geometric designs.

Experimentation with spiritualism was common among early twentieth-century pioneers of abstraction. Both Hilma af Klint and Wassily Kandinsky were influenced by Theosophical spiritual and philosophical leaders Helen P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant, Rudolph Steiner and Charles W. Leadbeater. Af Klint took a more direct approach than Kandinsky and her development of an abstract pictorial vocabulary occurred earlier than Kandinsky's.

Af Klint sought to gain knowledge through what she believed was direct contact with spiritual beings from other dimensions. She sought to speak directly the divine without going through a male-dominated theology or intermediary such as a priest or minister. Af Klint's interest in spirituality resulted in exuberant and wholly original compositions that are thrilling to view.

## excerpt ii

Hilma af Klint determined that a dedicated spiritual practice was necessary to develop a new and important type of art. Before beginning work on what would become her *The Paintings for the Temple* series, which included work on *Primordial Chaos #2*, *Eros No. 1*, *The Ten Largest No.2*, Klint prepared herself by fasting, prayer, and giving up realism. There are writings in some of her paintings indicating that she had dedicated her life to becoming a “Vestal—Ascetic” (meaning a virgin living a life dedicated to higher morality and asceticism).<sup>1</sup> Works containing the words “Vestal-Ascetic” include *Primordial Chaos, No. 9*, *The Eros Series, No. 2*, *The Ten Largest, No. 7*, *Adulthood*, among others.

Hilma af Klint’s experiments with abstraction are formally innovative and original. Her canvases demonstrate a broad range of abstraction and experimentation. Af Klint’s importance in art history is well described by art historian Pascal Rousseau:

an artwork is the product of more than just the artist’s conscious intention. It stands at the crossroads of a multitude of cultural parameters that elude the artist and make him an intermediary as much as an actor. Hilma af Klint is an *intermediary* of abstraction. Not only is she a pioneer who compels us to raise the question of abstraction before its time, or, more intriguingly, of the anticipation of abstraction, but she also incites us to rethink the origins of abstract art in a plural fashion, a version in which a multitude of converging sources intersect (arabesque, decorative vocabulary, and ornament; pure line, formalism, and musicalism; automatic writing, trance, and mediumship; symbolism, idealism, and hierophany).<sup>2</sup>

Through her distinctive methods and dedication, af Klint became one of the first great pioneers of abstract painting.

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1 Maurice Tuchman, Judi Freeman, Carel Blotkamp, Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, Ill.), Haags Gemeentemuseum, and Los Angeles County Museum of Art. *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), 156.

2 Iris Müller-Westermann, Jo Widoff, David Lomas, Pascal Rousseau, Helmut Zander, Hilma af Klint, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart--Berlin, Sweden) Moderna museet (Stockholm, and Museo Picasso Málaga. *Hilma Af Klint: A Pioneer of Abstraction*. (Vol. no. 375;nr 375;. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013),161.

“Like other pioneers of abstraction, Af Klint was intrigued by the challenge of conveying the issuance of material form from spirit, the structure of the invisible realm, and the relationships of patterns and forces therein.”

— Charlene Spretnak, in Spretnak, *The Spiritual Dynamic in Modern Art: Art History Reconsidered, 1800 to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 79-80.

“As early as 1906 [Af Klint] was developing an abstract imagery, several years before Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Kazimir Malevich, and Frantisek Kupka, who are still regarded as the forerunners of twentieth century abstract art. Like the modernist father figures, Hilma af Klint was influenced by the spiritual and occult movements of her time, in particular by spiritualism, theosophy and later anthroposophy.”

— Iris Müller-Westermann in Müller-Westermann, Jo Widoff, David Lomas, Pascal Rousseau, Helmut Zander, *Hilma Af Klint: A Pioneer of Abstraction*, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart--Berlin, Sweden) Moderna museet (Stockholm, and Museo Picasso), Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013, 33.



Hilma af Klint, *Group II, No. 2, Eros, the WU/Rose series*, 1907, oil on canvas, 58.5 x 81.5 cm. Stiftelsen Hilma af Klins Verk

“The genesis and development of abstract art were inextricably tied to spiritual ideas current in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An astonishingly high proportion of visual artists working in the past one hundred years have been involved with these ideas and belief systems, and their art reflects a desire to express spiritual, utopian, or metaphysical ideals that cannot be expressed in traditional pictorial forms.”

— Maurice Tuchman in Tuchman, Judi Freeman, Carel Blotkamp, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), 17.

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Hilma af Klint, *Group IV, The Ten Largest, No. 2, Childhood*, 1907, Tempera on paper, mounted on canvas, 315 x 234 cm, Stiftelsen Hilma af Klints Verk

## autumn pitney

### *Trauma, Sexual Violence, and Dowry Murders in Contemporary Indian Art*

#### abstract

This paper analyzes forms of trauma presented in visual artworks dealing with issues of rape and sexual violence in India. The paper examines issues of sexual violence occurring in contemporary India, such as rape and dowry-murders. The bodies of women may represent the nation. Trauma is evident in artworks such as Tyeb Mehta's *Kali*, Rekha Rodwittiya's *Scissors, Gun, Knife, Cunt*, and *Sathyarani—Staged Portrait, Supreme Court, Delhi*. It is evident that in this context rape and sexual violence are bound up with the history of colonialism and a broken sense of nation in the wake of the Partition of India and British colonialism.



Tyeb Mehta, *Kali*, 1989, oil on canvas, 67 x 54 in (170.2 x 137.2 cm), the Ebrahim Alkazi Collection.

Mehta's *Kali* represents a splitting away from colonialism. This painting can be linked to the Partition of India. Partition, which took place on August 16, 1947, divided the Punjab region into Pakistan and Eastern India after British occupation.<sup>1</sup> During this division, fifteen million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were displaced, causing the largest human movement ever documented.<sup>2</sup> Hindus moved to India and Muslims moved to what is now known as Pakistan. Violence erupted once the British left India for good. There became a sense of normalcy in this violence, as each group was committing atrocities against the other. This violence included mass train slaughters, looting and arson.<sup>3</sup> During Partition riots in Mumbai, Tyeb Mehta witnessed a man get stoned to death, which has influenced most of his works, including *Kali*.<sup>4</sup>

Atreyee Gupta, Professor of Global Modern Art and Southeast Asian Art at the University of California, Berkeley, claims that the "figurative iconography of disenfranchisement bore testimony, in a documentary made as it were, to Partition as presence."<sup>5</sup> This can be seen in Mehta's *Kali*. As the name of Mehta's painting suggests, the foremost blue figure represents the goddess Kali. Mehta often uses the goddess Kali as a subject for his work. Kali is known for being an aggressive, terrifying, immodest, self-absorbed mother figure.<sup>6</sup> She signifies more than the feminine. Vrinda Dalmiya, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii, describes Kali as exceeding "what is allowed by the traditional construction of 'motherhood.'"<sup>7</sup> Kali fearlessly goes above and beyond the traditional roles of mother. Arunima Dey writes: "The gendering of national legitimizes the idea that nation as mother or woman needs to be protected by its (male) citizens from evil outsiders, thereby sanctioning communal wars."<sup>8</sup>

1 Jisha Menon, *The Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the Memory of Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 6.

2 Menon, 7.

3 Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 37.

4 "Tyeb Mehta," Wikipedia, last modified March 13, 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyeb\\_Mehta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyeb_Mehta).

5 Atreyee Gupta, "Dwelling in Abstraction: Post-Partition Segues into Post-War Art," *Third Text* 31, no. 2-3 (2017): 434.

6 Vrinda Dalmiya, "Loving Paradoxes: A Feminist Reclamation of the Goddess Kali," *Hypatia* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 126.

7 Ibid.

8 Arunima Dey, "Violence Against Women During the Partition of India: Interpreting Women and Their Bodies in the Context of Ethnic Genocide," *ES*, 37 (2016): 108.

Women were the first to experience violence in Partition. Commonly, they were assaulted by someone belonging to other cultural and religious groups to dishonor them and their communities. Examples of this type of violence include disfiguring, rape, branding, cutting open wombs, killing fetuses, and being forced to walk naked throughout their communities. This violence was about protecting male and community honor, as women are thought of as the backbone of their communities.<sup>9</sup> However, the cutting open of wombs and killing fetuses is not only in the past. In the Gujarat Riots of 2002, men would cut open fetuses and burn them in front of the mothers.

Rekha Rodwittiya's painting, *Scissors, Gun, Knife, Cunt*, is a piece centered around those forced abortions. The figure on the left takes up half of the canvas, sitting in a yogic position. The woman is sitting above a pool of blood coming from her vagina. She has her hands around her stomach in a very nurturing manner. Her gaze is fixed, confrontationally, on the viewer. To her right is a string with three sets of handprints going up the canvas. Covering these sets of handprints are a pair of scissors, a gun, and a knife. Behind the woman are objects that form a circle around her. There is a chair to her bottom right and leaves above her right shoulder. There are windmills above her left shoulder, a house below that, twigs below the house, and rocks that sit by her left foot.

Typical to her works, Rodwittiya turns the victim into a fearless protagonist. The woman in the painting does not let her eyes leave the viewer. Her gaze demands the viewer to look at what is surrounding her, refusing to be objectified. In *Scissors, Gun, Knife, Cunt* the woman takes up half of the canvas, demanding space. Squatting down, she is as tall as the scissors on top of the rope. She requires the viewer to see her, not just the chaos around her. In the two pieces from *Love done right can change the World*, the figure takes up the entire canvas, also demanding the viewer to recognize the subject. Their gazes are fixed, almost daring the viewer to either stare back or look away. With this gaze, she "provides us with an imaginative, cognitive, and emotive language for feminist politics."<sup>10</sup>

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9 Ritu Menon, 43.

10 Gita Chadha, "Returning the Gaze," *Art India: The News Magazine of India*, 21, no. 2 (2000): 71.

The trauma represented in *Scissors, Gun, Knife, Cunt* can be recognized as transgenerational trauma. Transgenerational trauma is “the experience of a whole generation, in which individuals collectively share a similar psychology,” that contributes to a shared trauma.<sup>11</sup> It can also be referred to as post-memory, defined by literary theorist Marianne Hirsch as a “relationship that the ‘generation after’ acquires in relation to the collective trauma of those who came before,” transmitting the trauma through fragments.<sup>12</sup> Traumatic experiences experienced by one generation are passed down to others, causing later generations to experience a split in the world they live in. Dr. K. Frances Lieder, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, notes that it is impossible to remove a conversation about rape from history, as the rape and abduction of women are used as symbolic attacks on their communities.<sup>13</sup>



Rekha Rodwittiya, *Scissor, Gun, Knife, Cunt*, 1995, watercolor and acrylic on paper, Yashodhara Dalmis's *Contemporary Indian Art Other Realities*.

11 Tihamer Bako and Katalin Zana, “The Vehicle of Transgenerational Trauma: The Transgenerational Atmosphere,” *American Imago*, 75, no. 2 (2018): 272.

12 Salmi Mathur, “Partition and the Visual Arts; Reflections on Method,” *Third Text*, 31, nos. 2-3 (2017): 210.

13 K. Frances Lieder, “Performing Nirbhaya (Fearlessness): Performing Sexual Violence Discourse in Modern Urban India,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2018), 54.

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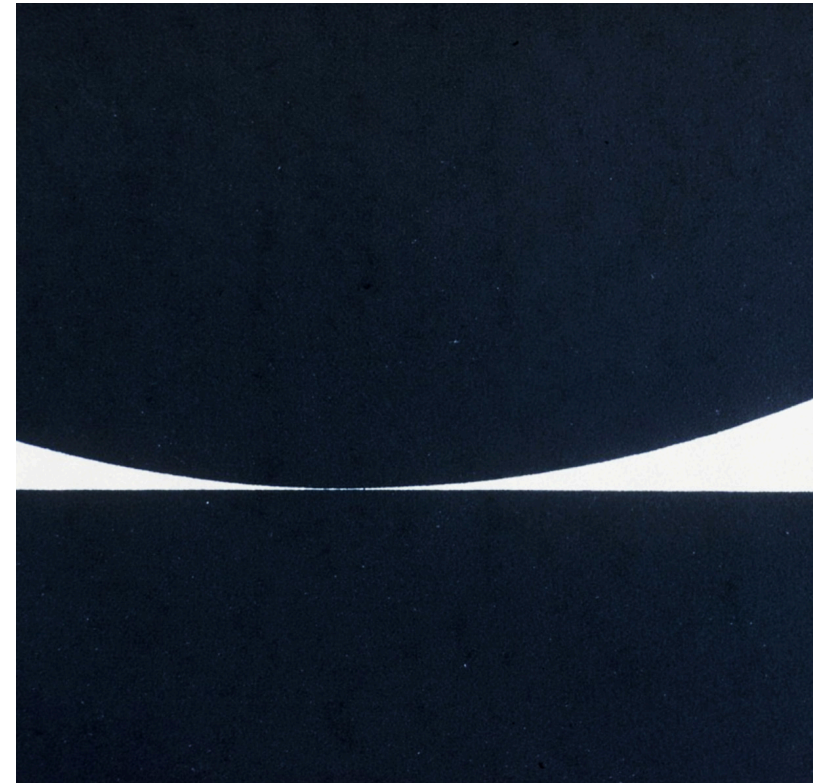
Sheba Chhachhi, *Sathyarani—Staged Portrait, Supreme Court, Delhi*, 1990, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, 30.4 x 20.3 in, Tate Museum, © Sheba Chhachhi

## devon hensler

### *Bridget Riley: Sensations of Past, Present, and Future*

#### abstract

Utilizing her own distillation of art history, conventions of Op, and her astute understanding of visual processes, Bridget Riley tackles the phenomenology of sensation within her pragmatic paintings. Calling into question the fallibility and limitations of vision, Riley uses her works as a methodology in which to convey the complexity of both sight and experience. This essay will assess Riley's career through the analysis of three major works: *Kiss* (1961), *Cataract III* (1967), and *Gaillard* (1989). Through the application of formal principles, discussion of visual stimuli, and historical considerations of the artist, this essay will argue that Bridget Riley's vibrating images, graphic compositions, and colorful creations exemplify the intricacy of vision in regards to phenomenological sensation.



Bridget Riley (b. 1931), *Kiss*, 1961, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122 cm, Private Collection, London

## excerpt i

Tremendous gravity is embedded within *Kiss* as the viewer's eye captures an invisible weight of the upper black form extending down to breach the space of the lower. As the eye follows the suggested 'pull,' a visual tension exists within the space between dark forms. The highly contrasting colors ensure that the eye cannot visually assimilate the forms together—guaranteeing that the space between will not go unnoticed.<sup>1</sup> However, another principle of design at play within this work is that of proximity. Proximity, in a basic perceptual sense, highlights a human desire to group similar visuals existing near one another.<sup>2</sup> Riley strategically utilized this spatial incongruity to develop visual tension that afflicts the onlooker, forcing a cycle from attempting to assimilate the black forms together and recognizing the space that exists between them.

Riley offers appropriate formalistic visual cues of proximity and contrast in order to create tension that can trigger the viewer's experiences of life. In this regard, Riley's first abstract work, *Kiss*, set a precedent for considering both the objective, formal and perceptual effects, and the subjective, sensationalism that would extend into her artistic career in its entirety. The intention of this work, however, is not for the viewer to glean understanding as to why, or how, the effect is being created. Rather, Riley presents *Kiss* to highlight a contentious experience. The optical effects present in the work act solely as a methodology in which Riley can facilitate a sensation within the viewer. As Riley intends to draw attention to, understanding proximity and contrast brings the viewer no closer to a profound phenomenological experience; however, the sensation they create allows for a deeper understanding of spirit and environment. The artist's intense consideration for these optical conventions, while presented in such subtleties, serve as a catalyst for the continuation of Bridget Riley's career.

## excerpt ii

Bridget Riley shifted her practice from monochromatic works of visually assaulting patterns towards more colorful considerations. Completed in 1967, *Cataract III* made a significant impact both visually and conceptually. Linear waves of greyed cyan repeat across the canvas, some capped with embellishes of red, all in repeated contour but slightly misaligned. The surface of the canvas seems to undulate and morph as the eye drifts across; perceptions entirely rooted in vision's alterability. Its large-scale form consumes the viewer's field of vision in its entirety. Thin lines of color seem to radiate a glow that consumes much more than the positive space on the canvas as the hard edge of each line is seemingly softened by the dazzling color.

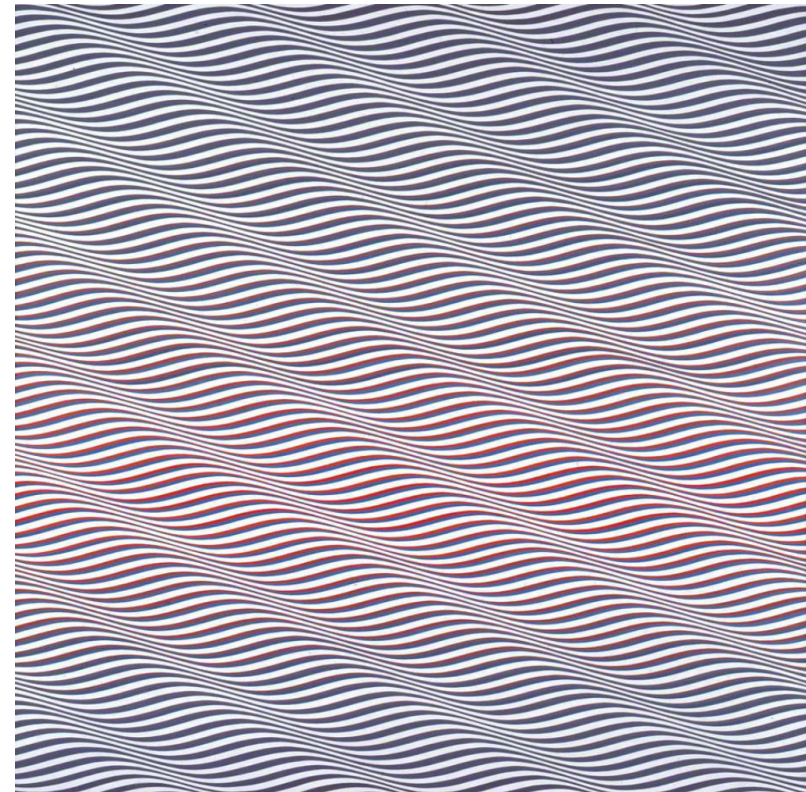
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1 Rene Parola, *Optical Art: Theory and Practice*, (New York: Beekman House, 1969), 14.

2 Ibid, 22.

With extended viewing, the painting can easily fatigue an untrained or inexperienced eye; however, Riley found this observation to be perturbing, claiming that her work was an “active, vibrating pleasure” to witness.<sup>3</sup> While Riley’s assertions are fact to some, her austere assessment lacks a certain consideration for those unpracticed in viewing her work.

In complete refinement of color and form, *Cataract III* emulates a warm sun dancing reflectively off the crests of a clear blue body of water in constant flow. The curvature of each contour leads the eyes on a path that mimics the movement of ripples through water—somewhat symmetrical, yet inherently serial. Taking careful and methodical preparation, as seen through her to-scale study for the work, Riley crafted her composition to walk a “fine line...between her desire for assertiveness and openness,” as she did with most of her works.<sup>4</sup> Her colleagues within the Op Art movement may not have been as attentive to this line, as many focused heavily on the assaulting perceptual mania capable of being produced. *Cataract III* offers an intriguing dichotomy between recalled serene sensations through the presentation of visual overload. However, the further submissive one becomes to the visual stimulus, the more capable they become when appreciating the effects’ serene qualities. Riley, choosing to make work with illusory effects, is not excluded from the “disjuncture between knowledge and vision,” meaning that the viewer must cross significant perceptual barriers, embracing the limitations of vision, in order to welcome the sensory experience.<sup>5</sup>



Bridget Riley (b. 1931), *Cataract III*, 1967, emulsion PVA on canvas, 223.5 x 222 cm, British Council Collection, London

3 Riley, Bridget, “Interview with David Sylvester,” *The Eye’s Mind: Bridget Riley Collected Writings 1965-2009*, Ed. Robert Kudielka, (London: Riding House, 2009), 95.

4 Simon Morley, “Bridget Riley. London.” *The Burlington Magazine* 141, no. 1158 (1999: 561-63), 562.

5 Joe Houston, *Optic Nerve: Perceptual Art of the 1960s*, (London: Merrell Publishers Limited, 2007), 80.

Expanding beyond her days as an Op Artist, Bridget Riley continues to make work within the vein of her past. However, the formalistic presentation of her works has changed entirely. For a period, Riley revisited her monochromatic past, painting geometric compositions that spanned entire walls, equipped with spacious repose between forms. Regardless, she could not resist the enriching qualities that color incorporated into her sensuous paintings. Riley continues her consideration for the history of art as she references Igor Stravinsky's "Poetics of Music" consistently within her practice—potentially as a pedagogical guide to composing her contemporary paintings.<sup>6</sup> Switching from her long-used acrylic paints to that of richer oils, Riley's contemporary works beginning in the 1980's are bursting with color; including that of *Gaillard*, painted in 1989.

Arranged on diagonal and horizontal axes, rectilinear fields of color occupy the entire surface of Riley's canvas with each color performing metaphorically musical roles. The white rhomboids act as counterbalance to the dark black forms scattered in the center of the image. Contrastingly, the warm tones are populated in diagonal threads throughout the fractured imagery. Yellow seems to act circulatorily, and blue presents itself in all the places left untouched—without visual pattern. With investigative vision and active pattern recognition, it feels likely that *Gaillard* was constructed by Riley with symphonic consideration: parts are being played harmonically and antithetically. Riley's composition feels "musical and rhythmical" rather than "diagrammatic or methodological" as the colored rhomboids have simultaneously occurring rhythms.<sup>7</sup> However, her construction and planning for these works does seem inherently methodological.

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6 Bridget Riley, "Perception and the Use of Color," interview by E.H. Gombrich, *Bridget Riley: Dialogues on Art*, (Zwemmer, 1995), 34.

7 Robert Kudielka, *Bridget Riley: Paintings 1982-1992*, (Germany: Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 1992), 32.

### quotations

"For Riley, painting becomes a kind of experiment in seeing: the art work sets up a 'situation' (a word much used by Riley in the sixties and seventies) in which the spectator is drawn into a dialogue taking place in the uncharted territory of the visual response."

-Simon Morely, "Bridget Riley. London," in *The Burlington Magazine*, Volume 141, No. 1158 (1999)

"By refusing to set us apart in our relative levels of visual mastery, Op Art makes us one in our anxious, enjoyable failure. More beneficially, as we stand before Op paintings that resist our understanding, we introduce ourselves to our unconscious selves. We become aware of the vast intellectual and perceptual resources that await our command just beyond the threshold of our knowing."

-Dave Hickey, "Trying To See What We Can Never Know," in *Optic Nerve: Perceptual Art of the 1960s* (2007)

"Properly treated, formalism is not an empty thing but a potentially very powerful answer to this spiritual challenge of an unavailable truth."

-Bridget Riley, "The Art of the Past," interviewed by Neil MacGregor, in *Bridget Riley: Dialogues on Art* (1995)

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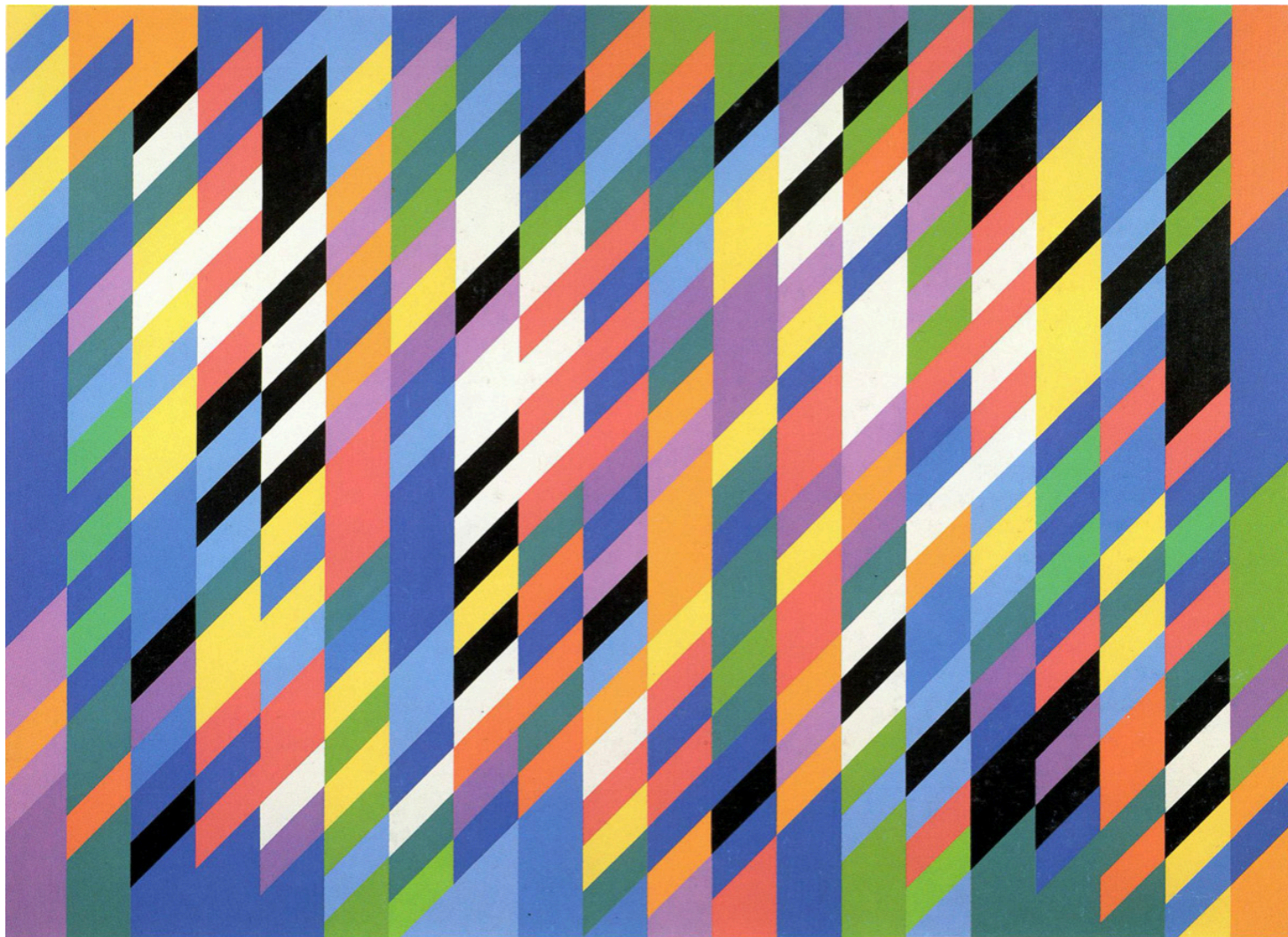
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Riley, Bridget. "The Art of the Past." interview by Neil MacGregor. *Bridget Riley: Dialogues on Art*. (Zwemmer, 1995), 16-32.



Bridget Riley, *Gaillard*, 1989, oil on canvas, 165 x 227.5 cm, Galerie Heinz Teufel, Mählberg

## isabella pittman

### *The Figure of the Femme Fatale in John William Waterhouse's Circe Invidiosa (1892)*

#### abstract

By emphasizing form, color, and subject matter, John William Waterhouse paid homage to the Romantic, Academic, and Pre-Raphaelite styles by creating an intimate and immediate, emotional effect in his works. His later portraits depict powerful women without reducing them to a sexual object. This essay will consist of a critical, visual, and historical analysis of *Circe Invidiosa* (1892), looking at the ways in which Waterhouse uses methods from these movements, ultimately aiming to challenge the concept of the femme fatale. In addition to a visual and historical analysis, feminist criticisms of the Femme Fatale will also be applied to *Circe Invidiosa* and will attempt to argue that the power and threat associated with the character of the Femme Fatale does not reside in any particular mythic individual or narrative, but in the nature of female eroticism itself.

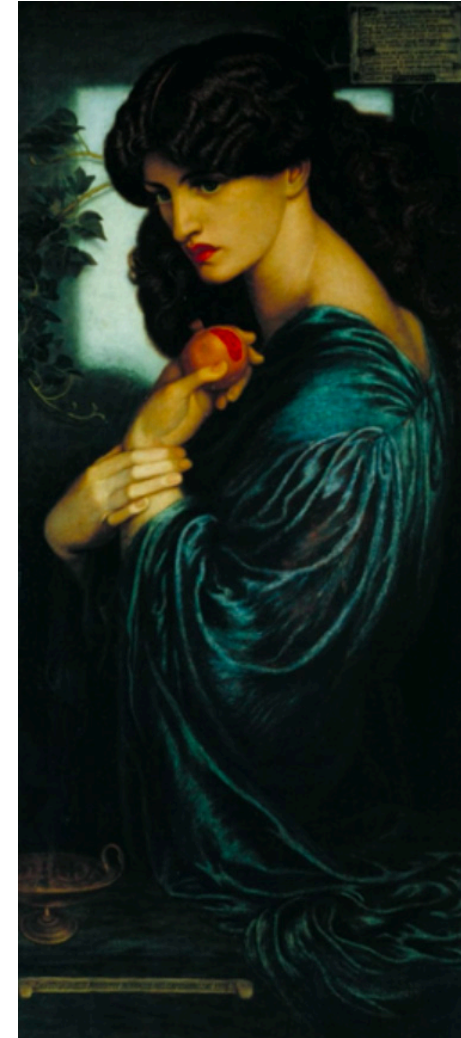


John Williams Waterhouse, *Circe Invidiosa*, 1892, oil on canvas, 70 x 33 in, Art Gallery of South Australia

The existence or identity of one thing depends on the coexistence of at least two other conditions, both the opposite of the first, so says the unity of opposites. This can pertain to things as uncomplicated as the directional “upward” and “downward” and as complex as the idea of personal sacrifice or “death” to succeed or “win” in life. This same concept applies to the duality of women in the erotic and sexual sphere of history. The virginal, pure-in-body-and-spirit archetype cannot exist without the inverse: the alluring and forbidden, the schemeing femme fatale. Consequently, the femme fatale was a popular image in nineteenth century art, with artists portraying women as beautiful but dangerous to men; sexual, but only for the benefit of the men viewing the image. By looking closely at these works, it becomes abundantly clear that the fear associated with these women was never about the seduction of men, but rather in the nature of female eroticism itself.

One of the oldest femme fatales in history is the goddess-witch Circe, daughter of the Greek god Helios. Her brother was Aeëtes, keeper of the Golden Fleece, and her sister was Pasiphaë, mother of the Minotaur. Little is known about the Circe, other than her vast knowledge of herbs and her tendency to turn those who offended her into swine. She appears in both Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Homer’s *The Odyssey*, stories in which her encounters with the protagonists became warnings against drunkenness and women, rather than the idea of a formidable female protagonist defending herself. Circe was placed and mentioned briefly throughout many significant points in the Greek mythological timeline, indicating that she was thousands of years old. One of the most prominent stories surrounding Circe was that of Glaucus and Scylla, which is the subject of John William Waterhouse’s 1892 oil painting, *Circe Invidiosa*.

Waterhouse's main focus of the work is the depiction of Circe, who is standing above water, menacingly in the middle of the composition. Her hands hold a glass bowl that is filled with- and running over- a spectral green liquid. The flow of the liquid follows down Circe's body into the water she is seemingly floating above. It is here that it becomes clear there is an object or creature underneath her feet. Upon close inspection, it appears to be an enlarged fish, mouth agape and fins circling below Circe. The green liquid is dropping directly on the face of the fish, seeming to cause a reaction between the two. While the eyes of the sea creature look panicked, Circe's appear the opposite: they are lowered, only showing the viewer the absolute minimum possible of the actual eye. Because the eyes are lowered, it appears that she is intensely focused on the bowl and liquid in her hands, as if she is controlling its flow, every falter, every patter atop the fish's face. At first glance, the action of Circe controlling the liquid's falling onto the fish physically connects the two beings. Critically looking at the scales of the fish in comparison to Circe's clothing, it echoes it almost directly. Her dress is the same shade of deep blue, with rivets in the fabrics that echo that of scales on the fish. The material is loose and does not cling to her body; in fact, there is a break of skin on her lower hip, as well as what appears to be an exposed breast.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Proserpine*, 1874, oil on canvas, 49.3 x 24 in, Tate Britain



John Williams Waterhouse, *Cleopatra*, 1887, oil on canvas, 22 x 25 in, Private Collection

Here, we do not fully see her nude breast because her arm, perfectly steady, covers it as it is raised to hold her chalice. Her dress slips apart above her thigh, letting the viewer know that while her dress is literally falling off of her body, her focus is elsewhere. Much like Circe's full attention being paid to the bowl, the viewer's attention is fully on Circe, unaware at first of the lack of details in the natural landscape behind her. This is intentional in this work, allowing for the viewer to carefully look at Circe's emotion and actions. In this scene, the viewer watches the transformation of Scylla into a terrible fish-beast by the hand of Circe and her potions. Circe's reason for doing this is that the fisherman-turned-god Glaucus approached Circe and requested a love potion for Scylla's affections, only for Circe to become enamored with Glaucus herself. In Waterhouse's work, the viewer sees not only Circe's intense concentration on her potion, but also incredible jealousy brewing in her eyes. Circe's destructive sexual desire for a man, so much so that it causes physical and emotional harm to those around her, is what has characterized her throughout history as a femme fatale.

## quotations

“There simply exists no art in the 19th century based upon women’s erotic needs, wishes, or fantasies. The imagery of sexual delight or provocation has always been created about women for men and enjoyment by men.”

—Linda Nochlin, “Eroticism and Female Imagery in the 19th Century” in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970*

“These women did have historical importances, but it found its limit and extent in their beauty.”

—Lara Perry, “Looking Like a Woman: Gender and Modernity in the 19th Century” in *English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identities*

“Waterhouse depicts women as conscious beings, capable of independent thought and self determination. These Women are individuals, not fairy tale characters or mythological heroines, or anonymous beauties seen as a receptacle for the artists’ sexual longing.”

—Hope B. Warness, “The Modest Maiden in 19th Century Art: Evolution of a Theme” in *Woman’s Art Journal, Volume 5, No. 2 (1984-85)*

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Evelyn De Morgan, *Helen of Troy*, 1898, oil on canvas, 48.8 x 29 in, Wightwick Manor

**jazmine applegate**

*Conservation after Colonization: Ethical Practice in the Khmer Empire*

**abstract**

Although political turmoil and colonialism have affected Cambodia since the 1800s, conservation is the key to unify its fractured culture. The battle between conservation efforts and the vanish of Cambodian heritage has been unresolved since the era of the Khmer Rouge. Today the fuel behind looting and desecration of Cambodian temples is brought by the corruption of the national government, a large increase in tourism, and a prolonged infatuation of Angkorian artifacts since the formation of French Indochina. The preservation of ancient Cambodian culture relies on organizations like APSARA National Authority, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the National Museum of Cambodia to defend against the looting and desecration of monuments and artwork.



"The Reconstruction of Angkor," at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris, 1931

Today the fuel behind looting and desecration of Cambodian temples is brought by the corruption of the national government, a large increase in tourism, and a prolonged infatuation of Angkorian artifacts since the formation of French Indochina. The preservation of ancient Cambodian culture relies on organizations like APSARA National Authority, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the National Museum of Cambodia to defend against the looting and desecration of monuments and artwork.<sup>1</sup>

The formation of French Indochina resulted in the worldly obsession of Cambodian artifacts. The representations of “oriental exoticism” in commercial trademarks is reflected in the political aims of French Indochina colonialism. The French believed that they had saved pieces of ancient Khmer civilization from oblivion, while the French image of Asian culture is both complimentary yet also demeaning. What “oblivion” were the French attempting to save Khmer heritage from? The temple symbolized the artistic talent and treasures of Indochina the French valued, yet at the same time they viewed it as evidence of a declining culture in need of protection and aid.<sup>2</sup> Cambodia was a French symbol of colonial exposition.

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1 Robert Garland Thomson, “On-site Conservation Training in Cambodia: A Critical Survey of Activities at Angkor,” in *Built Environment*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Built Heritage Conservation Education (2007), p. 379.

2 Dana S. Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples 1886-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 147.

Angkor is a noteworthy site of epitomizing cultural, religious and emblematic qualities, just as containing high architectural, archeological and artistically historical importance starting throughout the tenth century to the present day. However, the Cambodian government is currently looking for ways to stop others from destroying it. "Climbing on ruins, touching carvings and taking nude photographs is disrespectful to the Cambodians who live, work and worship at these sites and find them to be of great importance to their culture and heritage," said Alison Carter, an archaeologist who has been working in Cambodia for about 10 years and with the Greater Angkor Project since 2011. Yet, tourists frequently forget that Angkor Wat is a sacred wonder that is still actively maintained and worshiped. Multiple tourists from the U.S and Europe were charged with jail time and deportation when they were caught posing nude in front of the monument while Chinese tourists etched their names into the 12th century stone. A woman from New Zealand destroyed a statue that resided inside. These many forms of desecration and vandalism are not only offensive to the Khmer people but cause much emotional hurt as many Cambodian people save their earnings for a lifetime before traveling across the country for a chance to worship at Angkor Wat, only to see tourists destroy what is remaining.



An ancient sacred site burned to the ground by the Khmer Rouge on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1975

## quotations

Climbing on ruins, touching carvings and taking nude photographs is disrespectful to the Cambodians who live, work and worship at these sites and find them to be of great importance to their culture and heritage.

—Alison Carter, archaeologist, Greater Angkor Project

We are very concerned by this unprecedented, uncontrolled acceleration, which is damaging the monuments and the local environment. Preservation of the park for future generations has to be the number one priority, over and above commercial exploitation, which is mainly benefiting foreign interests instead of the local population.

— Teruo Jinnai, UNESCO representative, Angkor, Cambodia

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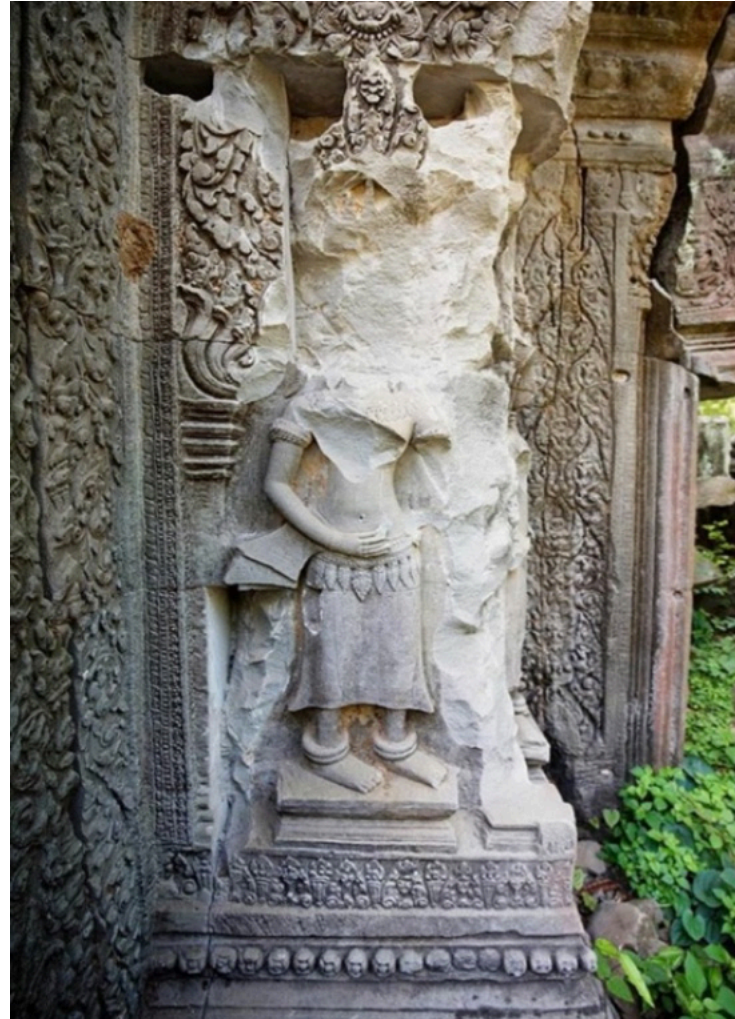
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Devatas at Preah Khan venerated with lipstick or destroyed by looting

**kyla andrus**

*“Ceaselessly Into the Past”: Costume Design in Baz Luhrmann’s The Great Gatsby (2013)*

**abstract**

While representations of the past in the movies engage us in a multitude of ways, period films in particular provide us a tangible connection to the past. In Baz Luhrman’s 2013 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, that connection takes us back to the 1920s. A key aspect of the film is its use of costuming to build a representation of 1920s New York City and Long Island that is relatable to contemporary viewers while being largely based around period accuracy. The fine line where historically accurate meets aesthetic representation and relatability directly influences how audiences think and feel about the past. Everyone thinks they know what the fashion of the 1920s looked like, but often the imagined look is simplified and stylized. Luhrmann and costume and production designer Catherine Martin sought to make Fitzgerald’s narrative relatable to contemporary audiences. Martin’s largely historically source-based designs shift the stereotype away from beaded and fringed short shift dresses, while the modern elements make the clothing more accessible to a wide audience.



"Tom introduces Nick to his mistress, Myrtle Wilson, at her husband's garage," from *The Great Gatsby*, directed by Baz Luhrmann, film, 2013



"One of Gatsby's lavish parties (nicknamed 'Bad and Tawdry' by production designer Martin," from *The Great Gatsby*, directed by Baz Luhrmann, film, 2013

This distinct binary in opinions is an important one. Not only do the costumes define character, they create a distinct worldview for the film by building the era for viewers in conjunction with the sets and other production elements. And the version of the 1920s that Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin created is, as Fashionista.com pointed out, more about the tone of the visuals than the spot on accuracy. When interviewed about the process of designing the film, Martin describes it as a process driven by Luhrmann's typical "visualist" style of planning. His focus on the visual aspects of a film meant that she had considerable access to resources, but had to attempt to balance both the costumes and sets within her budget as well as when designing an overall look to the film. Martin says, "[o]ne of the first things Baz told me is, 'I don't want a nostalgic New York, I don't want a sepia-toned New York, I want a New York that feels as vibrant and sexy and visceral and modern as it would have to Zelda and Fitzgerald, or any of the characters in the book,'" indicating that while there was a certain level of period accuracy that needed to happen, there was also a need for a modern edge to the film. Luhrmann did not want it to look like someone's flapper party, with obnoxious feather boas and plastic pearls.

## quotations

“In order to keep more than one century in our brains, humanity edits it down to a beaded flapper dress, rolled-down stockings and a horizontal headband with a feather in it.”

—Catherine Martin, costume designer for Luhrmann’s *The Great Gatsby*, quoted in *The New York Times*

“To be clear, I can tell from the trailer that these costumes are not period accurate. They all look like contemporary fashion interpreting 1920s Halloween costumes. The hair and makeup look like they’re from the present day. The architecture and interior design look much too contemporary to even pretend to be from the 20s. The colors are a bit too bright and the sparkle is a bit too computer generated.”

—Jacqueline Wayne-Guite on Baz Luhrmann’s *The Great Gatsby* (2013), quoted in the *Huffington Post*

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"Daisy and Gatsby reconnect during tea at Nick's house," from *The Great Gatsby*, directed by Baz Luhrmann, film, 2013

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—Morgan

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