

**'MAKING AN EXHIBITION OF HERSELF' – WOMEN, ART AND
BIRMINGHAM, 1860–1920**

Two Volumes: Volume I

by

KATY OWEN

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Art History, Curating and Visual Studies
School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the significant contribution of women to Birmingham's art culture between 1860 and 1920. It studies the activities of more than fifty women and demonstrates the extensive range of their art world experiences with priority given to those who have not previously received sustained scholarly attention. Most of the case study women were artists and their considerable involvement in the key areas of art education, art making, art exhibition and the art market form the basis of the first four chapters. The important contribution of non-artist women is considered for the first time in the fifth chapter on sociability and philanthropy. Birmingham women artists developed their professional art careers via a range of activities such as personal and professional networking, collaborative making, memberships to art societies and international travel. Sometimes their activities conformed to gendered societal expectations and other times challenged them. As award-winning art students, they played a vital role in the prominent reputation of Birmingham's School of Art. As professional artists, they created art works in a wide variety of media, exhibiting and marketing them extensively to generate sales. This thesis also considers the participation of Birmingham women artists in national and international art worlds. It includes examples of women from outside Birmingham, some of them famous artists, participating in Birmingham's art world. This examination of women in Birmingham's art world provides an important new contribution to our knowledge of the history of art education, women's professional work and social art history of Birmingham.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Peter, Jacob, Ben and Pam.

Enormous gratitude to Kate and Zoë for giving the very best supervision and support.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACES – Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society

BMAG – Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

BMI – Birmingham and Midland Institute

MAFA – Manchester Academy of Fine Arts

RA – Royal Academy

RBSA – Royal Birmingham Society of Artists

RMI – Royal Manchester Institution

INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century, Birmingham had a thriving art culture that included a considerable number of women artists and supporters. A visitor to the city during the later years of this period, would have encountered an art world shaped by the contribution and participation of these women. The visitor would have seen paintings from the city's public art collection on display at the Museum and Art Gallery including Helen Allingham's (1848–1926) *Valewood Farm, Haslemere* (fig. 1) and Flora Macdonald Reid's (1860–1945) *The First Communion* (fig. 2).¹ They would also have seen Anna Chamberlain Harris' contribution to the city's collection; a donated portrait of the architect John Henry Chamberlain.² Upon exiting the gallery, a visitor would spot the Gothic red-brick building of the Municipal School of Art (designed by John Henry Chamberlain and opened 1885) and groups of art students, many of them women, making their way to and from classes. An enquiry about the building's origins would reveal that it was made possible because of a considerable financial donation by the philanthropist Louisa Ryland and other local citizens. If the visitor had picked up a local daily newspaper, they may have seen a list of the School of Art examination results and prizes, including many awarded to women students. That paper would probably have included advertisements for art auction firms such as Thomas and Betteridge that often used the names of locally well-known women artists as headliners. If it had been the *Birmingham Daily Post's* edition for 12 May 1873, there was an article about the artist Anna Blunden-

¹ Helen Allingham's *Valewood Farm, Haslemere* was purchased by the Birmingham Art Gallery Fund in 1891. Flora Reid's *The First Communion*, oil painting, was presented to the Art Gallery in 1896 by George Myers.

² The portrait was by William Thomas Roden (1817-1892) and was presented to the Art Gallery in 1884.

Martino's recent move to Birmingham and informing the readers that she opened her studio to visitors on Mondays and Wednesday from three to five o'clock.³ If the visit was during October or November, the annual Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RBSA) Autumn exhibition would have been running. In the RBSA's New Street gallery, visitors would have looked at many paintings by local, national and international artists including those from Birmingham such as Mary Vernon Morgan (1871–1927), Florence Westwood Whitfield (1854–1926) and Georgina Martha Steeple de L'Aubinière (1848–1930).⁴ If the visit had been in the Autumn of 1901, cases of jewellery by Margaret Awdry (1854–1939) and Annie Steen (1864–1955) would have been on display. This theoretical visit to some of Birmingham's key art locations and happenings illustrates the many ways women were active and significant participants in Birmingham's art world across this era. Taking these examples as its starting point, this thesis argues that women artists in Birmingham had more of an influential role in the various elements that made up the city's art world culture than has been previously understood. These elements included art education, art objects, exhibitions, the art market, socialising and philanthropy, and these components make up the chapters of this thesis. The sixty-year period that is the focus of this project is of interest because major, progressive challenges and changes were happening for women in education, employment, law and marriage during this time.⁵ Additionally, during these

³ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 May 1873, 5.

⁴ Florence Westwood Whitfield was an Honorary then Associate of the RBSA from 1879. Mary Vernon Morgan was an Associate Member from 1893.

⁵ Some of the main events were, 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act reformed divorce law; 1866 John Stuart Mills presented the Votes for Women petition to Parliament; 1867 National Society for Women's Suffrage formed; Married Women's Property Acts in 1870, 1882 and 1893 giving women rights to own their own property; 1897 National Union of Women's Suffrage formed; 1903 Women's Social and Political Union formed; 1918 Representation of the People Act gave voting rights to some women aged over 30; 1928 Equal Franchise Act granted equal voting rights to women and men aged 21 and over.

years there were substantial developments in art and design education, connected to the desire to improve art manufacturing, both locally and nationally.⁶ Furthermore, Birmingham was a key location for both the Arts and Crafts movement and Pre-Raphaelitism during this period, influencing art teaching and art making.⁷ These happenings formed part of the wider conditions and contexts to women's art activities in Birmingham.

More than fifty women artists are closely scrutinised in this project with priority given to those who have not previously received sustained scholarly attention. This project uncovers for the first time the complexity of their art careers. For example, Mary Ann Preston (1831—1885) was an award-winning student at the Birmingham School of Art and then became a teacher there for the rest of her adult life. Alongside her art teaching career, she was a regular exhibitor at the RBSA. Mary Vernon Morgan (1846—1927) had a prolific exhibition record at the RBSA as well as solo and joint exhibitions in London. Edith Linnell (1871—1961) trained at the school of art and went on to build a successful art jewellery business with premises on Sloane Street, London, and some of her art objects were on permanent display in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This thesis also reveals for the first time the extensive, international career of Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière that took her

⁶ These are discussed in Chapter One.

⁷ Martin Ellis, Victoria Osborne & Tim Barringer, *Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts & Crafts Movement*, New York, 2018; Alan Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand. The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham*, Birmingham 1984; Sally Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art and Opportunities for Women's Paid Work in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1885-1914*, unpublished PhD thesis, 2013, University of Birmingham; John Swift, 'The Arts and Crafts Movement and Birmingham Art School 1880-1900', David Thistlewood (ed.), *Histories of Art and Design Education. Cole to Coldstream*, Harlow, 1992, 23-37; Roy Hartnell, *Pre-Raphaelite Birmingham*, Redditch, 1996; Claire FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object: Birmingham 1880-1930*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2016.

from Birmingham to London then to France, Italy, the United States and Canada before her final return to England. The artists of interest to this thesis were overwhelmingly middle-class. This was typically determined by the occupation, wealth and social status of the male head of household, typically their fathers or husbands. The middle-class status of the artists influenced the art world opportunities they had access to. For example, as is discussed further in chapter one, daytime lessons for women at the Birmingham School of Art were only accessible to those that did not have to undertake paid employment during the day. Furthermore, the social networks and events they had access to were often mediated by social status and shared family connections. These artists are situated within a wider pool of over 1,000 women students and artists active in Birmingham between 1860 and 1920. For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of a Birmingham woman artist includes those who were born, lived or trained in Birmingham, and they can meet all, some or just one of the criteria. The large number of case studies demonstrates the extensive range of women's art world experiences. The breadth of their art training and career experiences show that there were many different paths in to the 'professional' art world and demonstrate the multiplicity of ways professional artistic culture developed during this era. The parameters of the art world used throughout this thesis include art education, artist societies, exhibitions, the art market, art businesses, galleries, museums and art-related social activities such as conversaciones. The research for this project has identified over 2,500 art activities including: art school examinations; national art prizes and gold medal awards; exhibiting locally, nationally and internationally; the sale of artworks to a range of patrons including Queen Victoria; public artwork commissions; commercial strategies, and generous acts of philanthropy and posterity. My research also considers, for the first time,

the influential activities of non-artist women who played a pivotal role in social and philanthropic activities such as financial and art object donations to Birmingham's art world. Exploration of their activities enables a greater breadth of understanding of British nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art cultures. The findings of this thesis significantly enrich understandings of women's careers as artists, and their participation in - and impact on - the diverse public spheres of the art world.

Birmingham is a significant location for an analysis of women's artistic roles. Women artists prospered in Birmingham because of several converging aspects that gave rise to a distinctive art culture. For instance, the city's local industries consisting of small art-based manufacturing workshops, resulted in a population with an above-average knowledge of art and design aesthetics.⁸ The products produced in Birmingham relied on quality designs and attractive decorations to give them a competitive edge against those produced in other towns and countries. The town's leaders were concerned with ways to boost the commercial success of its manufacturing industries such as improved art training. The liberal and socially progressive views of Birmingham's civic leaders, often Nonconformists, were a major influence on the town's unique art environment. Birmingham was an attractive location for Nonconformist entrepreneurs and their families because there were no constricting guilds, corporations or religious denominations, and this facilitated freedom of citizenship and entrepreneurship. Birmingham's leaders were guided in their actions by the 'Civic Gospel', a philosophy of municipal socialism that responded to

⁸ Barbara Tilson (ed.), *Made in Birmingham. Design 1889-1989*, Studley, 1989; Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Cambridge, 1996, 89.

industrialisation with a motivation to improve the health and welfare of their fellow citizens.⁹ These motivations were closely connected to the desire to improve the design of manufactured products produced in Birmingham.¹⁰ This thesis will argue that the art produced by women artists was also a vital element of that ambition and resulting art culture. Birmingham was a popular location for Nonconformist families who typically held liberal and progressive views about women's position in society.¹¹ These families tended to be supportive of their daughters gaining an education and seeking opportunities within wider society.¹² The new Schools of Design/Art, created to fulfil the national ambition to improve the design of products manufactured in Britain, also provided a fortuitous opportunity for many middle-class women to gain training and education that were typically quite difficult for them to pursue.¹³ Furthermore, Birmingham was a popular, nationally important location for art exhibitions. The Royal Birmingham Society of Artists twice-annual exhibitions attracted hundreds of exhibitors from all over the country including regular participation by prominent artists of the day. Local women artists regularly took advantage of the opportunities to exhibit their paintings alongside nationally recognised artists including Royal Academicians.¹⁴ This included well-known women artists from locations beyond Birmingham and notably London. The unique combination of these

⁹ Andrew Reekes and Stephen Roberts, *George Dawson and his Circle. The Civic Gospel in Victorian Birmingham*, Dagenham, 2021.

¹⁰ Stuart Davies, *By the Gains of Industry. Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery 1885-1985*, Birmingham, 1985.

¹¹ Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860*, London, 1998.

¹² Birmingham was an important location for the women's suffrage movement with one of the earliest regional societies. Nicola Gauld, *Words and Deeds: Birmingham Suffragists and Suffragettes 1832-1918*, Alcester, 2018; Elizabeth Crawford, 'Suffrage Stories: 'From Frederick Street to Winson Green': The Birmingham Women's Suffrage Campaign', *Woman and her Sphere*, 2008, www.womanandhersphere.com [accessed 21st Jan 2022].

¹³ Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place. Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 2007.

¹⁴ Artists such as Turner, Leighton, and many other Royal Academicians widely considered to be the very best of the art world at the time.

beneficial circumstances was a distinctive feature of Birmingham in comparison to other British art locations such as Manchester and Glasgow that had non-art based, larger-scale, local industries. The other large towns and cities in Britain that had art schools were shaped by different compositions of their populations as well as different exhibition opportunities.¹⁵

However, women's role in Birmingham's art world has not been the focus of sustained scholarly interest and this thesis is positioned in this gap. Trevor Fawcett's book, *The Rise of English Provincial Art. Artists, Patrons and Institutions Outside London, 1800—1830* (1974) was an early study of British art world happenings beyond the capital in the first half of the nineteenth century, a previously neglected area of scholarship. Fawcett introduces the art world before the era of interest to this thesis and includes some focus on Birmingham, and specifically on artists, dealers, patrons and exhibitions. However, Fawcett does not include the wider context and communities that were part of provincial art worlds and makes no mention of women artists or art supporters. Roy Hartnell (1995) has explored the transformation of Birmingham in the nineteenth century from grimy industrial town to being one of the most artistic towns in the country via civic culture and art. He highlighted the role and contribution made by local artists and designers in transforming Birmingham, but his examination does not include the participation and contribution of women artists.¹⁶ More recently, an exhibition titled *Victorian Radicals. From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts*

¹⁵ Manchester's and Glasgow's industries were predominantly larger manufacturing businesses, such as cotton, textiles and heavy industries such as shipbuilding.

¹⁶ Roy Hartnell, 'Art and Civic Culture in Birmingham in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Urban History*, 22:2, 1995, 229-237.

and Crafts Movement toured locations in the United States between October 2018 and May 2021. It exhibited over 150 works of art from Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's permanent collection. Whilst it included many works for the collection that were not produced in Birmingham, the essays by Martin Ellis and Victoria Osborne in the accompanying book examine Birmingham's art culture in the Victorian era.¹⁷ They specifically explore the manifestation of the Arts and Crafts movement in Birmingham, the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on its community of creative artists and the intersections of art, industry and politics during that time. However, women artists' involvement is only nominally mentioned, often via their relationships and connections to male artists. John Swift's examinations (1989, 1999) of the Birmingham School of Art have included some focus on women art students.¹⁸ Swift concluded that the women art students' training had little impact on their subsequent expectations and ambitions. However, Sally Hoban (2013) counter-argued that women's art school training in Birmingham did provide employment opportunities and enabled art careers to flourish.¹⁹ Furthermore, Hoban connects the women's professional practices to the flourishing of the Arts and Crafts movement in the region. The Birmingham Arts and Crafts movement has been examined by Alan Crawford (1984) with some mention of women artists but typically as ancillary to male artists as relatives or students.²⁰ Clare FitzGerald (2016) challenged this by addressing the underacknowledged involvement of women graduates of the Birmingham School of Art to

¹⁷ Ellis, Osborne & Barringer (eds), *Victorian Radicals*.

¹⁸ John Swift, 'Birmingham Art School: Its Branch Schools and Female Students 1880-1900', Barbara Tilson (ed.), *Made in Birmingham. Design & Industry 1889-1989*, Studley, 1989, 49-64; John Swift, 'Women and Art Education at Birmingham's Art Schools 1880-1920: Social Class, Opportunity and Aspiration', *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 18:3, 1999, 317-326.

¹⁹ Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*.

²⁰ Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*.

the Arts and Crafts movement.²¹ FitzGerald investigated seven case study artists via an object-led approach. She argued that these artists were significant to the arts of book illustration, stained glass, tempera painting and embroidery. Furthermore, her examination traces the overlapping social, personal and professional networks that supported the art careers of her seven case study artists. In comparison, this project makes an important new contribution via a greater breadth of material and a significantly larger number of case study artists and their art practices. Many of them participated in the Arts and Crafts movement as well as other art practices, styles and types. This broader range reveals that there were multiple ways for women to be involved in and influence the 'professional' art world. This thesis demonstrates how women's art endeavours enabled them to challenge and exceed society's limited expectations of what women could do and to have an impact on the shape of the art world they inhabited.

This research project intersects with and contributes to the fields of art history, including exhibition and art market studies, the social history of art, women's history, nineteenth-century studies, art education history, histories of philanthropy and Birmingham's history. Most notably, this project enriches and broadens knowledge of nineteenth-century British women artists, a field of growing academic interest. It draws on feminist art histories that centrally position women's lived conditions to reveal the social, cultural and material factors that impacted their experiences.²² This thesis is situated at the intersection of

²¹ Claire FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object: Birmingham 1880-1930*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2016.

²² Jo Devereux, *The Making of Women Artists in Victorian England. The Education and Careers of Six Professionals*, North Carolina, 2016; Clarissa Campbell Orr, *Women in the Victorian Art World*, Manchester,

feminist art histories and social histories of art. The feminist art histories that emerged out of second wave feminism in the 1970s, and continue today, sought to recover and restore the histories of forgotten women artists across a range of historical periods.²³ These studies often used a biographical approach focused on individual or small groups of women painters, traditionally defined as working in the 'fine arts'.²⁴ Scholarly attention has also focused on women artists of the Victorian era, using a biographical and restorative approach.²⁵ The field has been significantly advanced by art historians such as Deborah Cherry (1993) and Janice Helland (2019) with analysis of social and economic factors that influenced art practices and identities across larger case study groups.²⁶ My research draws on this work by using a social history approach to examine the participation and contribution of a large group of women artists connected to Birmingham. Its particular innovation is the use of a large number of case studies (over fifty), as a means of enriching understanding of how British women artists conducted their art occupations.

1995; Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, London, 1997; Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush. Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven, 1994; Zoë Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, Manchester, 2020.

²³ Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', *Art News*, 69, 1971, 22-39; Eleanor Tuft, *Our Hidden Heritage. Five Centuries of Women Artists*, London, 1974; Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses. Women Art and Ideology*, London, 1981; Germaine Greer, *Obstacle Race: Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, New York, 1982; Frances Borzello, *A World of Our Own: Women As Artists Since the Renaissance*, New York, 2000; Rebecca Birrell, *This Dark Country: Women Artists, Still Life and Intimacy in the Early Twentieth Century*, London, 2021.

²⁴ The fine arts were traditionally defined as painting, architecture and sculpture. This dates as far back as the fourteenth century with Giorgio Vasari's (1550) *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*.

²⁵ Janice Helland, *The Studios of Frances and Margaret MacDonald*, Manchester, 1996; Ann O'Donoghue, 'Mary Lowndes. A Brief Overview of Her Life and Work', *The Journal of Stained Glass*, vol.xxiv, 2000, 38-52; Elizabeth Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair: 1852-1936*, Edinburgh, 2005; Patricia de Montfort, *Louise Jopling: A Biographical and Cultural Study of the Modern Woman Artist in Victorian Britain*, London, 2016; Anna Mason, et al., *May Morris: Arts and Crafts Designer*, London, 2017.

²⁶ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, London, 1987; Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women. Victorian Women Artists*, London, 1993; Janice Helland, *Professional Women Painters in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Commitment, Friendship, Pleasure*, London, 2000; Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists Between the Wars: 'A Fair Field and No Favour'*, Manchester, 2010; Shannon Hunter Hurtado, *Genteel Mavericks: Professional Women Sculptors in Victorian Britain*, Bern, 2012; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.

Scholarship on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women artists often uses an expanded category of 'art' beyond the traditional understanding of 'fine art' as pictorial oil painting and watercolour drawing. This thesis reveals new evidence of women artists working in a variety of media across the categories of fine and applied arts. My findings support Cherry's argument that the division between fine and applied arts was a discursive construct.²⁷ The division encourages a false impression that artists worked in either one or the other domain. At the Birmingham School of Art, students were taught the principles and basic skills of fine art alongside applied art and design. Individual artists worked in a variety of media such as oil and watercolour paintings as well as craft medias such as enamelling, jewellery, textiles and stained glass. For example, Margaret Awdry (1854–1939), a student at the Birmingham School of Art and later professional artist, exhibited and sold easel paintings and jewellery she had designed and created. This project looks at both the fine and applied arts to give a more comprehensive account of women artists' activities and contributions.

Examinations of women artists' overlooked yet vital contributions to art styles and movements have encouraged a dismantling of the division and hierarchy between the applied and fine arts.²⁸ Anthea Callen's pioneering book, published in 1979, demonstrated

²⁷ Cherry, *Painting Women*, 120-140.

²⁸ Anthea Callen, *Angel in the Studio. Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870-1914*, London, 1979; Zoë Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, Manchester, 2020; Toni Lesser Wolf, 'Women Jewelers of the British Arts and Crafts Movement', *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, vol.14, 1989, 28-45; Janice Helland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries 1880-1914*, Co. Kildare, 2007; Catherine W. Zipf, *Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement*, Tennessee, 2007.

the neglected contribution of women to the Arts and Crafts movement, challenging the androcentric story of William Morris, John Ruskin and the men-only Art Workers' Guild.²⁹ Callen does this by focusing on crafts popular with women artists, such as embroidery and lacemaking and their connection to women's struggle for economic and cultural independence. More recently, Zoë Thomas has examined the hitherto unrecognised importance of the Women's Guild of Arts to the Arts and Crafts movement.³⁰ Thomas presents previously unseen source material that sheds new light on the social history of women art workers, including their professional strategies and networks based on social and professional collaborations. Knowledge of women's work in the applied and decorative arts has also been expanded by studies focused on jewellery, embroidery, pottery, craft-based philanthropy and interior decoration.³¹ Miranda Garrett's (2018) analysis of the latter demonstrates the connections between the professional careers of women interior decorators and shifts in gender ideologies, especially those centred on domestic home life.³² Garrett's examination of the professional careers of women interior decorators shows the complexity of art careers that on one hand fitted with notions of middle-class feminine domesticity but also challenged traditional gender ideologies of conventional domestic life. Garrett's work has helped to shape this thesis and its ambition to uncover

²⁹ Pamela Todd, *William Morris and the Arts & Crafts Home*, London, 2012; Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, London, 1991.

³⁰ Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.

³¹ Wolf, 'Women Jewelers', 28-45; Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch. Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine: Revised Edition*, London, 2019; Maria Quirk, 'Stitching Professionalism: Female-Run Embroidery Agencies and the Provision of Artistic Work for Women, 1870-1900', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 21:2, 2016, 184-204; Cheryl Buckley, *Potters and Paintresses: Women Designers in the Pottery Industry 1870-1955*, London, 1990; Miranda Garrett, *Professional Women Interior Decorators in Britain, 1871-1899*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of the Arts London, 2018; Bridget Elliott and Janice Helland, *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts 1880-1935*, Aldershot, 2002.

³² Garrett, *Professional Women Interior Decorators*.

hitherto overlooked women artists and how they creatively, intellectually, skilfully and collaboratively conducted their art practices in an environment shaped by proscriptive and unequal gender ideologies. The art careers of the women examined in this thesis had a similar trajectory to those studied by Garrett in that they challenged traditional stereotypes, although at times in a manner considered suitable with conventional understandings of femininity.

This research project draws on studies of how women artists navigated professional status and art world commerce.³³ It demonstrates that there were a number of ways for women to participate in professional art culture. It considers artists as ‘professional’ because of the various and multi-faceted activities they undertook such as formal art training and qualifications, membership of art organisations, intentions to promote and sell their artworks, and other art market interactions. Maria Quirk (2019) has highlighted ‘the importance of women’s ability to make money to their status as professional artists’.³⁴ Additionally, Miranda Garrett defines ‘professional’ in the work of women interior designers as having a paid occupation.³⁵ Zoë Thomas warns that understanding ‘professionalisation’ for women via a single assessment could disregard a variety of other

³³ Charlotte Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France and England. Their Art Education, Exhibition Opportunities and Membership of Exhibiting Societies and Academics, with an Assessment of the Subject Matter of their Work and Summary Biographies*, London, 1984; Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*; Cherry, *Painting Women*; Susan Casteras and Linda Peterson, *A Struggle for Fame: Victorian Women Artists and Authors*, Connecticut, 1994; Kirsten Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930*, North Carolina, 2001; Laura Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America*, Massachusetts, 2002; Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and Patricia Zakreski (eds), *Crafting the Woman Professional in the Long Nineteenth Century. Artistry and Industry in Britain*, Farnham, 2013; Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*; Devereux, *The Making of Women Artists in Victorian England*.

³⁴ Quirk, *Women, Art and Money in England*, 4.

³⁵ Garrett, *Professional Women Interior Decorators*, 19.

strategies women artists employed.³⁶ My chapters show that Birmingham women artists used an assortment of professional strategies and tactics in their art careers including those that carefully navigated prohibitive social conventions. Professional status was more difficult for women in this era to realise compared to their male colleagues.³⁷ Women's full access to the institutions and spaces that enabled a professional identity were restricted by social customs and rules.³⁸ Also, they were routinely identified as 'amateurs' invoking assumptions that they were lacking skills, seriousness and produced artworks of inferior quality. Published reviews of art exhibitions routinely identified them as 'lady amateurs', 'lady artists' or 'lady exhibitors'.³⁹ These labels were used to separate their work from their male, 'professional', contemporaries and as shorthand to signify lesser quality and ability.⁴⁰ The language used in published Birmingham exhibition reviews is examined in chapter two.

Artists benefited from public visibility to build reputations and attract attention to their artworks. For women this required careful navigation of restrictive societal boundaries of activities in the public sphere including risks to their reputations and respectability.⁴¹ Yet

³⁶ Thomas, *Women Art Workers*, 12.

³⁷ Temma Balducci, 'Negotiating Identity: Mary Ellen Best and the Status of Female Victorian Artists', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 1:2, Autumn 2002.

³⁸ For example, full access to life drawing classes, that developed essential skills for drawing human figures, were often prohibited to women. In Birmingham women artists could not become full members of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists until 1952. Prior to then only Honorary or Associate membership was given from 1879.

³⁹ Chapter three includes a discussion on the different language used by exhibition reviewers for female and male artists.

⁴⁰ Numerous examples can be found in newspapers and art journals. *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 29 Sept 1850, 5; *Art Journal*, May 1872, 142; *Art Journal*, Oct 1873, 317; *The Birmingham Pictorial and Dart*, 24 Sept 1897, iss. 1092, 7.

⁴¹ Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson (eds), *Women and Work Culture: Britain c. 1850-1950*, Farnham, 2005; Gillian Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman: Middle-Class Women and Work in Britain, 1870-1914*, Cambridge, 2015; Jennifer Aston, *Female Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth Century England: Engagement in the Urban Economy*, London, 2016.

despite the gendered limitations, feminist art historians have shown that women artists did engage in professional activities in both the fine and applied arts.⁴² This thesis contributes to the field with examples of Birmingham women artists' public activities that ran the risk of them 'making an exhibition of themselves' and threatening their social status.⁴³ This project gives many examples of women promoting and exhibiting their artworks for sale, gaining status via memberships of recognised art societies, albeit often at a lower level of membership compared to men artists, undertaking commissions and international travel to seek new art opportunities and markets. It shows how they negotiated and developed strategies to command space, form networks and negotiate inclusion in serious, commercial art activities. The artists discussed in this thesis were working during a time of change and shift of understandings of what women could do. Gillian Sutherland has examined the enduring impact of the phenomenon of the 'mass presence' of women beginning to work in publicly visible jobs.⁴⁴ The same concept can be useful for understanding the impact of women artists in Birmingham. Their public visibility was enabled by art exhibitions, social events and reinforced via published lists of sold paintings regularly appearing in local newspapers. Professional women artists' constant and mass presence in Birmingham shaped its art world culture and wider understandings of what women could and should do.

⁴² Cherry, *Painting Women*; Patricia Zakreski, *Representing Female Artistic Labour, 1848-1890: Refining Work for the Middle-Class Woman*, London, 2006; Hadjiafxendi and Zakreski, *Crafting the Woman Professional*; Devereux, *The Making of Women Artists in Victorian England*; Quirk, *Women, Art and Money in England*; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.

⁴³ Orr, *Women in the Victorian Art World*, 14.

⁴⁴ Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman*, 161.

Birmingham women artists were active beyond the city's borders and my research expands the field on women artists and travel in the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ Janice Helland (2000) has shown that Scottish women artists' activities included practicing and exhibiting their artworks for sale across Britain and the world.⁴⁶ My research reveals a similar trend for Birmingham's women artists with hundreds of examples of art activities including regularly exhibiting in locations all over Britain, Europe and North America. Mary Vernon Morgan (1846–1927) exhibited in many British locations including Worcester, Evesham, Cheltenham, Bristol and London. In the capital her works could be seen at the Royal Society of British Artists, Walkers Gallery and the Royal Academy. The extensive European art travels of the sisters Annie (1849–1935) and Minnie (1851–1903) Townley can be traced by the titles of the paintings including Belgium, Netherlands, France, Italy and Switzerland. Birmingham artist Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière's (1848–1930) art career took her to Paris, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. This research demonstrates that Birmingham women artists extended not only geographical and social boundaries but also those surrounding women's professional art commerce activities. The main purpose of Georgina's travelling was to create and sell paintings in international locations. The national and international art activities of these women artists reshape the field of women and travel via their commercial ambitions. The case studies show that women's art practices were not confined to the domestic realm or even to their local town. Their activities were located within the wider network of international cultural

⁴⁵ Jordana Pomeroy (ed.), *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*, London, 2005; Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland, *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 2006.

⁴⁶ Helland, *Professional Women Painters in Nineteenth-Century Scotland*.

and economic exchange. Their histories develop the field by connecting Birmingham to the wider national and international worlds of art. This thesis utilises a feminist methodology that positions women at the centre of the frame of enquiry. It assesses their activities in the context of laws and social customs that restricted and marginalised their participation. It demonstrates that despite limitations, prejudices and unequal access, compared to their male colleagues, women were consistently and significantly involved in shaping Birmingham's art world culture.

A mix of research methods have been used for this project. It involved identifying and critically reading published source materials for evidence of Birmingham women artists' activities. My research has benefited from the availability of digitised national and international newspapers, UK census returns, trade directories and art exhibition catalogues. Digital records can be more efficiently searched and extensively interrogated, and it was therefore possible to discover a greater amount of information on individual case study artists.⁴⁷ However, the RBSA exhibition catalogues are not digitised, and it was necessary to locate and manually search these for artists and their exhibition activities. Additionally, RBSA catalogues include artwork prices and artists' home addresses as do the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition catalogues, which are digitised. The Royal Academy (RA) exhibition catalogues are also digitised and include addresses but not prices. The RA price lists were manually searched at the Royal Academy Arts Library, London.

⁴⁷ I note that there are also drawbacks to digitisation. Adrian Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:2, June 2010, 225-231; Paula Hamilton and Mary Spongberg, 'Twenty Years On: Feminist Histories and Digital Media', *Women's History Review*, 26:5, 671-677.

Visual analysis was used for chapter two on art objects to demonstrate the creative and intellectual engagements of women artists' making. Overall, the analysis does not compare the work of the women artists with male artists.⁴⁸ The women's art objects were considered for their own merits with the focus undiluted. The availability of artworks by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women artists is limited. They are seldom present in public collections because their work was typically considered less worthy and collection management was male dominated and institutionally biased towards male artists.⁴⁹ The online digital image databases of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal Collection have enabled the retrieval of some visual material. Also, modern auction house websites and digitised nineteenth-century illustrated art periodicals have enabled access to images of artworks that are discussed in chapter two on art objects. This has shaped the approach of this project by limiting the choices for case studies to those for which images could be found. As digitisation of images in public and private collections continues and develops, future research will benefit from greater availability and more sophisticated search tools.

Both comparative and case study approaches have been used for this thesis. Quantities and categories of art genres by women artists are compared with their male colleagues, as have the school of art student numbers, the types of artworks exhibited, the quantities and price values of artworks sold and responses in the press to their exhibited works. Some

⁴⁸ There is a limited comparison of representations of the Greek goddess Circe.

⁴⁹ Patricia de Montfort and Robyne Erica Calvert (eds), 'Still Invisible?', *British Art Studies*, 2, 2016.

comparisons have been made between Birmingham and other art locations such as London and Manchester to demonstrate the distinctive art world circumstances for women in Birmingham. The case study approach used throughout builds upon the statistical data and develops understandings of the variety and nuances of lived conditions for women artists in Birmingham.

This thesis is structured around five key areas of women's art world activities. Together, these form its chapters focused on art education, art objects, exhibitions, the art market and art world sociability and philanthropy. It takes the reader from training and making, to display, sale and the wider art world. Chapter one contributes to histories of nineteenth-century art and design education from local and national perspectives. It argues that women art students had a more influential role than has previously been understood.⁵⁰ Studies on women's nineteenth-century art education have revealed the gendered nature of their experiences and the battles fought to gain parity of qualifications and opportunities with their male colleagues.⁵¹ John Swift and Sally Hoban have demonstrated the impact the

⁵⁰ Quentin Bell, *The Schools of Design*, London, 1963; Peter Cunningham, *The Formation of the Schools of Design, 1830-1850, with Special Reference to Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1979; Edward Bird, *The Development of Art and Design Education in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished PhD thesis, Loughborough University of Technology, 1992; David Thistlewood (ed.), *Histories of Art and design Education. Cole to Coldstream*, London, 1992; Carol A. Jones, *A History of Nottingham School of Design*, Nottingham, 1993; Mervyn Romans (ed.), *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, Bristol, 2005; James Measell, *A Provincial School of Art and Local Industry: The Stourbridge School of Art and its Relations with the Glass Industry of the Stourbridge District, 1850-1905*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2016; Malcolm Quinn, *Utilitarianism and the Art School in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, London, 2016.

⁵¹ Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France and England*; Enid Zimmerman, 'Art Education for Women in England from 1890-1910 as Reflected in the Victorian Periodical Press and Current Feminist Histories of Art Education', *Studies in Art Education*, 32:2, 1991, 105-116; Cherry, *Painting Women*; Laurel Lampela, 'Women's Art Education Institutions in 19th Century England', *Art Education*, 46:1, 1993, 64-67; Sara M. Dodd, 'Art Education for Women in the 1860s: a decade of debate', Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Women in the Victorian Art World*, Manchester, 1995, 187-200; F. Graeme Chalmers, *Women in the Nineteenth-Century Art World. Schools of Art and Design for Women in London and Philadelphia*,

Birmingham School of Art and its teaching methods had on women's art education and subsequent career opportunities.⁵² This chapter extends those investigations by arguing that the women students also had a substantial impact on the school. Using data on student numbers from school records and reports published in local newspapers, this chapter demonstrates their influence in key areas. The growing demand for women's art education and attendance in considerable numbers resulted in a bulging waiting list and several changes to the school's timetabling to accommodate them. The women students played an important role in the achievements and national reputation of the school. Their successes at local and national art competitions boosted the school's national reputation and standing against other schools as well as increasing the level of funding the school received.⁵³ The women's aspirations for art training were leveraged by the school's management committee to support the financial viability and contributed to the school's independence from central government funding and curriculum control. The ethos of the school and opportunities for women, shaped by the women, contributed to an art milieu in the town that was somewhat less gender-restricted than has been observed in other locations.⁵⁴ This thesis argues that Birmingham's unique circumstances are part of the reason why women artists in Birmingham did not formally organise themselves in a group or society as happened in other locations such as Manchester, Glasgow and London.

Connecticut, 1998; Maria Quirk, 'An Art School of Their Own: Women's Ateliers in England, 1880-1920', *Woman's Art Journal*, 34:2, 2013, 39-44; Devereux, *The Making of Women Artists in Victorian England*; Jo Devereux, 'The Evolution of Women's Art Education, 1858-1900: Access and Legitimacy in Women's Periodicals', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 50:4, 2017, 752-768.

⁵² Swift, 'Birmingham Art School and Female Students'; Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*.

⁵³ From 1854 the School of Art's funding from the Board of Trade was regulated by the demand for instruction, the work done, and results obtained. *Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Birmingham School of Art Committee*, 25 March 1854.

⁵⁴ Women's art groups and societies were formed in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Paris as a response to the restricted art education and exhibition opportunities.

Perhaps the women artists in Birmingham did not feel the need to create their own art societies because they were content with the opportunities available to participate in Birmingham exhibitions alongside male artists.

Chapter two's focus is on artworks made by Birmingham women artists to establish the breadth and depth of their influence on artistic culture and art-based industries. This object-orientated chapter uses a wide range of media, emphasising the importance of both applied and fine arts to women's art history. Furthermore, it establishes how art produced by women artists played an invaluable role in Birmingham's ambition to improve the design and sales of the town's manufactured products. The chapter initially looks at painting genres and specifically landscape and still life. The case study examples show how the artists approached the issues and challenges of landscape painting such as national and international travel. Floral still life was a popular subject for women artists and the chapter argues that whilst women did make art within this socially acceptable genre, they also exercised considerable intellectual engagement, creative invention and advanced technical skills. Furthermore, floral and foliage work was an important part of the school of art's curriculum that directly connected with designs and decorations used in art manufacturing. The chapter continues by examining examples of studio enamelling practiced by women artists that challenge assumptions that art practices conformed to limiting gendered stereotypes. Furthermore, examinations of studio enamelling in Birmingham evidence women artists' collaborative working and multi-layered networking. It adds to scholarship by examining large and small groups of women artists in both formal and informal settings

in this era.⁵⁵ Formal women artist groups aimed to represent and facilitate their professional interests and needs in an art world shaped by gender-based limitations and privileges. However, not all supportive networks for women artists were formally organised. Informal working relationships and friendships based on shared interests, activities and locations also provided crucial support and encouragement.⁵⁶ Being part of a community of artists went towards legitimising their identities as artists as well as providing encouragement and support in numbers. Many relationships began at the school of art, were fostered by involvement at the same art exhibitions and developed into working partnerships and collaborations. Additionally, this chapter section establishes that women artists and art students occupied and moved through public spaces to access geographical locations as part of their collaborative working and informal networking. Many of the artists who collaborated did so in spaces such as the school of art, studio spaces and each other's homes, encouraged by them living in close geographical proximity to each other. Their movement to and from these spaces challenges the ideology of separate spheres and its concept of women being limited to their own domestic, private spaces. Art-making collaborations in the same or complimentary media such as enamelling and jewellery were a frequent occurrence for Birmingham women artists. However, this research also shows that Birmingham women artists networked and professionally collaborated with both women and men artist colleagues. An important example is Annie Birkett, award-winning artist and designer, working in Birmingham's commercial jewellery and metalwork firms, collaborating with colleagues and contributing to the success of those businesses. The case

⁵⁵ Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*; Helland, *Professional Women Painters*; Lucy Ella Rose, *Suffragist Artists in Partnership: Gender, Word and Image*, Edinburgh, 2018.

⁵⁶ Helland, *Professional Women Painters*.

study artists discussed were an overt demonstration to the wider public of gender parity in art abilities and skills, challenging traditional notions of gendered hierarchies. This further supports my argument that women artists not only benefited from but also influenced and shaped the art world environments they inhabited.⁵⁷

The final section of chapter two examines Birmingham women artists' depictions of literary scenes and characters, a popular art trend of the era. Art works in a variety of media are analysed to demonstrate the diversity and complexity of their creative and intellectual engagements. The trend for portraying literary characters provided an opportunity for women artists to depict women characters including the popular trope of the femme fatale. A detailed study of examples of Circe shows how Birmingham women artists re-presented the character in ways different from their male colleagues.

Chapter three argues that women artists played an important role in Birmingham's art exhibition culture which has hitherto been overlooked.⁵⁸ The chapter initially focuses on the RBSA annual Spring and Autumn exhibitions and contributes to understandings of British nineteenth century exhibition culture.⁵⁹ Section one examines data on the numbers

⁵⁷ Objects created via collaborative working is discussed further in chapter two. Socialising also fostered bonds of professional and personal relationships based on shared interests and this aspect is discussed further in chapter five.

⁵⁸ See, Trevor Fawcett, *The Rise of English Provincial Art*, Oxford, 1974; Hartnell, 'Art and Civic Culture in Birmingham'; Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*.

⁵⁹ Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum. Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition*, New Haven, 2000, details the importance and popularity of 'Old Masters' loan exhibitions; Kenneth W. Luckhurst, *The Story of Exhibitions*, London, 1951, provides a short history, concentrating on London from 1851 to 1939; Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting. The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768*, London, 1988, details the growing interest in art and the emergence of the art market in England from 1680; Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, *The Art of All Nations. 1850-1873*, Princeton, 1982; Anne Helmreich, 'Victorian Exhibition Culture. The Market Then and the Museum Today', *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 2010, www.ronjournal.org [accessed 11 Nov 2019].

of exhibiting artists by gender to demonstrate the high levels of participation of women artists. It continues with a close look at the exhibition review articles published in local newspapers, comparing differences in language used about men and women artists to demonstrate the uneven access to notions of artistic worth and the challenges women faced to their professional identity and status. Finally, the section scrutinises the home location of exhibiting women artists to understand the significance of Birmingham as an art location, outside of London, for women artists. Section two focuses on seven individual artists and gives greater depth and nuance to the data to enrich understandings of how women participated in exhibition culture via their own enterprise and agency. The case study examples show that there were multiple tactics and routes to establishing professional art careers. These included the exhibition of paintings, other pictures and craft objects such as jewellery. The artists chosen were regular exhibitors at the RBSA and each conducted their art careers in different ways with some remaining in Birmingham and others expanding their exhibiting opportunities further afield to Europe and North America. These artists impacted Birmingham's art viewing public each time they exhibited art works by demonstrating what a women artist could do, challenging male-centric notions of what a professional, exhibiting artist should be.

Chapter four establishes the considerable and consistent involvement of Birmingham women artists in the art market. It examines sales via exhibitions, art union lotteries and direct purchases from buyers. This chapter uncovers new material on Birmingham's art dealers and auction houses. The transactions involved private individuals, public galleries, dealers, auctions and posthumous estate sales. This chapter also considers an expanded

boundary of art commerce activities to include activities beyond the traditional understanding of the art market. These activities were a vital facet of women's art careers and professional identities building on the changing relationship artists had with patrons during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶⁰ This chapter examines the prices of paintings exhibited from the RBSA exhibition catalogues, comparing the differences for women and men artists. The price data for Birmingham exhibitions has some similarities and differences compared to another location such as Manchester. Data for the numbers and prices of sold paintings by women artists is also examined. These were either sold directly from the exhibition walls or as prize selections in the Art Union ballots. The price data is converted to percentages based on number of paintings exhibited by gender and shows women artists sold as many and sometimes more of their exhibited paintings than male artists. The data on sales of paintings includes an investigation of women artists from outside Birmingham interacting with the local art market. The findings support the argument that Birmingham could be a favourable location for professional women artists, including some famous ones, from across Britain seeking sales.

The chapter continues with case studies of Birmingham women artists and their activities within local, national and international art markets. The examples establish the wide range

⁶⁰ Jeremy Warren and Adriana Turpin (eds.), *Auctions, Agents and Dealers. The Mechanisms of the Art Market 1660-1830*, London, 2007; Thomas M. Bayer and John R. Page, *The Development of the Art Market in England: Money as Muse, 1730-1900*, London, 2016; Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*; Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich (eds.), *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London 1850-1939*, Manchester, 2011; Charlotte Gould and Sophie Mesplède, *Marketing Art in the British Isles, 1700 to the Present*, London, 2012; James Hamilton, *A Strange Business. Making Art and Money in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, London, 2014; Michael North and David Ormrod, *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800*, Aldershot, 1998; Gerald Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste: The Rise and Fall of the Picture Market, 1760-1960*, two volumes, London, 1961.

of art market engagements by these artists. Their interactions were often conducted via art dealers, auctions and estate sales and, at times, their names were used as prominent headliners in advertisements for art auctions. This project engages with the existing scholarship concerning Birmingham art patrons, many of whom were local business owners, with new evidence of their ownership of art by women artists. It also shows examples of art by Birmingham women artists being collected by arguably the most eminent patron in the country at the time, Queen Victoria. Birmingham women artists engaged with international art markets, undertaking trips abroad specifically to create, market and sell their artworks. This augments the field of nineteenth-century women artists and travel with evidence of how artists from a provincial location such as Birmingham conducted their professional art careers in an assortment of ways across a range of locations using a wide variety of strategies.⁶¹ The chapter then moves its focus to an expanded realm of art commerce for Birmingham women. It provides evidence of women's involvement in art-based commerce such as selling copyrights, registering Assay Office hallmarks, commissioning work as individuals and as part of a group, building their own commercial art businesses to sell their creations and businesses for art supplies that supported artists. Academic studies of the art market often focus on the transactions of fine art objects. The expanded examples of art market interactions discussed in this chapter intersect with how women negotiated professionalisation and allows for a fuller understanding of how women artists interacted with the commercial art world.

⁶¹ Pomeroy, *Intrepid Women*; Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global: Women Artists*.

The fifth and final chapter of this thesis is focused on women's involvement in two wider, key aspects of Birmingham's art world culture; sociability and philanthropy. The chapter argues that women's contribution to the wider art world, including non-artist women, was greater than has previously been understood. The material analysed in this chapter advances knowledge of late nineteenth and early twentieth century art world happenings via evidence of the social activities of women that have thus far been overlooked. Their activities expose the breadth of social networks that made up Birmingham's art milieu. Socialising as part of a group enabled women to navigate societal restrictions, such as those related to public activities, in a more acceptable way than if they were participating alone. Women's art-based socialising enabled them to foster community networks and artistic identities. Women artists in Birmingham leveraged socially acceptable activities, such as social events, to gain publicity, assert their identity as artists and build reputations. For example, Mary Vernon Morgan organised community events at which her artworks were exhibited. One such event at the Lecture Hall in Perry Barr included her offering artworks for a proposed art gallery there, reinforcing her important position as an artist to the local community.⁶² Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière and Anna Blunden Martino (1829–1915) hosted social events in their art studios as occasions to draw attention to their artworks, working practices and spaces, displaying and reinforcing their identities as professional artists.⁶³ These events blended the socially acceptable role of hostess with their artist identities.

⁶² *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 Jan 1875, 6.

⁶³ *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 March 1886, 2; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 May 1873, 5.

Additionally, this chapter sheds new light on the vital contribution women made to the formation of BMAG's collections. Kate Hill has examined the interactions between gender and knowledge production via women's overlooked contributions to museum collections.⁶⁴ Significantly, Hill demonstrates that women's involvement contributed to the breaking down of boundaries between 'public' and 'private' objects and spaces within museum collections. A number of studies have demonstrated that it was difficult for women of the middle- and upper-classes to be actively involved in the public realm because of restrictive social conventions that inhibited them from being paid.⁶⁵ However, unpaid charitable works and philanthropy were acceptable and provided opportunities for women to gain experience and skills and self-fulfilment. The case studies discussed in this chapter provide further evidence of how women, both artists and non-artists, impacted Birmingham's art world in ways that have hitherto been overlooked. This chapter establishes that women were responsible for adding invaluable artworks to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's public collection. These were often critical acts of legacy preservation, intimately connected to family and friendship bonds. Often, such acts of donating were interconnected with other forms of civic philanthropy. An example is Frances Hudson Everitt whose philanthropic actions included donations to BMAG and the founding of the Girls' Night Shelter, assisting young women in need of vital support. Frances Everitt played

⁶⁴ Kate Hill, *Women and Museums, 1850-1914. Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge*, Manchester, 2016.

⁶⁵ F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, Oxford, 1980; Anne Digby, 'Victorian Values and Women in Public and Private', T. C. Smout (ed.), *Victorian Value. A Joint Symposium of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy, December 1990*, Oxford, 1992, 195-215; Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson, 'Middle-Class Women and Professional Identity', *Women's History Review*, 14:2, 2006, 165-180; Carmen Nielson Varty, 'A Career in Christian Charity': Women's Benevolence and the Public Sphere in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canadian City', *Women's History Review*, 14:2, 2006, 243-264.

a significant role in the social and cultural life of Birmingham. A further example of women's impact on Birmingham's art culture is Louisa Ryland's substantial financial donations to the Birmingham School of Art, which enabled the new building on Margaret Street to be built with conditions that the school be municipalised. Women's art philanthropy was connected to their other acts of civic philanthropy that formed part of the ambitions for civic reform, called the 'Civic Gospel' in Birmingham. This chapter demonstrates that women participated in the desire, mostly driven by the middle-classes and reinforcing middle-class values, to improve the moral virtue of the wider population via acts of community service. Women were able to make a substantial contribution to this municipal ambition by leveraging the ideology of women's domestic roles within the public realm.

Women influenced Birmingham's art world by participating via activities that were typically considered socially acceptable for their gender. Women artists advanced their art careers, their public profiles and professional identities by hosting social events. They blended their domestic environment with the public sphere to develop their artist reputations and potentially attract sales in a manner that minimised risks to their reputations. Non-artist women also participated in shaping the art culture via socially acceptable means. Many of these women were Nonconformists of the middle and upper classes with values that encouraged civic responsibility and municipal activism. Their social and cultural philanthropy played a far greater role in Birmingham's story than has previously been understood.

The chapters of this thesis, structured by the key areas of training, making, displaying, selling and the wider art world, explore many questions about the substantial role women had in Birmingham's art world and beyond. The evidence from the analysis of group numbers is enriched by a large sample of case studies, to bring a breadth of women's impactful experiences to the fore. The contribution of this project lies not only in the attention it gives to many hitherto neglected stories but also in its argument that women, as active agents, were a vital and influential part of the local, national and international art worlds to a greater extent than has hitherto been understood. Their art activities such as training, displaying and selling, typically in the public domain, challenged and progressed and reshaped understandings of what women could do.

CHAPTER ONE – ART EDUCATION

There was one lady to whom they would award no prizes, for the simple reason that she had taken all the prizes they had to offer her.¹

The quote above, published in 1865 in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, gave high praise to a woman art student at the Birmingham School of Art. Unfortunately, her name was not mentioned: she was only recognised as a 'lady', providing a striking representation of the circumstances of interest to this chapter. Women art students in Birmingham achieved great success for themselves and their school but their achievements and impact were not fully recognised then or in subsequent histories. This chapter seeks to counteract this by arguing that women art students were a vital part of the Birmingham School of Art, and their involvement had a significant impact on the institution and by extension, the art culture of the city.

The Birmingham School of Design, as it was originally titled, was a key institution in the art culture of Birmingham in the second half of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries.² It opened in the Autumn of 1843 and women were enrolled from the very beginning. Their experiences were different and unequal to those of their male peers, requiring negotiations of gender-based prejudices and limited expectations. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the quote above, despite the challenges many women excelled and gained top examination grades and won medals and prizes in the annual national

¹ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 6 July 1865, 5.

² It was also called 'The School of Ornamental Art', 'The School of Art' and 'The Municipal School of Art' over the course of its history.

competitions of art schools. This chapter argues that the school fostered an encouraging environment for women to undertake art education and develop skills that supported art practices and careers. It was an environment for women students similar to those found in other art school locations, such as Glasgow, but shaped by unique local factors that are discussed in this chapter.³ Furthermore, their leveraging of the opportunities had a substantial and efficacious impact on the school and the wider local and national art worlds. The art training aspirations of the women influenced the operations, curriculum and reputation of the school. Previous examinations of Birmingham's women art students have focused on the influence the school had on women.⁴ This chapter recalibrates current understandings to show that women had an impact on the school.

The period for this thesis is 1860 to 1920. However, for this chapter it is necessary to look from the 1830s, to the start of the Government Schools of Design and the reforms to design manufacturing to fully understand the involvement of women art students.⁵ This chapter uses an understanding of art in its fullest sense, encompassing the fine arts, applied arts and design. The Government Schools of Design were originally established to develop design and applied arts skills for use in art manufacturing. However, they also taught and fostered fine art practices and women participated in all aspects. This chapter is based on the Birmingham School of Art archive held at Birmingham City University. These contain

³ Judge Burkhauser (ed.), *Glasgow Girls. Women in Art and Design, 1880-1920*, Edinburgh, 1993.

⁴ FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object*; Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*; John Swift, 'Birmingham and its Art School: Changing Views 1800-1921', *Journal of Art & Design Education*, 7:1, 1988, 5-29.

⁵ Bell, *The Schools of Design*; Christopher Frayling, *The Royal College of Art. One Hundred & Fifty Years of Art & Design*, London, 1981; Romans, *Histories of Art and Design Education*.

school attendance records and minutes of the management committee meetings. The meeting minutes were also reported in local newspapers as were the results of examinations and prize competitions. Census records and exhibition catalogues were used to understand the careers and art market activity of the artists discussed.

This chapter is structured by the following key areas to support the argument that women played a significant role in art education. It begins with a brief overview of manufacturing design reform, the national Schools of Design and the history of Birmingham's art education. It then gives evidence of the impact women students had on timetabling, the curriculum and the financial viability of the school. It establishes their key role in the school's national reputation and competitive success. The role played by social class in the operation of the school is also discussed in relation to the women students. The original ambition of the school was to train artisan workers, predominantly male, for the art-based manufacturing industries. However, the evidence in this chapter shows that middle-class women were a key part of the student population and contrary to negative opinions that they had no claim to be there and unfounded accusations that they 'took up a lot of the teachers' time', many of these women were not leisured amateurs.⁶ The case study examples establish a more complex reality of them using their art skills to earn an income, develop art careers and participate local and national art markets.

⁶ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 5 April 1852, 1; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 Feb 1866, 8.

1.1 Design Reform and Art Education in England

In the mid-1830s, Members of Parliament raised concerns about the economic state of Britain's manufacturing industries and their positioning against economic rivals such as France and Germany.⁷ Manufacturers of textiles, ornamental domestic items and decorative metalwork, collectively labelled 'art manufactures', were of most concern because of their importance to the country's economy.⁸ The Government formed a Parliamentary Select Committee on Arts and Manufacture to investigate and make recommendations for improvement. The popularity and preference amongst British consumers for imported products, especially from France, was blamed on the inferior design of British products, 'shoddy calicoes, inelegant cutlery, and garish wallpaper'.⁹ The 1835–36 Select Committee report concluded that Britain's lack of art and design education for art manufacturing labourers was to blame.¹⁰ The situation was exacerbated by the relaxation of tariff barriers in the mid-1820s.¹¹ The report highlighted the French Government's public design schools, public museums, and copyright protections as crucial factors in the success of French manufactures. The Select Committee recommended the setting up of Schools of Design throughout the country and especially in areas with art manufacturing industries. The purpose of the Schools of Design was described in the 1849 Report of the Select Committee as, '[to bring] about a significant improvement in the

⁷ Clive Ashwin (ed.), *Art Education. Documents and Policies 1768-1975*, London, 1975, 8; Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 52; Bird, *The Development of Art and Design*. Bird also explores the discontent with the Royal Academy's provision of art education as a factor leading to the Select Committee investigation.

⁸ Bird, *The Development of Art and Design Education*, 100.

⁹ Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs. Labor, Empire and the Museum in Victorian Culture*, London, 2007, 2.

¹⁰ Bird, *The Development of Art and Design Education*.

¹¹ Ashwin, *Art Education*, 8.

quality of British industrial goods' by improving the design knowledge and skills of the artisan population.¹²

Art and design education was shaped and organised by gender with separate schools or classes for women and men. The first School of Design (sometimes called the Normal School of Design) opened in 1837 in Somerset House, London for male students only and seventeen were enrolled in the first year.¹³ Four years later the Female School of Design was opened, also housed in Somerset House, London. It opened with enrolment at full capacity and a long waiting list.¹⁴ F. Graeme Chalmers' examination of women's art education in two large cities, London and Philadelphia, demonstrates the participation of women in art education and their impact on the ambitions of the design reform movement.¹⁵ Chalmer's book addresses the experiences of non-famous women artists, providing examples of more 'ordinary' experiences. This enables him to show how gender and class were used to organise art education. This chapter builds on Chalmer's work and shows how women in a non-city location, such as Birmingham, had an impact on art education locally and nationally. It examines how the categories of gender and social class were also used in the provision of art education beyond large city locations. The Birmingham focus of this project enables the locational circumstances and environment to be scrutinised, thereby contributing to a wider understanding of nineteenth-century art education. Furthermore, Cherry has argued that art schools had a role in the regulation of

¹² Ibid., 26.

¹³ Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 19.

¹⁴ Callen, *Angel in the Studio*, 28.

¹⁵ F. Graeme Chalmers, *Women in the Nineteenth-Century Art World. Schools of Art and Design for Women in London and Philadelphia*, Connecticut, 1998.

social class as well as sexual differences.¹⁶ It was generally understood that fine art training was for the upper- and middle-classes whilst the Schools of Design were aimed at working-class students. However, there were also encouragements for upper- and middle-class women to be trained at the design schools.¹⁷ This inconsistency reflects the shifting ambitions of art and design education. Additionally, it supports the argument of this thesis that a narrow or rigid emphasis on either fine art, applied art or design can hinder a fuller understanding of women's participation in art.

The role of social class in art and design education is evident in the following quote from the Report of the Council of the Schools of Design 1842–43,

The establishment of a school or Class for instructing females in the art of Ornamental Design with reference to manufactures was in contemplation by the Council in 1841. The fitness of such an occupation for females; the various branches of ornamental manufacture for which their taste and judgment are adapted; the desirableness of enlarging the field of employment for well-educated women; and the successful precedent of a similar institution on the continent.¹⁸

The reference to 'taste and judgment' and 'well-educated women' can safely be assumed to be about middle- and upper-class women. The objective was to leverage the perceived qualities of women of certain social classes to improve the products of ornamental manufacturing. A similar desire was expressed in an 1870 magazine article about the Female School of Design, 'to enable young women of the middle class to obtain honourable

¹⁶ Cherry, *Painting Women*, 58.

¹⁷ Cherry documents the decline of the Female School of Design after 1848 when it had to discourage that fine art training that attracted middle-class women. It was later re-introduced but the school premises were relocated to a location considered unsuitable for middle-class women. Cherry, *Painting Women*, 58.

¹⁸ Board of Trade, *Report of the Council of the School of Design*, London, 1842-3, 6.

and profitable employment, and partly to improve ornamental design in manufactures, by cultivating the taste of the designer'.¹⁹ The intention of the Council was to educate a very specific type of woman student to be trained for work in ornamental manufacture, 'they were not to be 'ladies' merely in search of art education as a genteel accomplishment, and they were not to be interested in becoming serious artists'.²⁰ This statement supported notions of a gender hierarchy that only men could be serious artists and women could not. The Council required the students to explicitly declare their intention for studying and for preference to be given to those intending to do design and decorative work for ornamental manufactures.²¹ In 1849 there was a false accusation of ladies coming to the school in their carriages which was quashed upon investigation by the then Head Mistress, Fanny Mclan (1814–1897).²² However, when Mclan investigated pottery manufactures, she concluded it would be suitable for her trained and skilled students because work could be executed at home, 'so that without any injurious interference with the uneducated female artists, or rather artisans, in the Potteries, a constant and beneficial employment might be procured.'²³ Social class was clearly an important factor in art and design education for women. The ideal student should not be too wealthy or too working-class. The Council's notion of an ideal woman student is connected to the debates surrounding the Schools of Design curriculum and the tussle between a fine art and an applied art focus. This is also connected to the issue of design education, the gendering of ornamental work and suitable

¹⁹ J. Cordy Jeaffreson, 'Female Artists and Art-Schools of England', *Art Pictorial and Industrial*, vol. 1, 1870, 52.

²⁰ Chalmers, *Women in the Nineteenth-Century Art World*, 16.

²¹ Chalmers, *Women in the Nineteenth-Century Art World*, 24.

²² Carriages being understood as a sign of wealth.

²³ Fanny Mclan, 'On Porcelain Painting', *The Athenaeum*, iss. 906, 1845, 249-250.

employment for women.²⁴ These issues of gender and social class differences will be explored further in the context of women students at the Birmingham School later in this chapter.

Women students were enrolled in the Schools of Design throughout the country from their first openings or shortly after and they were taught in gender separated classes.²⁵ As I explore in this chapter, gender was crucial to the formation and running of the Schools. However, despite the consistent presence of women students, many existing histories of the Schools of Design have an overwhelming male-centric point of view and have not considered the significance of gender.²⁶ As an example, Birmingham women art students are briefly mentioned in relation to the 1849 scandal and resignation of the Headmaster, Thomas Clarke and the impact this had on the succession of male Headmasters.²⁷ There is no mention of how this impacted the women who are presented as passive props to the story of the male protagonists.

²⁴ Elliott & Helland, *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts*.

²⁵ Bird, *The Development of Art and Design Education*, 296.

²⁶ Bell. *The Schools of Design*; Bird, *The Development of Art and Design Education*; Cunningham, *The Formation of the Schools of Design*; Roy Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art – and of Design – to the Emergence and Establishment of a Civic Culture in Birmingham in the Late Nineteenth Century*, unpublished PhD thesis, Birmingham Polytechnic, 1992; Stuart Macdonald, *A Century of Art and Design Education. From Arts and Crafts to Conceptual Art*, Cambridge, 2005; Mervyn Romans, *Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Determinants in the History of Early to Mid-Nineteenth Century Art and Design Education in Britain*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Central England, 1998, 51; Romans, *Histories of Art and Design Education*.

²⁷ Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art*, 61-2 & 242.

1.2 Art Education in Birmingham

Women's participation in art education in Birmingham can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first art school was founded in 1803 by Joseph Barber (1757–1811) on Great Charles Street.²⁸ It is not known if he taught women students but his three daughters, Maria (1783–1863), Eliza (1785–1851) and Ann Matilda (1791–1861), taught private students and exhibited paintings.²⁹ Barber taught Samuel Lines (1778–1863) who in turn set up his own art academy in Newhall Street in 1807. The Lines Academy taught women, and Connie Wan has argued that there is evidence indicating they influenced the curriculum.³⁰ Wan found that a variety of art skills were taught to satisfy the needs of the students including floral studies and designs that were restricted to women students. Wan writes that later, the popularity of floral studies declined as the women students became more interested in landscape and architectural ruins.³¹

The Birmingham Government School of Design was setup in 1843 by the Birmingham Society of Arts with funding from the Council for Schools of Design, Somerset House, London.³² It was the sixth School of Design in the country outside London. The intertwining of a fine arts organisation and a design school mandate led to some disagreements. The Council initially hesitated with Birmingham's application because of the Society's

²⁸ Ibid., 230.

²⁹ Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Pen and Ink Drawing – Thatched Barn, Handsworth, www.bmagic.org.uk/objects/1906P302, [accessed 19/3/2019].

³⁰ Connie Wan, *Samuel Lines and Sons: Rediscovering Birmingham's Artistic Dynasty 1794-1898 Through Works on Paper at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2012, 73 & 184.

³¹ Wan, *Samuel Lines*, 88.

³² Roy Hartnell, *Edward R. Taylor and the Birmingham Municipal School of Art*, unpublished MA dissertation, Royal College of Art, 1976; Terry Hunt (ed.), *Finely Taught, Finely Wrought. The Birmingham School of Jewellery and Silversmithing, 1890-1990*, Birmingham, 1990; Swift, 'Birmingham and its Art School'.

'preoccupation with fine art'.³³ However, compromises were made, and the Council allowed annual fine art exhibitions to continue but would not allow there to be separate classes for fine art in the same premises as the School of Design. This chapter expands on the existing literature by arguing that women were a key influence from the beginning. Swift has examined the impact the school had on women students, giving credit for their successes to Headmaster Edward Taylor's (1838–1911) 'executed design' teaching methods, but he did not consider the impact the women had on the school. Swift concluded that 'few women were enabled by their art education to change their original ambitions or expectations'.³⁴ Hoban has challenged this conclusion by demonstrating the link between women's art education and their opportunities for paid employment and similarly to Swift, her focus is on the impact the school had, and not that of the women.³⁵ However, FitzGerald's PhD thesis focuses on the impact Birmingham women artists had on the Arts and Crafts movement.³⁶ FitzGerald argues women had a greater influence on the arts of book illustration, tempera painting, stained glass making and embroidery than has previously been acknowledged. This chapter expands on FitzGerald's research by analysing the women's impact on art education and the wider art culture in the town.

The original purpose for the Birmingham School of Design was to provide design education to, predominantly male, artisan workers from manufacturing. The school rules, published in January 1844, stated the following.

³³ Cunningham, *The Formation of the Schools of Design*, 240.

³⁴ Swift, 'Women and Art Education', 322.

³⁵ Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*.

³⁶ FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object*.

4. No Student to be admitted who is studying Fine Art, solely for the purpose of being a Painter or Sculptor.

10. Every Student shall state, within the first three months of his attendance, to what department of Manufacture or Decorative Art, he intends to apply his studies.³⁷

These rules make clear who the training was for, setting out the type of student, mediated by the students' intentions and ambitions. However, when it came to how the training was to be conducted, an understanding emerged that design could not be directly taught but would be developed via the teaching of basic fine art skills.³⁸

the committee knew – and they were constantly reminded of it by the masters – that a thorough knowledge of the principles of art must precede design. Given sufficient instruction in art, and design would follow³⁹

Therefore, the school that was supposed to be for artisans with a design-based curriculum provided fine art-based teaching and attracted non-artisan, middle-class students and especially women who had limited educational opportunities. Lists of student occupations were recorded several times in the early decades of the school and included students who were opticians, land surveyors and innkeepers.⁴⁰ Clearly, not all the Birmingham students were artisans in ornamental manufacturing.

³⁷ J. W. Unett, 'Rules for Attendance, Conduct and Studies Government School of Design Birmingham', January 1844, Birmingham City University Arts, Design and Media Archive, volume 1842-1822.

³⁸ These basic techniques were taught via outline drawing and shading from the flat and three-dimensional objects (often antique cast models), colour, perspective and for advanced students, the principles and history of ornamental design.

³⁹ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 26 Feb 1863, 3.

⁴⁰ 'List of Pupils, Ages and Occupations', *Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design Minute Book*, July 1845 and 1852, Birmingham City University Arts, Design and Media Archive; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 June 1858, 2; Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art*, 280-81.

1.3 Women Art Students in Numbers and Impact on Timetabling

The Birmingham School of Design first opened its doors in the Autumn of 1843 to 84 students, ten of whom were women (12%).⁴¹ By the end of that first academic year, the total was 310 students, 79 of whom were women (25%) and their numbers increased year after year.⁴² The start of the 1849–50 school year had 186 women students (39%) enrolled out of a total of 483 students.⁴³ These figures show that women students took advantage of the opportunity to study art and design in Birmingham. This is further highlighted by a comparison with the numbers of women students attending the other Schools of Design across the country. A snapshot of student numbers in 1852 from seventeen other Schools of Design show that Birmingham had the highest number of women students, 133, ahead of the Female School of Design in London with 118, Manchester with 100, Glasgow with 88 and Nottingham with 30.⁴⁴ Nationally, Birmingham was the location with the greatest number of women art students, and this suggests it was an encouraging and progressive environment for women artists resulting in a high demand for places in the female classes.⁴⁵ At the start of the 1848–49 school year the number of women students at the school was so great that it was necessary to place an advertisement in the local newspapers announcing that the classes were full.⁴⁶ The 1850–51 school year required a waiting list of women wishing to attend the School, ‘eighty females are now waiting for admission’ with

⁴¹ Bird, *The Development of Art and Design*, 179.

⁴² *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 3 June 1844, 2. This can be compared to Nottingham’s School of Design in the 1850s having 16% women students (Jones, *A History of Nottingham School of Design*, 29).

⁴³ *Birmingham Journal*, 26 Oct 1850, 7.

⁴⁴ Bird, *The Development of Art and Design*, 296. Bird’s chart shows the number of students attending the Schools of Design at the time of the establishment of the Department of Practical Art, February 1852.

⁴⁵ The term ‘female classes’ follows the original nineteenth-century language.

⁴⁶ *Birmingham Journal*, 23 June 1849, 4.

150 places already being occupied in the female classes.⁴⁷ A new class timetable was put in place in January 1847 to cater for the increasing numbers of women students, doubling the number of daytime classes for women students to two, 2-hour sessions per week.⁴⁸ The overwhelming demand from women wanting places resulted in changes to the school's timetabling.

The school's timetables (see Appendix 1, Table 2) were organised by gender and social class, structured by daytime and evening classes. They were revised several times in response to the growing demand from women.⁴⁹ Despite the government's original intention for the Schools of Design to train artisan workers to improve local art manufacturing businesses, from the very beginning, the school held daytime sessions for women students. These classes, held during the working day, were typically only accessible to women who did not work. In the school's first year the women students attended a Thursday class between 2pm and 4pm. A year later a second, evening female class was timetabled between 7.30pm and 9.30pm.⁵⁰ The evening classes were for students who worked during the day, and these were typically students of the working class employed in the art manufacturing industries. The daytime classes were typically populated by those of the wealthier middle classes who did not work during the day. The increasing numbers of daytime, middle-class women students had an important impact on the school. Practical

⁴⁷ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 24 March 1851, 3.

⁴⁸ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 11 Jan 1847, 3.

⁴⁹ Cherry, *Painting Women*, 53.

⁵⁰ 'Female Class on Thursday Afternoon and Evening', *Minutes of the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design Committee*, 1844. The male students had three, 3-hour daytime classes and three, 3-hour evening classes per week.

changes such as timetabling of classes were necessary as well as a reconfiguration of the school's purpose and target population, which are discussed in greater detail further on in this chapter. The growing demand from these students was part of a wider trend across the country for middle-class women to have greater access to education, training and occupation.⁵¹

1.4 Reactions to Women Art Students

At the 1849 Annual General Meeting of the school, the then Chair, James Lee, Lord Bishop of Manchester, commented on, 'the pressing necessity there was for enlarging the means of female education in the schools as much as possible'.⁵² This demonstrates a favourable attitude of the school's management to the phenomenon. This is further evidenced in the management committee's response to implementing a waiting list for the female daytime classes:

The committee adopted this course with much regret, for they greatly value this part of your school not only on account of the rapid progress the pupils are making in correct drawing and colouring, but because they have long indulged the hope that, through the medium of Schools of Design, a new and profitable, while eminently useful, profession might be opened to a class whose claims on the community are yet only beginning to be fully appreciated, and for which purity, taste, and refinement are essential qualifications.⁵³

The quote directly references the trend for middle-class women seeking new and rewarding occupations and expresses an encouraging response from the school to help

⁵¹ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women, Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*, Chicago, 1992.

⁵² *Birmingham Journal*, 23 June 1849, 8. James Prince Lee was also the headmaster of King Edward's School and involved in several Birmingham civic institutions, see M. C. Curthoys, 'Lee, James Prince', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sept 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16292.

⁵³ 'Report of the Annual General Meeting', *Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design*, 22 June 1849; *Birmingham Journal*, 23 June 1849, 4.

address the growing need. The reference to paid professions being the potential result of the female classes is a clear endorsement of the purpose of the school in relation to middle-class women students. The key phrase 'greatly value' demonstrates the Committee's encouragement towards this group of students, regarding them as an important facet of the school's community. However, as much as it expresses a liberal view of women and employment, the comment that 'purity, taste, and refinement are essential qualifications' expresses a reductive view of women, matching their perceived innate abilities to a suitable occupation that would benefit from those 'natural' qualities. Despite the generally favourable environment and attitude of Birmingham's School of Design towards women's art training, the response was mediated by socially proscribed beliefs of gendered abilities and limitations.⁵⁴

However, not everyone involved with the school was as encouraging about the women students. Ambrose Poynter (1796–1886), Government Inspector to the Schools of Design, highlighted in his 1850–51 report the overcrowding in the female class in Birmingham, 'attended by a large number of ladies who have no claim whatever to be admitted into a School of Design'.⁵⁵ He was specifically targeting the middle-class women students that he deemed undesirable because they were not employed in art manufacturing. Poynter made no mention of the even larger numbers of middle-class male students not employed in art

⁵⁴ Those beliefs, as part of a patriarchal ideology, were that women were naturally inferior to men intellectually and creatively. It was believed that their delicate emotions and physicality were only compatible for certain types of art making. See Parker & Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 12.

⁵⁵ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 5 April 1852, 1.

manufacturing attending the school.⁵⁶ His comment reveals a gendered and social class bias against middle-class women students.

Further disparaging and sweeping assumptions about women art students were made at various times throughout the nineteenth century. An article published in 1862, unfavourably reviewing the school's annual exhibition of students' works comments:

This failure is no doubt owing in a great degree to that radical difficulty in the Government institution which obliges the Committee to rely upon what has been expressively called "the young lady element," - this is, undertaking as a means of income to teach drawing to persons who neither intend to practise art as their daily occupation, nor to follow trades directly or indirectly influenced by a knowledge of the principles of ornamental design.⁵⁷

However, as will be demonstrated by the case studies discussed further on in this chapter, many of the women students did in fact practice art as their daily occupation as a means of earning an income. Unfortunately, when the comment was discussed at the School Management Committee's annual general meeting, the response was not to defend the women students, but to defend the use of certain design patterns that were supplied by South Kensington.⁵⁸ Following another meeting of the school's Management Committee, Brooke Smith questioned 'whether the attendance of a female class was really an advantage to the institution' and clarified that he was talking about the wealthier women students by saying 'many of them were in a position to pay handsomely for professional

⁵⁶ Lists of student occupations, mostly male, taken in 1845, 1852, 1858 and 1879 included land surveyor, landscape gardener, wholesale stationer, paper dealer, portrait painter, innkeeper, domestic servants, grocers and an optician – *Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design Minute Books*, 1845 and 1852; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 June 1858, 2; Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art and of Design*, 280.

⁵⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 26 Feb 1862, 2.

⁵⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 Feb 1862, 3.

teaching'.⁵⁹ John H. Chamberlain replied that the women students 'brought in a lot of money to the school, however, they took up a lot of the teachers' time'. Charles R. Cope defended by saying, 'some of the best pupils of the school were the ladies' and 'the Government had certainly pressed upon them to form it' and 'there was not an atom of attention given to one class more than another'.⁶⁰ Cope's vindication establishes that the women students were not only necessary to the school but were being taught with equal attention to the male students and were excelling in their studies. The women students at the school were active and enthusiastic members of the student body.⁶¹ Their presence had a significant impact on the structure of the school, which led to conflicts of opinion, perhaps as a reaction to the increased educational opportunities for women and changes to society's understanding of what middle-class women could achieve.⁶²

1.5 Competitive and Scholarship Successes of Women Students

Contrary to the perception that the women students were a hindrance to the school, they were in fact responsible for many of its competitive successes and contributed to its outstanding national reputation. The ethos of the government-led Schools of Design was entrenched in a spirit of competition, founded by the desire to compete more successfully in art-based industries against other countries. The art school masters were paid on a competitive basis; the higher the examination results, the higher their pay. Also, the many regional Schools of Design competed against each other at the government's annual

⁵⁹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 Feb 1866, 8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ This is discussed in further detail in Chapter Five via Constance Smedley's experience as a student at the school.

⁶² Vicinus. *Independent Women*.

National Competition of Schools of Art hosted at the South Kensington Museum.⁶³ Women art students excelled in the competitions by winning prizes, medals and scholarships. Their participation was a valuable part of how well the Schools of Design performed and their reputations locally and nationally.

Local prizes and competitions were an important feature of Birmingham's School of Art. In the early years, the competitions were often separated by gender, based on the timetabled classes for women and men students. For example, Sir Francis Scott, then president of the school, sponsored a design competition for women students only, awarding £5 for the best original design for a china dessert plate.⁶⁴ This competition reinforced the direct connection between women art students and art manufacturing by encouraging them to create original designs for manufactured objects. 1847 saw the first prize categories open to both genders. From 1861 there were no gender divided categories.⁶⁵ Perhaps this indicated a rebalancing of attitudes towards students' abilities based on gender. Allowing all students to compete in the same competitions indicates parity in their training and the calibre of their produced work.

The local art prizes that were competed for by all students were sometimes won by women students. However, the majority were awarded to male students which correlates to them being the greater number of the student population. Examples of the women's competitive successes are the award for £10 from the Armourers' and Brasiers' Company won by Clara

⁶³ Callen, *Angel in the Studio*, 33-4.

⁶⁴ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 Feb 1862, 3.

⁶⁵ *Birmingham Journal*, 23 Feb 1861, 5; *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 23 Feb 1861, 8.

Mills in 1892 for a design for a repoussé plaque.⁶⁶ The annual Messenger Prizes, bequeathed by Samuel Messenger and awarded via the Midland Institute, were intended to encourage designs for art manufacturing and were frequently won by women art students. In 1886 Mary Jane Newill shared the £5 Messenger Prize for the best drawing of a human figure with Fred Mason. That same year Hettie Bunn won a second place Messenger Prize of £6 and Kate Havelin won a first place Messenger Prize of £10 for a modelled design for a brooch and pendant.⁶⁷ In 1894 Mabel Harrison was awarded a £5 Messenger Prize for a drawing of the human figure from life and Annie E. G. Hall also received one for studies in sciography.⁶⁸ These wins are notable because they were competitions for designs directly connected to and often sponsored by local art manufacturing businesses.

The Chamberlain Medals, provided under an endowment fund setup by the Birmingham architect John Henry Chamberlain (1831–1883), were a highly valued prize and in 1900 Effie D. Ward was awarded a Silver Medal for a copper plaque with Limoges enamel and Angusine MacGregor was awarded a Bronze Medal for book illustration.⁶⁹ In 1901 Agnes I. Pool was awarded a silver medal for Champeve enamel work on metal.⁷⁰ Many other monetary prizes were awarded each year to the best performing students. For example, in 1897 Gertrude Connoly won the first prize of £2 in the Advanced Design Prize

⁶⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 9 Feb 1892, 4.

⁶⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 Oct 1888, 5.

⁶⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 13 Feb 1894, 8.

⁶⁹ Celia Levetus, 'The Birmingham School of Art', *The Artist*, vol. 29, Sept 1900, 441.

⁷⁰ 'The Birmingham School of Art', *The Artist*, vol. 30, Jan 1901, 204.

competition.⁷¹ Further cursory examples are evident in 1895 when nine women art students won prizes between £1 and £2 for work in modelled designs, ecclesiastical decorative figures, oil and water colour paintings and designs for enamelling and mosaics.⁷² Additionally, in 1911 Alice M. Camwell won a prize for enamelled jewellery and Ellen A. Walton won a special prize of £5 for plant studies.⁷³

Women art students successfully competed for and won local prizes at the Birmingham School of Art, demonstrating their advanced skills and capabilities. Their achievements, written about in the local and national press, reflected positively on the school and enhanced its reputation. An example of this happened in 1886 when Professor William Blake Richmond (1842–1921), who was the Slade Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Oxford (1876–1883) a few years prior, gave an address and distributed the annual prizes at the Birmingham School of Art.⁷⁴ In his address he ‘especially congratulated the ladies, who bore away, he believed, the larger number of prizes’.⁷⁵ This recognition of the achievement of women students from a nationally respected artist and art professor was a significant endorsement. Women students winning competitions intended to encourage and strengthen links between art education and art manufacturing are a significant

⁷¹ *Birmingham Municipal School of Art Management Sub-Committee Minutes*, 14 Dec 1897; Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*, 121.

⁷² *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 Feb 1895, 3. “Annie E. M. Taylor, £1.10s for modelled design for a fountain; Mary Newill, £2 for ecclesiastical decorative figures; Helen L. Faulkner, £1 for two designs produced in a two-hour exam; Kate Light, £1 for design for enamel; Offlow Scattergood, £1.10s for enamel designs; C. Blanche Davies won £1.10s for mosaic design; Catherine A. Lilley, £2 and Elise Smallwood £1 for still life painting in oils produced in a twenty-hour time limit; Florence Stern, £1.10s for painting of still life in water colours.”

⁷³ *Birmingham Mail*, 10 Feb 1911, 2.

⁷⁴ Simon Reynolds, ‘Richmond, Sir William Blake’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 4 Oct 2007, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35745.

⁷⁵ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 Feb 1886, 4.

demonstration of their involvement in the realisation of the ambition for the school to improve the design quality of locally produced products.

Scholarships were another form of competition that the women art students participated and excelled in. Some scholarships were separated by gender, but others were competed for by all students. As early as 1857, Marian Sanders was awarded a scholarship for free classes.⁷⁶ Women students were also awarded national, government scholarships such as Mary Ann Preston was in 1859.⁷⁷ Local scholarships were also competed for jointly for by women and men students. In 1886 Louisa Brown was awarded one of four local scholarships for free admission, the other three were awarded to male students.⁷⁸ In 1892 three of five local scholarships of £5 towards school fees, open to students under eighteen years of age, were won by women students.⁷⁹ The success of women artists winning local scholarships continued throughout the period and in 1892, thirty-two women students out seventy-seven in total were awarded free studentships for a year.⁸⁰

However, their successes were tempered by complaints expressed in letters to the local newspapers. An anonymous note, from 'a Subscriber to the School of Design' was published in 1881, complaining of the unfair advantage the women students had in competing for the scholarships; 'young ladies have almost all their time during the day to

⁷⁶ *Birmingham School of Art AGM Report*, 3 Feb 1857, 85.

⁷⁷ *Birmingham School of Art AGM Report*, 17 Feb 1859, 191. Mary Ann Preston's career is discussed further in Chapter Three.

⁷⁸ *Birmingham School of Art Minute Book*, 1886, 64.

⁷⁹ Awarded to Margaret Elise Bayliss, Violet Mary Holden and Florence Gertrude Tooth. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 9 Feb 1892, 4.

⁸⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 29 August 1892, 5.

study' and questioning 'was it the intention of the generous anonymous donor that these major scholarships should be given solely to ladies who will never pursue the industrial arts, or a trade; or, if they should follow a branch of art [...] it will be most likely that of painting still life or flowers?'.⁸¹ The writer believed that only middle-class, non-working women attended the school and for no other purpose than amusement. The same sentiment was expressed four years later in 1884 at the annual general meeting by Mr T. Brooks who was reported as saying, 'in respect of the awards of the minor and major scholarships, he suggested that the standard was fixed too high and that as a result its operation was to give advantage to young ladies who had a larger amount of leisure'.⁸²

Perhaps the complainers did not realise that they were also complimenting the young ladies and the high standards they were achieving. The complainers had a limited and restricted view of what the women art students were doing at the school. They also had no conception of the ambitions and art activities of women art students outside of leisure and flower painting. Clearly, the School of Art committee members, who decided the awarding of scholarships, had a greater understanding of the capabilities of the women students were capable of. In 1863, the Committee of the Council on Education established two scholarships, 'to be held by the two most eminent female students of the schools of art'; a ringing endorsement for women's art education to be taken seriously and not as time wasted.⁸³ Lord Houghton distributed the prizes for the Female School of Art, London in 1864 and is quoted as saying, 'he was particularly gratified by the success of the institution,

⁸¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 Nov 1881, 5.

⁸² *Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 Feb 1884, 5.

⁸³ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 19 Oct 1863, 3.

because it proved that the female sex of this country was more and more acquiring that independent position which he believed it was most advantageous for civilisation they should occupy.⁸⁴ Despite the gendered assumptions about the limited ambitions of women art students, their efforts and abilities were rewarded by scholarship awards. Their prize record challenged assumptions that only working class, artisan, men students should be supported to develop art careers after their training. Women art students in Birmingham were given funded opportunities to train and excel at the art school and many developed art practices and careers as a result.

In the later decades of the nineteenth century the Birmingham School of Art was widely known to be one of the best performing schools in the nation. This is evidenced by the large number of awards its students attained at the annual National Competition of Schools of Art, run by the government's Department of Science and Art and based at the South Kensington Museum.⁸⁵ Women students were responsible for a great number of Birmingham's National Competition awards. As early as 1854 and 1855, Government awards saw seven bronze medals awarded to Birmingham women students.⁸⁶ In 1855 Mary Ann Preston won several National Competition medals and was awarded a scholarship and a funded visit to the Paris Exhibition, given to those students who obtained the largest number of awards in two examinations.⁸⁷ In 1857 Jane Francis won a National Competition

⁸⁴ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 June 1864, 4.

⁸⁵ This archive was difficult to access, it was closed during the 2020/2019 Covid-19 pandemic. However, the competition results were often published in newspapers.

⁸⁶ *Birmingham Journal*, 2 Feb 1856, 3.

⁸⁷ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 19 Sept 1853, 1; *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 4 Feb 1856, 1. Preston resigned her award, the reason not given, and it was given to William Holyoake, the student who stood next highest on the list.

silver medal and her prize included £10's worth of art teaching aids for the school.⁸⁸ Appendix 1, Table 3 is a sample list of Birmingham women art students' awards at the National Competition. It is significant to note that in the years 1901, 1902 and 1903 women art students were the only gold medal winners for Birmingham. Also, in 1901 Geraldine Morris' gold medal was accompanied by a £25 Princess of Wales scholarship. The list is concrete evidence of the contribution women art students made to the Birmingham School of Art's national success and reputation by winning competitions. Their successes also bolstered their future, professional career prospects and challenged wider understandings of what women were capable of in the arts.

The Birmingham School of Art's teaching of executed design, under the leadership of Edward Taylor, enabled students to make the objects they designed and was an important factor in the school being one of the best in the country.⁸⁹ John Swift has argued that the executed design opportunities were responsible for the vast number of awards for Birmingham women students. The executed design curriculum was intended to develop the skills of students destined for work in the local art manufacturing businesses, namely the male artisan students. However, as with other areas of the art school curriculum already discussed, the women students excelled in areas that were not intended for them, 'the success of female students in local, national and outside competitions increased with the development of executed design, including repousse work which had been intended to encourage the male artisan'⁹⁰ The achievements of the women students challenged the

⁸⁸ *Birmingham School of Art AGM Report*, 4 Feb 1858, 137.

⁸⁹ Hartnell, *Edward R. Taylor*.

⁹⁰ Swift, 'The Arts and Crafts Movement', 26.

gendered assumptions of students' intentions and ambitions, and attracted criticism from the Department of Science and Art examiners. William Lethaby, a government examiner between 1897 and 1900, criticised Birmingham for the number of 'amateur' winners, taking prizes from those intended to encourage artisans.⁹¹ It was clear that he was criticising the middle-class, women students and expected a clear, binary division of students based on ambitions and gender. However, there were some commentators who had a better understanding of the more complex circumstances of women students, their capabilities and their ambitions. An article in the *Studio* magazine, reviewing the Birmingham School of Art stated, 'the high percentage of awards gained in the National Competition where, whatever its enemies might assert, the incapable dilettante is obviously out of the running.'⁹² The article author has recognised that the Birmingham women students winning medals were not 'dilettantes' and had impressive capabilities.

Swift concluded that the school did not react or respond to criticisms of too many women students because it was 'in fear of losing prestige, fees and the support of the 'art industrialists' whose daughters were part of this group'.⁹³ I argue that this is an inadequate explanation that does not recognise the wider contribution of the women students to the town's art culture and manufacturing businesses. The middle-class women art students were not only at the school for leisure or hobby purposes. The art practices and businesses they developed from their training at the school were of a greater variety and played a much larger role in the wider Birmingham art world. Their involvement in local art

⁹¹ *Birmingham Municipal School of Art Management Committee Minutes*, vol. 22, 1897-1900, 7-6.

⁹² 'The Birmingham Municipal School of Art', *The Studio Magazine*, no. 2, 1894, 90.

⁹³ Swift, 'Women and Art Education', 95.

industries, such as stained glass, enamelling, metalwork and jewellery, as well as their engagement with the fine art market, are discussed further in chapters two, three and four of this thesis. A greater recognition and fuller understanding of their activities stemming from their art school education is essential for an understanding of Birmingham's art history.

However, despite the many successes and achievements of the women students, there remained negative concerns about their presence, especially those who were not of the artisan class and assumed to be there for amusement only. The quarrel was partially alleviated via financial considerations. In 1849, a Government Select Committee investigated the effectiveness of the Schools of Design and as a result, the Council of the Schools of Design, Somerset House was replaced by the Department of Practical Art and Science based at Marlborough House under the stewardship of Henry Cole (1808–1882) and Richard Redgrave (1804–1888).⁹⁴ One of Cole's priorities was to make the provincial Schools of Design financially self-supporting.⁹⁵ He also addressed Poynter's concern of the numbers of 'ladies who had no claim' to be at the school.⁹⁶ Cole's 1852 report on the Birmingham School to the Board of Trade, suggested, 'a higher rate of fees might be charged for those who study rather for pleasure than profit.'⁹⁷ As Bell summarises, Cole determined that allowing 'ladies' and 'amateurs', 'into schools destined for the mechanic would do no real harm and might well be made a good source of income'.⁹⁸ It can be

⁹⁴ Bird, *The Development of Art and Design Education*, 332.

⁹⁵ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 250.

⁹⁶ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 5 April 1852, 1.

⁹⁷ *Birmingham Journal*, 10 April 1852, 5.

⁹⁸ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 250.

assumed that the category of 'amateur' included male students, aligning them with the 'ladies' as a good income source. Cole's proposition included leveraging the popularity of the school with wealthy middle-class women, keen for education, to achieve the goal of financial self-sufficiency.

1.6 Social Class and Ambitions of Women Students

A new Headmaster to the Birmingham School, George Wallis (1811–1891), was appointed by the Department of Practical Art for the 1852–53 school year. He began his headmastership by 're-arranging the classes and the course of instruction followed in the School' which included addressing the problem of overcrowding in the female classes.⁹⁹ These were split in two by social class and intent, and charged different fees. The overall number of classes for women students was doubled again to four sessions per week, two for each type of female class. Previously, all women students were charged three shillings per quarter regardless of which class session they attended. The new 'Ladies Class' for the middle-class students learning for pleasure and accomplishment were charged fifteen shillings per quarter, a five-fold increase, and attended on Monday and Wednesday mornings between 11am and 1pm. The 'Female Class' was for those wanting to 'learn drawing as a means of adding to their pecuniary resources' and were charged five shillings per quarter and attended on Monday and Wednesday afternoons between 4.30pm and 6.30pm.¹⁰⁰ The students wanting to attend the afternoon 'Female Class' were also required to sign a declaration of their intention to study art for practical purposes. I have found no

⁹⁹ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 5 April 1852, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 7 March 1853, 2.

evidence of the daytime male students needing to sign such a declaration. A similar declaration was in the *Rules for Attendance, Conduct and Studies* for students of the evening classes (presumed male), published in 1844, shortly after the school opened. An objection to this requirement was raised at a school management committee meeting, but 'it was explained that the separation was in accordance with the wish of the pupils themselves, and that the declaration was a necessary check'.¹⁰¹ The school's management saw an opportunity to secure the school's financial position via leveraging the desire for wealthier, middle-class women students to receive an art education. The increase in fees was clearly targeted at the wealthier, more leisured group. However, irrespective of the publicly aired negative comments and large increase in fees, contributing to a challenging environment, the women student body persisted in their effective role at the school.

In 1853, the number of women students was reported in the local press as, 'out of 151 lady students, 80 attended to learn drawing as an accomplishment, 9 as governesses, 30 as intending to become governesses, and only one intended for some industrial pursuit'¹⁰² These figures show that the social class divide amongst the women art students was not a simple binary one between middle-class women studying as a leisure activity and working-class women studying to improve their earning capacity. Women students who were governesses or training to become one, and defined as learning to draw for pecuniary reasons, were often from middle-class backgrounds.¹⁰³ The figures show that the women's art classes were predominantly populated by those not employed. Perhaps the hours of

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *Birmingham Journal*, 5 March 1853, 8.

¹⁰³ The example of Mariane Sanders who was a governess is detailed below.

the afternoon sessions, between 4.30pm and 6.30pm were too early in the day to enable employed women to attend due to work commitments.¹⁰⁴ In 1874, female evening classes were started again on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 7pm and 9pm. It was reported in the *Englishwoman's Review* that 'a class for instructing female artisans in the art of drawing' was started for the 1875/76 academic year for them to 'gain instruction which to many may be found of great value in their daily occupation'.¹⁰⁵ The school's timetabling was again adjusted to accommodate the demand from women students, of all social classes, to gain an art education. It was too simplistic to assume that the women art students could be so neatly divided by social class and assumptions of their ambitions.¹⁰⁶ The author of the comment quoted above did not consider the possibility that the 'young lady element' could and indeed sought to become, via their training, active in art industries. Hoban's PhD thesis and the case studies I have uncovered and discuss further on in this chapter, demonstrate that middle-class women at the school did pursue income-generating occupations in art industries such as jewellery, enamelware and textiles.¹⁰⁷

The women students received instruction that was more than just the art of drawing for daily occupation. In 1865, there were three evening classes a week for mechanical drawing and modelling from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.¹⁰⁸ It could be assumed, because of the late evening class times, that these were for male students. However, the prizes and examination results

¹⁰⁴ See the 1853 timetable in Appendix 1, Table 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Englishwoman's Review*, 1 Oct 1874, 302. Also reported in the School Minutes for 25 Sept 1873 and 27 Nov 1873.

¹⁰⁶ The same concerns of social class were not applied to the male students.

¹⁰⁷ Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*.

¹⁰⁸ *Birmingham Journal*, 7 Jan 1865, 1.

show that the women students were also taught modelling and designing. These may have been taught in the general female classes if not in separate classes. In 1852, before the evening female artisan classes were restarted, it was noted in a newspaper review of the student exhibition that year that Miss Southall had produced three 'favourable specimens' of modelled busts.¹⁰⁹ The article goes on to describe, 'modelling is a great and important requisite in the Birmingham School. It is one of the most essential elements which enters into the production of the wares of the town'. When the School struggled to recruit a modelling master for some time, 'private modelling classes for ladies' were set up with the sanction of the School's Committee and supervision of Headmaster George Wallis.¹¹⁰ The term 'ladies' was typically used for those of the middle- and upper-classes and this demonstrates that the school was teaching non-artisan women art students in art skills beyond just drawing that were directly connected to art manufacturing industries.

A special wood engraving class was advertised in 1870 for two afternoons a week, from 2.30pm.¹¹¹ It is known that wood engraving was encouraged for women students and the daytime scheduling supports these as being for women art students.¹¹² This is a further demonstration of the school encouraging daytime, women students to develop skills beyond drawing. An 1878 article about a new pottery painting class is another example of

¹⁰⁹ *Birmingham Journal*, 3 July 1852, 7.

¹¹⁰ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 19 March 1855, 3.

¹¹¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 Aug 1870, 4.

¹¹² Certain art occupations were thought of as suitable for middle-class women. This view is expressed in the following quote from a letter to a Birmingham newspaper, recommending woodblock lessons, "Tools used are small, simple, few and easily handled. There is a want of employment for females of cultivated tastes, whose means are small; and wood engraving is an occupation which even a lady might practise with pleasure. It is clean, and the delicate touch required in the excision of the wood, to give relief to lines which print, peculiarly points it out as an employment for the gentler sex" (*Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 Feb 1870, 5)

how applied art and design skills were encouraged for all women students. It was under the direction of Mr Davis and Miss Powis: ‘the work may be strongly recommended to those who desire to obtain an interesting means of home amusement as well as of art occupation.’¹¹³ The mention of both ‘home amusement’ and ‘art occupation’ suggests that the class was to be attended by day-time women art students but that they could use the skills for more than just leisure reasons.

The school’s organisational structure was based on social class and ambition, divided by day and night classes.¹¹⁴ According to the timetable, the women art students were either of the leisured, upper and middle classes or of the employed, lower classes. However, the reality was that the boundaries between social class and ambitions were more complex. Many of the daytime students challenged the assumption of a leisured ambition with the art practices and careers they developed with their new art skills. There are numerous examples of these students using their art training to enable art practices that provided an income, working for themselves and/or local art manufacturing businesses and exhibiting their paintings for sale at local, national and international exhibitions.¹¹⁵

1.7 Case Study Examples of Women Art Students

Following are snapshot case studies, based on new primary research, that demonstrate a variety of women’s routes to professional practices via their art training, shaped by

¹¹³ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 Nov 1878, 4.

¹¹⁴ Deborah Cherry has written “art schools participated in the complex social regulation of class distinction as well as sexual differences” (Cherry, *Painting Women*, 58)

¹¹⁵ These issues are discussed further in the later chapters of this thesis.

individual circumstances. Some students began their training with the intention of using the skills for employment. Others were able to respond to changes in personal and family circumstances by using their art skills to develop careers and generate income to support their families.

Minnie Rosetta Catstree (1858–1929) was a middle-class student at the school from at least 1874 until about 1880. She passed several art exams with a score of ‘excellent’.¹¹⁶ Minnie was one of seven children to Lunetta and James Catstree and the family lived in Edgbaston. Minnie’s father owned a brass foundry business employing several staff. However, in 1878 the family’s fortunes changed when the foundry business went into liquidation and James was then employed as a filer in another brass foundry business. The family’s situation worsened in 1890 when James died and an income to support the family was needed.¹¹⁷ In 1882, two of Minnie’s sisters, Fanny and Julia, had started a day and boarding school for ladies and it seems that Minnie taught painting to their students.¹¹⁸ From 1901 Minnie lived with her mother, Lunetta, and sister Jessie and was the only one to have an occupation listed in that year’s census.¹¹⁹ Minnie’s art skills were needed to financially support her family via teaching and exhibiting paintings for sale at art exhibitions.¹²⁰ She first exhibited a painting for sale at the RBSA in 1877, whilst she was still a student at the school and at

¹¹⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 11 August 1879, 8.

¹¹⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 May 1890, 8.

¹¹⁸ 1901 and 1911 England Censuses list Minnie Rosetta Catstree as a teacher of painting.

¹¹⁹ 1901 England Census.

¹²⁰ Her exhibiting included being listed in the ‘Directory of Artists’ in the *Year’s Art* annual books. These were national publications that included an index of artists exhibiting that year at major exhibitions across Britain.

least twenty-five more paintings between then and 1905, all listed in the catalogues with prices.

Mariane Sanders (1821–1908) was also a student at the school (attended c.1854–c.1860) and won multiple scholarships, medals and prizes. She was the only child of William and Mary Ann Sanders and her father, a surgeon, died in 1850. Mariane then lived with her mother, Mary Ann, who died in 1881. After her father's death, the household income was supported by Mary Ann having property and income from dividends.¹²¹ Mariane contributed to the household finances as a governess, art teacher and artist.¹²² She first exhibited paintings for sale at the RBSA in 1862 and continued to regularly exhibit until 1886, when she was sixty-five years old. Records show that in 1867 her painting *Primroses* sold during the exhibition for £3.3.¹²³

Florence Westwood Whitfield's (1855–1926) art career was shaped by similar circumstances. She was the eldest of six children to Benjamin and Florence Westwood. Her father owned a jewellery business employing about twenty staff.¹²⁴ From at least the age of six, Florence attended the Holyhead Place Ladies School in Handsworth as a boarder and then attended the Birmingham School of Art, exhibiting her work at the student exhibitions and winning prizes.¹²⁵ In 1873, whilst she was still a student at the School of Art, she began

¹²¹ 1861 and 1881 England Censuses.

¹²² 1851, 1861 and 1881 Censuses

¹²³ *Birmingham Journal*, 18 Jan 1868, 11.

¹²⁴ 1871 Census

¹²⁵ 1861 Census; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 Jan 1874, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 Feb 1877, 4; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 Feb 1878, 6.

her extensive record of exhibiting art, for sale, at RBSA exhibitions. She received high praise in exhibition reviews published in local newspapers. She married George J. Whitfield, an auctioneer, surveyor and estate agent, in 1879 and they lived at 50 Charlotte Road, Edgbaston. This was the same year she was elected an Honorary Member of the RBSA.¹²⁶ Florence and George had two daughters, Georgie, born in 1880, and Olive, born in 1885.¹²⁷ Florence's exhibiting career at the RBSA began in 1873 and continued until 1925, the year before she died at the age of seventy-one. Her husband George died of pneumonia in 1893 and his illness and death might explain the twelve-year gap in her exhibiting, between 1890 and 1903, by which time her daughters were of adult age. Also, her eldest daughter, Georgie, married Thomas Hidson in 1903.¹²⁸ It is interesting to note that a similar gap in her art exhibiting did not occur when her daughters were born.

It appears that her art career, enabled by the training she received at the School of Art, had a different motivation than those experienced by Minnie Catstree and Mariane Sanders who lost their fathers and needed to generate an income to support their immediate families. The illness and death of her husband impacted Westwood Whitfield's art career by preceding a significant break in her exhibiting, perhaps to concentrate on raising her young daughters as a single parent. Westwood Whitfield's election to the RBSA suggests she was partly motivated by professional recognition, something that was not readily available to women artists. However, selling her art was still of importance and this is

¹²⁶ *England & Wales Civil Registration Marriage Index*, January, February and March 1879, 184; *The Englishwoman's Review*, 15 April 1879, 169.

¹²⁷ 1881 and 1891 England Censuses.

¹²⁸ *Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1937*.

reflected in the relatively high prices for her paintings in the RBSA catalogues. Her exhibiting history and painting sales are discussed further in chapters three and four respectively.

The experiences of these three women show that their Birmingham art school training enabled them to participate in art education and the art market. Their experiences challenge perceptions of the school's structure based on middle-class women students attending merely to support a leisured hobby. There are many more examples of women students who attended the daytime classes, supposedly for the pursuit of an accomplishment, who developed professional art practices, gained employment, and started business during and after their art school training.¹²⁹ The sisters Eleanor Lily Ward (1861–1946) and Effie Downes Ward (1874–1960) were from a fairly typical middle-class family and both studied at the School of Art.¹³⁰ Eleanor had a forty-two year career as an art teacher at King Edward's High School for Girls.¹³¹ Effie was an award-winning student and developed a career as an artist and jeweller, collaborating with others such as Arthur and Georgina Gaskin.¹³²

Margaret Jane Awdry (1854–1939) was one of eight children whose father, a clergyman, died in 1875, instigating a move to Edgbaston with her mother and siblings. During her

¹²⁹ Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*.

¹³⁰ Their father was a machine engineer employing ten staff and their home was looked after by live-in servants. See the 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 England Censuses for the Ward family.

¹³¹ Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*, 96.

¹³² Effie Ward is discussed again later in this chapter and her collaborations with the Gaskins are explored in more detail in Chapter Two.

studies at the School of Art she won many awards and a scholarship in 1892. The 1901 and 1911 censuses list her occupation as 'art teacher' and she also exhibited her art works widely, usually for sale, locally, nationally and internationally.¹³³ In 1909 she was listed in the *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Arts* as a designer and maker of jewellery and metalworks.¹³⁴ She continued to live with her mother and siblings until at least 1911. Census documents show that Margaret and her brother Walter were the wage-earners for the family.¹³⁵

Mary Ann Preston (1831–1927), the daughter of a publican, was also an award-winning student who frequently exhibited her artworks for sale at the RBSA exhibitions and was employed as a teacher at the School of Art her entire adult life.¹³⁶ She lived at the same address from childhood with her parents and siblings, contributing to the household finances with her wages, until her death in 1885.¹³⁷ Significantly, her death certificate records her occupation as 'an artist', an important recognition of her career.¹³⁸

These case studies demonstrate that women art students from middle-class families undertook training at the School of Art that directly led to their employment in the arts. Their individual family circumstances appear to have required them to earn a living to help support their families, but they would not have been considered of the artisan class,

¹³³ See Chapter Two for further detail on objects she exhibited in a wide range of locations.

¹³⁴ *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art*, 1909, 123.

¹³⁵ Margaret was listed as 'art teacher' and her brother Walter was listed as 'civil engineer' on the 1901 and 1911 England Censuses.

¹³⁶ *Birmingham Mail*, 9 April 1884, 2.

¹³⁷ 1861, 1871 & 1881 England Censuses she is recorded as 'Teacher of Drawing' and 'Art Teacher' living at 5 Sun Street West

¹³⁸ Certified copy of an Entry of Death for Mary Ann Preston.

working in the factory workshops of the art manufacturing industry. The progression of their art training into art vocations did not directly align with the original purpose of the school, which was for the training to be used to support art manufacturing occupations but does illustrate the various routes into the professional art world for nineteenth-century women. Their experiences challenged the binary social class structure of the school and were indicative of the changing situation for middle-class women during this period.

1.8 Wider Impact of Women Art Students

The Birmingham School of Art held annual exhibitions of students' artworks that provided an opportunity for the students to show the wider community their developing skills and abilities. They also provided an opportunity for the school to demonstrate its teaching progress and successes. The annual exhibitions regularly elicited commentary in the local newspapers, and the women students were often a focus. For example, in 1866, an article covering the school's annual meeting, asserts that the 'young lady element' was 'essential to the maintenance of the school: but it kills the exhibition, by necessarily deteriorating the quality of the work'.¹³⁹ The use of the word 'necessarily' suggests that the deterioration was inevitable because of their gender. Unfortunately, the commentator was not paying close enough attention to how well the women students were performing. A more positive comment was published in a review in 1873: 'the floral work, in which the ladies, as usual, muster strong, is above average'.¹⁴⁰ The gendering of floral art is clear in this encouraging praise. Other admirations were not limited to the genres women were expected to work in. In 1885, an article commended women's work in enamelware designs, an area directly

¹³⁹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 Feb 1866, 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 Feb 1873, 5.

connected to manufacturing, 'many of the articles are very tastefully decorated from special designs by lady students of the Birmingham School of Art'. These designs had been manufactured into objects by Messrs. J. H, Hopkins and Son and written about in an article titled *Trade of the Town and District*. This clearly demonstrates a direct connection between the women art students and the town's art manufacturing businesses.

It seems that over time, attitudes began to change with a realisation that there was parity between artworks produced by women and men students; demonstrated in the following comment,

we have made no distinction between the male and female students in this criticism of the exhibition. But justice requires us to say that much of the best work displayed on the walls has been done by female students, another proof, if proof were need, that, at least in Art, women can submit to the same conditions of training as men and can hold their own in an equal competition.¹⁴¹

This demonstrates that there was some understanding in the wider Birmingham art community of the capabilities of women art students, but the author still felt it necessary to draw attention to the abandonment of a distinction.¹⁴² Evidently, the continuing exposure to artworks by women students effected a change in perceptions and understandings of their abilities and stands as further evidence of how the women art students influenced the wider community's awareness of what women could achieve.

¹⁴¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 Feb 1885, 4.

¹⁴² *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 Feb 1885, 4.

A lot of the women art students at the Birmingham School of Art participated in the RBSA twice-yearly exhibitions of mostly fine art paintings and by proxy this provided the local community with positive exposure to the successful art education being offered at the school. From about 1880, the Arts and Crafts Movement had a major impact on the curriculum taught the Birmingham School of Art.¹⁴³ As a result of this and the growing popularity of the movement, from 1909 the RBSA established an Arts and Crafts section in its exhibitions. Most of the exhibitors in this section were woman artists and a great many of them were alumnae of the Birmingham School of Art. The impact went beyond the local community via their frequent participation at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibitions in London and internationally.¹⁴⁴ Their catalogue entries would often include an association with the Birmingham School of Art, which were further disseminated in the exhibition review articles published in national magazines such as *The Studio*. This provides further evidence of how women art students, and especially those who were Arts and Crafts practitioners, were directly responsible for positive publicity for and enhancing the reputation of the school.

I argue in this chapter that despite the original intentions of the Government, the Birmingham School of Design/Art was much more than just a design school for male artisan students with a minor, appended female class. The women students were a vital, constant and influential part of the school. The women impacted the school's timetabling to accommodate their increasing demand for places, and the curriculum was amended to

¹⁴³ Swift, 'The Arts and Crafts Movement', 23-37.

¹⁴⁴ For example, the 1913 Ghent International Exhibition at which at least six Birmingham women art school alumni participated.

include classes offering specific art skills for them. The financial viability and self-sufficiency of the school were made possible via increased fees for women students. They positively impacted the school's reputation and ranking against other national Schools of Design via their successes and achievements in local and national competitions. The Birmingham school was often in the top national position in the rankings of the Schools of Design and the work of the women students was an important part of this. Furthermore, they challenged the gendered assumptions of what women would do with their art training, which had the potential to impact positively on the limited gendered assumptions in wider society of what women could do. Every time an exhibition visitor saw the excellent work by women art students, there was the possibility of a recalibration of their understanding of what women could imagine and skilfully create.

Birmingham in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, and early decades of the twentieth century, was a vital location for women to gain and develop an art education. Their participation, despite the gendered inequalities, was greater than has hitherto been understood and they played a significant role in the structure and policies of the school, influencing its financial viability and its wider visibility and reputation. However, it was the women students themselves who leveraged the opportunities to bring changes to the school and the wider community. Many of those women art students went on to develop art practices and careers despite limited gendered understandings and expectations. Their experiences show that there were a variety of routes into the art world, and these change our understandings of the role of art education for women.

CHAPTER TWO – ART OBJECTS

At the 1906 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (ACES) exhibition, a pendant and chain necklace titled *Briar Rose* (fig. 3) was exhibited by Birmingham artists Margaret Awdry and William Morris.¹ *The Studio* magazine's review of the exhibition favourably mentioned the necklace as,

one of the most purely beautiful things amongst the jewellery; the workmanship is exquisite and sensitive, and the arrangement of colour obtained by the stones is one of variety and distinction, harmoniously blending the elusive colours of the stones.²

Clearly, the reviewer was very impressed with the necklace and the design expertise it demonstrated. Such praise and recognition are important for reputation building and developing interest in an artist's work. The reviewer allocated credit for the object as 'the design of William Morris, completed by Miss Margaret Awdry'.³ These designations were not described as such in the exhibition catalogue: they were assumed by the article's author. The male artist was given primary position for the creative design whilst the female artist was given a subordinate role in the construction of the male artist's design. However, the author of the article was wrong: the designer and lead-artist was Margaret Awdry. Three months after the original review article a correction was published; 'Miss Awdry informs us that the design was entirely her own, and that its execution was merely completed, in one or two particulars of secondary importance, by Mr. Morris, a young

¹ Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, *Catalogue of the Eighth Exhibition*, 1906. Margaret Awdry's address in the catalogue is 117 Pershore Road, Edgbaston. William Morris was a student at the Birmingham School of Art with no relation to the famous designer of Kelmscott Press and Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.

² *The Studio*, 156, March 1906, 135.

³ *Ibid.*

Birmingham student'.⁴ Unfortunately, readers of the original article would have read the correction many months later, if at all, separating the praise for the art work and the knowledge that the artist was a women. This event contributed to and compounded the challenges women artists faced in obtaining recognition for their art. Regrettably, the correction has been missed by subsequent scholars and the same attribution error has echoed through art history despite Awdry's vigilant efforts to rightfully claim the design and primary execution of the necklace as her own.⁵ The example of the Briar Rose necklace succinctly illustrates how the work of women artists has been misappropriated, obscured and excluded from art history. This chapter aims to redress such omissions by demonstrating via art objects the breadth and depth of the contribution women artists in Birmingham made to the art world, thereby expanding and deepening our art historical knowledge. Claire FitzGerald's doctoral thesis also has a focus on Birmingham women artists, their art objects and their contribution to the Arts and Crafts movement.⁶ FitzGerald gives detailed analysis of book illustration, tempera painting, stained glass and embroidery. This chapter differs from FitzGerald's work with its wider breadth of art types and a scope not limited to the Arts and Crafts movement. It demonstrates that Birmingham women artists were active participants in easel painting and a broad range of applied arts.

The types of objects examined in this chapter cover many different media including enamelling, stained glass, embroidery, metalwork, gesso and painting to demonstrate the

⁴ *The Studio*, 159, June 1906, 90.

⁵ The error was repeated by Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 114, and on www.victorianweb.org [accessed 9th Nov 2020] and subsequent journal articles referencing Crawford's book which also mis-attributes the necklace to William Morris of Kelmscott Press fame. It is also made in Wolf, 'Women Jewelers', 40.

⁶ FitzGerald, *Women, Craft and the Object*.

breadth of involvement of these artists in the wider art world.⁷ Section one examines the genres of paintings exhibited by women artists at the RBSA to understand what types of work they were producing. It then takes a detailed look at the specific genres of landscape and still life, to assess the contribution of these artists and the impact of their art works. Section two focuses on art in other media, initially enamelling, which provides an opportunity to shine a light on the collaboration and community amongst artists in Birmingham. The third and final section brings together a variety of art objects to consider their connection and impact on literary culture. The subjects from literature chosen by Birmingham women artists enable a gendered reading of their art works. The examples discussed in this chapter are female characters presented differently by women artists compared to men artists. Typically, by showing them in active roles as opposed to a passive and alluring presentation. This shows one of the ways women artists asserted their values and perspectives in their art.

The object-orientation of this chapter argues that art works by women were a vital element of Birmingham's art world between 1860 and 1920 to a greater extent than has been previously understood. Claire FitzGerald's thesis and three exhibitions on Birmingham artists Margaret Gere, Edith Payne and Georgina Gaskin (with her husband Arthur) being rare exceptions.⁸ Birmingham had an art environment that enabled and empowered women artists to create and exhibit art works in a wide variety of media. My case study

⁷ I initially intended to include sculpture but unfortunately there is a lack of primary source evidence.

⁸ FitzGerald, *Women, Craft and the Object*; Gaynor Andrews and George Breeze, *Margaret Gere 1878-1965*, exhibition catalogue, Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, 1984; George Breeze (ed.), *Edith Payne 1875-1959*, exhibition catalogue, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1979; George Breeze (ed.), *Arthur & Georgina Gaskin*, exhibition catalogue, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1981.

object choices were heavily influenced by the availability of objects and images. Unfortunately, much art cannot be traced or has not survived. However, contemporaneous periodicals sometimes reproduced images and those sources are invaluable.⁹ It is important to note that whilst this chapter is organised by genre and media, many of the artists mentioned often worked across such categories. For example, Edith Linnell exhibited paintings at the RBSA as well as designing, sourcing gems and creating jewellery for her own business. The third section of this chapter has a theme that allows a variety of media to be included. This is an important point because categorising and segregating an artist's work by media or genre can limit a full understanding of the diversity of their art practices.

2.1 Painting Genres

The RBSA in the second half of the nineteenth century was the predominant exhibition organisation in the town.¹⁰ From 1866, it presented two exhibitions a year of mostly oil and watercolour paintings.¹¹ Numerous paintings from the nineteenth century are sadly untraceable. Therefore, the painting titles published in the RBSA exhibition catalogues are a vital guide to understanding what types of paintings were being exhibited by women artists in Birmingham. I have taken a cross section sample of catalogues from between 1860 and 1920 and allocated a genre category based on the titles of the paintings, supported by descriptions published in local newspaper reviews and national art periodicals. This is not an exact science and Yeldham highlights this difficulty, explaining that for exhibitions up to

⁹ Gail Levin, 'Writing About Forgotten Women Artists: The Rediscovery of Jo Nivison Hopper', Kristen Frederickson and Sarah E. Webb (eds), *Singular Women: Writing the Artists*, California, 2003, 133.

¹⁰ Appendix 7 gives a brief history of the RBSA.

¹¹ Sculpture was also occasionally exhibited and towards the turn of the century, arts and crafts objects were also displayed. Exhibitions are examined in greater detail in chapter three.

1870 this method is more successful as titles tended to be explicit and reviews usually described the appearance of a work.¹² For paintings exhibited after 1870, there was an increase of non-descriptive titles and exhibition reviews provided less description.¹³ For painting titles that did not allow for an easy, clear categorisation, I have allocated the 'genre' category as the default catch-all.¹⁴ The categories I have used are:

- History – narrative, literature, religious, historical, mythological
- Portrait – person known
- Genre – unknown person/people in everyday activities
- Landscape – including marine
- Interior – of buildings and homes
- Still life – floral, fruit, animals, birds

Appendix 2, Graph 1 shows the popularity of each genre category across all exhibiting artists in Birmingham for a selection of exhibitions. The data show that paintings were the most popular with all artists in the categories of landscape, genre and still life. The nature of Birmingham's art-based industries had an impact on the type of art exhibition audiences enjoyed.¹⁵ The local population typically had an advanced understanding of art aesthetics, often with greater attention on technical aspects of paintings over content.¹⁶ In

¹² Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France and England*.

¹³ Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France and England*, 116.

¹⁴ Mary Jane Boland argues the term 'genre' is a retrospective classification that can be useful for general classification but problematic if used more specifically and hierarchically. (Mary Jane Boland, 'A troublesome 'genre'? Histories, definitions and perceptions of paintings of everyday life from early nineteenth-century Ireland' in *Journal of Art Historiography*, 9, Dec 2013, arthistoriography.wordpress.com.

¹⁵ Barbara Tilson (ed.), *Made in Birmingham. Design 1889-1989*, 1989, Studley.

¹⁶ Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class. Money and the making of cultural identity*, Cambridge, 1996, 89 & 109.

comparison, Manchester patrons and exhibition audiences typically favoured didactic, narrative pictures encouraging social responsibility and 'rational recreation'.¹⁷ Furthermore, Birmingham's thriving amateur artist tradition contributed to its advanced art knowledge and technical appreciation. Additionally, Macleod has argued that the presence of a high-profile local artist such as David Cox encouraged enthusiasm for landscape painting in the local population.¹⁸ A similar influence was not experienced in Manchester where patrons and art enthusiasts were more typically influenced by art dealers.¹⁹

Birmingham's art exhibition scene was fertile ground for contemporary artists from all over the country. Women artists were an active and vital part of this and the genres of paintings they exhibited in Birmingham are shown in Appendix 2, Graph 2. The data show that genre, landscape and still life scenes were also the most popular for women artists and their exhibiting within those categories mostly increased towards the end of the century as their participation increased. This is discussed further in the Exhibitions chapter of this thesis.

A closer examination of one of the most popular categories, landscapes, enables a greater understanding of the participation of women artists in this aspect of Birmingham's art culture. As can be seen in the data in Appendix 2, Graph 2, landscape paintings were an enormously popular genre. The popularity of landscapes can be interpreted as a reaction

¹⁷ Ibid., 90.

¹⁸ Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*.

¹⁹ John Seed, 'Commerce and the Liberal Arts': the political economy of art in Manchester, 1775-1860', Janet Wolff and John Seed (eds), *The Culture of Capital: art, power and the nineteenth-century middle class*, Manchester, 1988, 54.

to increased industrialisation and urbanisation.²⁰ As cities and the urban environment grew, depictions of unspoilt nature and the countryside became desirable, including idealised, fictional versions.²¹ Landscape paintings appealed to nostalgia for an older, simpler way of life that could be brought into homes and hung on walls as a counter to the rapid changes and the urban environment happening outside the windows of homes. The urban and industrial environment separated the population from the beauty of nature that was frequently equated to moral virtue. Art depicting scenes of unspoilt nature was desirable and considered morally valuable beyond the pleasure of viewing for aesthetic pleasure only.²² Birmingham in the latter half of the nineteenth century has been considered the first truly industrial city and the popularity of landscape paintings at the annual art exhibitions can be considered as a reaction to rapid urban growth.²³

Landscape painting was problematic for women artists because it posed a challenge to society's notions of suitable behaviour for women. Women of the middle and upper classes were expected to conform to conventions of bourgeois femininity. These were centred on activities and concerns within the ordered boundaries of the domestic realm. Activities outside the home and especially in uncontrolled natural landscape locations ran the risk of condemnation and threatened their respectability.²⁴ The same concerns did not apply to

²⁰ Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art. 2nd Edition*, London, 1976; Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds), *Englishness Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, London, 1986.

²¹ Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology. The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860*, California, 1986.

²² Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain*, California, 2012, 1-2.

²³ Martin Ellis, "'By the Gains of Industry we Promote Art": The Birmingham Collection', Martin Ellis, Victoria Osborne and Tim Barringer (eds), *Victorian Radicals. From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts & Crafts Movement*, London, 2018, 16- 33.

²⁴ Anne Helmreich, 'The Marketing of Helen Allingham: The English Cottage and National Identity', Steven Adams and Anna Gruetzner Robins (eds), *Gendering Landscape Art*, Manchester, 2000, 45-60; Deborah

conventions of masculinity. Male landscape artists were often described as heroic conquerors, taming Nature's wild and primitive terrain.²⁵ This perception was intensified by the gendering of Nature as female, 'a transcultural tradition which dates back to Antiquity'.²⁶ The binary of male, active civiliser and female, passive scenery did not allow for the active part to be played by a woman. By its very nature, landscape art involved time spent outdoors, away from the home and hearth, considered to be the appropriate place for women. However, despite such deterrents, many women artists produced landscape paintings. From the fifteen exhibitions detailed in Appendix 2, Graphs 1 and 2, over 540 landscape paintings by women artists were exhibited at the RBSA.

Helen Allingham (1848–1926), a well-known landscape artist, studied at the Birmingham School of Art and frequently exhibited her landscape and rural scene paintings in Birmingham.²⁷ She participated in nine RBSA exhibitions between 1866 and 1907, exhibiting twenty paintings. In 1891, her paintings *Valewood Farm* and *Old Cottages at Pinner* were purchased for the Birmingham Art Gallery permanent collection.²⁸ The collecting policy of the Art Gallery included, 'the works of Birmingham artists who have risen to eminence' and Helen Allingham certainly fitted that criterion.²⁹

Cherry, 'Women Artists and the Politics of Feminism 1850-1900', Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Women in the Victorian Art World*, Manchester, 1995, 57.

²⁵ Steven Adams and Anna Gruetzner Robins (eds), *Gendering Landscape Art*, Manchester, 2000.

²⁶ Adams & Robins, *Gendering Landscape Art*, 5.

²⁷ Allingham went on to study at the Female School of Art, London and Royal Academy schools.

²⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Oct 1891, 4.

²⁹ Davies, *By the Gains of Industry*, 22.

Allingham's landscapes were praised for their truth to nature, which was achieved by direct observation, outdoors, away from home. Such activity was regarded as unfeminine and a threat to her respectability. Allingham negotiated the gendered challenges by depicting a feminised version of outdoor spaces such as enclosed cottage gardens as an extension of the domestic interior.³⁰ Such scenes with a close connection to domesticity conformed to what was deemed suitable subject matter for a woman artist. Her gendered conformity was leveraged to advance her career, acclaim and sales.³¹ Louise Jopling (1843–1933), also a frequent exhibitor at the RBSA, was interested in landscape but, as Quirk discusses, her domestic responsibilities, including financial, made time away from her home studio in London difficult.³² Cherry demonstrates how artists, writers and women's rights campaigners Barbara Bodichon (1827–1891), Anna Mary Howitt (1824–1884) and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829–1925) defied such approbation, 'in going on country excursions, immersing themselves in the view, drawing, painting and writing out of doors, the three friends redefined femininity as strong, working and self-determined'.³³ However, when women artists exhibited landscapes, they often received criticism designed to remind them that it was not for them. Bodichon's landscapes were negatively reviewed as being 'too ambitious'.³⁴ A review of Emily Osborn's (1828–1925) picture, *Hessian Peasants* exhibited at the RBSA 1862 Annual exhibition states, 'the landscape portion of the work, however, is inexcusably careless'.³⁵ The implication of the comment is that her painting is worth notice

³⁰ Devereux, *The Making of Women Artists*, 114-5.

³¹ Anne Helmreich, 'The Marketing of Helen Allingham'.

³² Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*, 50.

³³ Deborah Cherry, 'Women Artists and the Politics of Feminism'.

³⁴ Dodd, 'Art Education for Women', 188.

³⁵ *Birmingham Journal*, 27 Sept 1862, 7.

for its pleasantness, but the reviewer feels the need to keep in check the landscape element as a reminder that is not within her reach.

However, despite such circumscriptions, many Birmingham women artists frequently painted and exhibited landscapes inspired by locations from all over the country and indeed, the world. An inspection of the titles of the paintings listed in Appendix 2, Graphs 1 and 2 shows a wide range of geographic locations depicted and a sample of them are listed in Appendix 2, Table 1. It could be that some of these pictures were copies of other paintings, but it is known that women artists from Birmingham did travel and create works of art inspired by those travels. For example, in September 1874 the *Whitby Gazette* reported that the sisters, Annie (1849–1935) and Amelia, known as Minnie (1851–1903) Townley of Edgbaston, Birmingham stayed in the village of Goathland near Whitby, Yorkshire.³⁶ The sisters used this and other visits for their art. The RBSA exhibition catalogues show that they exhibited the paintings listed in Appendix 2, Table 2, with titles directly linked to Whitby and Yorkshire. A timeline of the travels of the Townley sisters can be traced by the titles of the paintings they exhibited at the RBSA. Their expeditions included many popular British tourist locations such as Malvern, Eastbourne, Llangollen and the Isle of Wight. Their painting titles also show that they frequently travelled to European countries as can be seen from the titles of their paintings listed in Appendix 2, Table 3. To emphasise the travelling that the sisters undertook, two paintings exhibited by Minnie Townley in 1891 are titled, *Lemons in Our Italian Garden* and *Oranges in Our Italian*

³⁶ *Whitby Gazette*, 19 Sept 1874, 4.

Garden. The designation of the garden being ‘ours’ indicates her painting the scene directly, as opposed to being copied from another work.

Georgina Steeple de L’Aubinière (1848–1930) is another example of a well-travelled Birmingham artist who is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. Steeple de L’Aubinière was born in Balsall Heath, Birmingham in 1848 to John and Martha Steeple. She did not attend the Birmingham School of Art but was trained by her father who was an artist.³⁷ Her exhibition history at the RBSA is a timeline of her travels around Britain and the world. Her earlier paintings had titles with locations relatively local to Birmingham, such as Worcestershire, Hamstead, Stourbridge, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Merionethshire. From 1880 her painting titles included the Baveno region of Italy, the United States and Canada. Towards the end of the century, she returned to Britain with her husband, and they undertook a residency at Kew Gardens, painting the landscape scenery (fig. 4). There followed an exhibition and a book, published with Mr W. T. Thiselton-Dyer, the then Director of Kew Gardens. Kew Gardens, founded as a national botanical garden in 1840, is a manufactured park, an artificial creation, bordering London’s smoke and dirt, designed to showcase the beauty of Nature. Steeple de L’Aubinière’s painting of the lake in Kew Gardens, with its edge-to-edge presentation, fully immerses the viewer in the scenery. The stillness of the water, undisturbed by human activity and the imposing and majestic height of the trees, with a tiny sliver of the distant horizon, presents Kew Gardens as natural and untouched by human shaping or artifice. The paintings these well-travelled women artists

³⁷ *The Queen*, 25 April 1891, 647. Her father, John Steeple, advertised landscape painting instruction (*Birmingham Journal*, 29 Sept 1860, 8)

then exhibited in Birmingham were part of the burgeoning travel culture of the nineteenth century. Images of scenery from far-away places would have whetted the appetite of the exhibition audiences. Birmingham women artists were creating, exhibiting and selling their landscape paintings to a public that was keen to hang such pictures in their homes. Steeple de L'Aubinière's exhibition and book were part of the culture of the park and her landscape art was part of the presentation of it as a natural, undisturbed environment to counter the disruptions of industrialisation and urbanisation.³⁸ Landscape paintings of idyllic nature were connected to the ideology that natural beauty, including those depicted in art, equated to moral virtue.³⁹ It was thought that looking at such depictions of unspoilt nature would help to soothe a viewer's soul, disturbed by the negative conditions of industrialisation.

Birmingham women artists were able to participate in and contribute to the popular genre of landscape art despite the limitations imposed on them because of their gender. Their opportunities to travel were often enabled by their social class. Many Birmingham women artists were from middle-class families, wealthy from the industrial manufacturing opportunities in Birmingham. Their financial circumstances enabled them to travel in ways that minimised concerns of impropriety. They also mitigated such risks via companionship. The Townley sisters travelled and worked together as did Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière with her artist husband. Every act of participation in the genre of landscapes by women artists challenged ideas of what was considered suitable for women. When their landscapes

³⁸ *The Sketch*, 17 March 1897, 332.

³⁹ Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*.

were exhibited and viewed by the public, this challenged the viewers' understandings of what women could and should do. When women painted images of women, discussed in greater depth further on in this chapter, they were doing something powerful in taking ownership of the presentation of their own gender. Landscape paintings by women challenged gendered notions of the subject as wild, feminine, 'Nature' to be tamed by male artists. When women artists did the taming and presenting, they were challenging the concept, the notion of passivity, of things gendered female, including themselves.

The genre category of still life was also consistently one of the most popular with artists in Birmingham between 1860 and 1920. The genre of still life can be broken down to three sub-categories, flowers and fruit, animals and birds and other still life. Appendix 2, Graph 3 shows a breakdown of these sub-categories for a sample of fifteen RBSA exhibitions between 1860 and 1920 for all artists. A total of 1,100 still life paintings were exhibited at these fifteen exhibitions.

A further breakdown of these still life categories by gender of the artist is shown in Appendix 2, Graph 4. A total of 647 these paintings were by women artists and 461 by male artists. This shows that the contribution by female artists to this genre was significant. Graph two also shows that paintings of flowers and fruit were especially popular for women artists. Floral still life pictures are traditionally positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy of art genres.⁴⁰ The genre has been denigrated for its alignment to femininity, 'the

⁴⁰ The hierarchy has been described as, 1) history 2) portrait 3) genre scenes 4) landscape 5) still life. See, Charles Harrison, *An Introduction to Art*, New Haven, 2009, 99-112.

characterization of flower painting as petty, painstaking, pretty, requiring only dedication and dexterity is related to the sex of a large proportion of its practitioners'.⁴¹ However, in much of the art historical literature on the topic, Victorian male practitioners have been praised as the masters, credited with developing grand styles.⁴² The contribution of women artists to this category has been overwhelmingly ignored in the histories of art, despite it being considered one of the most appropriate for them.

In Birmingham, flower paintings exhibited at the RBSA were connected to the ambition to improve design for Birmingham's manufactured products. In the School of Art, the study and drawing of flowers and foliage were an important part of the curriculum.⁴³ The students were encouraged to develop their art knowledge by visiting the exhibitions and discounted tickets were offered to attract them. They undertook examinations specifically assessing their floral and foliage drawing skills. Prizes were regularly awarded for the best flower and fruit compositions.⁴⁴ The design and decoration of products manufactured in Birmingham often required advanced skills in producing flower and foliage motifs. The floral still life pictures by women artists were a significant factor in this ambition. They were regularly viewed by art students and the citizens of the town; the very people who worked in the manufacturing businesses in need of design improvement. The many flower pictures

⁴¹ Parker & Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 1981, 54.

⁴² See Christopher Wood, *Victorian Painting*, London, 1999.

⁴³ This is discussed further in Chapter One.

⁴⁴ An example, Mr H. Sparrow Thompson won a silver medal for a Roman tripod panel that included fruit and flowers and attracted the following comment in a local newspaper review, "The working of the fruit is almost perfect; that of the flowers excellent". (*Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 9 March 1867, 7).

on regular and abundant display had a role in the art education of Birmingham's art students and artisan workers.

Mary Vernon Morgan (1871–1927) was a prolific and productive Birmingham artist, and her oeuvre was dominated by still life paintings. During her career, she exhibited over 279 paintings at RBSA exhibitions of which 180 were flower paintings (recognisable as such from their titles). Her contribution to the art culture of Birmingham, in terms of numbers of paintings exhibited, was substantial. Her flower paintings were popular with the public and were often chosen as prizes in the Art Union ballots held after each exhibition.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, very few of Vernon Morgan's flower paintings are accessible. A surviving example is *Flowers in a Glass Vase* (no date) (fig. 5), an oil painting of white and blue irises, purple lilac blossoms and white ox-eye daisies. Vernon Morgan's choice of flowers was not arbitrary and connects with the centuries old practice of floriography and floral iconology.⁴⁶ Blue irises are symbolic of faith and hope, white irises symbolize purity and innocence, ox-eye daisies symbolize visual clarity and patience, and lilacs are linked with first love and youthful innocence. They are all spring blooming plants, and they connect with the history of flowers in art representing mortality, impermanence and temporality. Vernon Morgan's composition with its edge-to-edge presentation emphasises the abundance of the bouquet. The flowers are a dominant subject, there to stimulate the viewer's senses: you can almost smell them. The composition is supported by colours, the bright white of the irises and daisies dominating the middle and the right, which is also supported by the darker

⁴⁵ This is discussed further in Chapter Four.

⁴⁶ Debra N. Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica. Flowers in Pre-Raphaelite Art*, London, 2003.

purples and blues as contrast. There are three colours of irises, and they circle from the white at bottom left and centre, to pale purple on the right and blue at the top. Again, it is a feature of her composition that connects with the passage of time and stages of mortality represented in colour, beginning with the early, white innocence of youth. Vernon Morgan's technical proficiency with her medium is demonstrated by the glass vase and reflected light. This aspect of the picture provides the atmosphere, one of abundance and spring life blooming against a darker background with a strong shadow. The fleeting impermanence of the flowers' glories are hinted at with some of the heads just starting to droop and some of the petals have over-blown.

Vernon Morgan's painting challenges the notion that women artists were good at flower paintings because they only required nimble dexterity and mere copying skills.⁴⁷ Her capacity for creative invention is clear, involving engagement with a history of symbolism and advanced skills in composition, colour and light. Her painting is one example from the many still life paintings exhibited by Birmingham women artists and sits alongside their work in the applied arts such as enamelling, jewellery, metalwork, textiles and also design work. The full range of art practices and objects by women artists are an important part of the art history of Birmingham.

⁴⁷ "Embedded in this discourse was the art historical trope, traceable to the Renaissance, whereby *designo*, with its associations of intellectual creativity, was assigned as a male trait where as *colore*, with its associations of unthinking imitation, was designated female ... the notion that these differences could be attributed to gender is found nowhere in the works themselves but solely in the rhetorical strategies of art critics." (Helmreich, 'The Marketing of Helen Allingham', 54).

2.2 Studio Enamelling and Artistic Collaboration

Enamelling from the nineteenth century can be organised into two types; mass-produced industrial enamelling and hand-made, studio works, sometimes called enamelwork or studio enamelling.⁴⁸ Birmingham and the surrounding area were an important centre for industrial enamel production during the nineteenth century with their products being sold all over the world.⁴⁹ However, studio enamelware was also widely created, as part of the jewellery trade and the enamelware training at the Birmingham School of Art. This chapter section is concerned with studio enamelling and its practice in Birmingham with a focus on objects made by women artists to demonstrate the breadth and depth of their contribution to the art culture of Birmingham, including the informal community of artists.

There was a revival of studio enamelling in the 1890s, as part of the Arts and Crafts movement.⁵⁰ It was a traditional craft skill practiced by members of the Guild of Handicraft, the Art Workers' Guild, and exhibited at the ACES exhibitions.⁵¹ Alexander Fisher (1864–

⁴⁸ Fred Miller's article about the work of Mr Fisher, an artist enameller, member of the Art Worker's Guild, reinforces this point. (Fred Miller, 'An Enameller and His Work', *The Studio*, Aug 1896, 8:41, 149-156).

⁴⁹ Manufacturers such as Salt's Patent Enamel Works, Bradford Street, Birmingham (founded 1860); The Patent Enamel Company Ltd., Selly Oak, Birmingham (founded 1889); Chromographic Enamel Company Ltd., Wolverhampton (founded in 1886) – they mass-produced functional objects such as weather-proof plate signage for buildings and advertising, clock faces, badges, stove linings, fire screens, to name a few. (Wolverhampton History & Heritage, *The Chromographic Enamel Co. Limited*, www.historywebsite.co.uk [accessed 28th July 2020]).

⁵⁰ Crawford attributes the general revival in the late nineteenth-century to "the Arts and Crafts pioneer" Alexander Fisher. Crawford also credits Louis Joseph as the pioneer teacher at the Birmingham School of Art. (Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 103). Cockroft states, "Alexander Fisher (1864-1936) was the doyen of Arts & Crafts enamellers. He led the British revival in the ancient craft." (V. Irene Cockroft, *New Dawn Women. Women in the Arts & Crafts and Suffrage Movements at the Dawn of the 20th Century*, Surrey, 2005 11).

⁵¹ 'The society has already been the direct inspiration of many revived crafts. Enamelling, jewellery and embroidery have all renewed their vitality since it first came into existence' ('The Arts and Crafts Exhibition', *The Studio*, 9:46, Jan 1897, 284); 'The Guild of Handicraft: A Visit to Essex House', *The Studio*, 12:55, Oct 1897, 27-36.

1936) is often credited as the pioneer of Arts and Crafts pictorial enamelling. His involvement in art education and the artworks he exhibited are lauded, and his influence on other art enamellers is recorded.⁵² However, the studio enamelling by women artists, and specifically those from Birmingham, is often absent in the histories of Arts and Crafts enamelling. Traditionally, when women artist enamellers are mentioned, it is in connection with their marriage to male artist enamellers and teachers.⁵³ More recently, scholarship has prioritised attention on the careers of women enamellers.⁵⁴ Zoë Thomas' recent examination of the artistic working partnership and marriage of Edith (1862–1929) and Nelson Dawson (1859–1941) argues that not all marriages were universally repressive for women artists.⁵⁵ Thomas establishes that such a partnership helped develop the professional careers of both Edith and Nelson, albeit with some commonalities and differences in strategies.

The Birmingham School of Art played a vital role in the revival of studio enamelling techniques from the early 1890s.⁵⁶ Many of the students at the School of Art who excelled at the craft were women, but their work and practice have not been fully recognised. The artworks produced by these students won prizes and appeared at exhibitions all over the

⁵² Stephen Pudney, 'Alexander Fisher: Pioneer of Arts & Crafts Enamelling', *The Journal of Decorative Arts Society 1850 – the Present*, no. 23, 1999, 70-85.

⁵³ Pudney discusses artist enameller marriages such as Nelson & Edith Dawson, Gilbert & Gertrude Bayes. When he does discuss a women artist enameller, Madeline Wyndham, he makes clear that she was an aristocratic lady, not a professional artist.

⁵⁴ For example, Irene Cockroft documents the artists Ernestine Bell Mills (1871–1959), (Cockroft, *New Dawn Women*) and Elizabeth Cumming's book on Phoebe Anna Traquair (1852–1936) who worked in a wide range of media including enamel (Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair*).

⁵⁵ Zoë Thomas, 'Marriage and Metalwork: Gender and Professional Status in Edith and Nelson Dawson's Arts and Crafts Partnership', Heidi Egginton and Zoë Thomas, *Precarious Professionals: Gender, Identities and Social Change in Modern Britain*, London, 2021, 125-154.

⁵⁶ "Wood-carving, too, and metal work, are rather at a standstill; but there is much good enamelling to be seen." ('Birmingham Municipal School of Art Student Exhibition', *The Studio*, 10:48, March 1897, 132).

country and internationally, and this is explored further in Chapter Three.⁵⁷ These objects were an important part of the Arts and Crafts movement and its dissemination across the country and the Western world. Their objects had an impact on the commercial art market and wider visual culture.

Studio enamelling is a craft that could challenge notions of what was considered ideal for women.⁵⁸ On the one hand, enamelled objects often had a delicate aesthetic, demonstrating skills of fine dexterity, and were frequently associated with jewellery. These associations supported understandings of it as an activity suitable for women. However, the reality of the manual and dangerous labour involved in creating such enamels was in contradiction to the perceived suitability. Such concerns were also evident in views of water colour painting, as a cleaner and more delicate medium, being a more appropriate choice for women in comparison to oil painting.⁵⁹ The reality of working in enamels was much less delicate and clean and is demonstrated in a photograph of Ernestine Mills (1871–1959) (fig. 6), a student of the Slade School of Art.⁶⁰ Mills, standing in front of an enamelling kiln, is wearing a long, protective smock and a face mask with built-in goggles to protect her from the hazards of the extreme heat. The image demonstrates the potential danger, via the use of protective equipment, and the physical effort required in the use of heavy tools for moving the trays and pots in and out of the kiln. Enamelling required manually

⁵⁷ Crawford gives some mention of female artists but typically prioritises male artists. For example, Kate Eadie, is mentioned in connection with her husband Sidney Meteyard. (Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 79).

⁵⁸ Anthea Callen, 'Sexual Division of Labour in the Arts and Crafts Movement', *Oxford Art Journal*, 3:1, April 1980, 22-27.

⁵⁹ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Problem Pictures. Women and Men in Victorian Painting*, Aldershot, 1995, 31.

⁶⁰ Mills was an artist, writer and suffragette. She was also the vice-president of the craft section of the Society of Women Artists.

laborious activities such as grinding powder in a pestle and mortar and acid washes to prepare metal bases. Such dangerous working conditions and the associated hard manual labour did not fit with the ideal type of activity considered suitable for women in the nineteenth century. Clare FitzGerald has argued against Anthea Callen's conclusion that the Arts and Crafts movement ultimately perpetuated class and gender hierarchies.⁶¹ FitzGerald's analysis of women working in stained glass supports her argument, showing that the skills required did not fit with notions of women having less physical strength than men. The research for this project supports FitzGerald's findings with the craft of enamelling which required physical strength: for example, for the lifting of heavy melting pots in and out of the kilns. It was nevertheless a popular art craft with women students at the Birmingham School of Art and their enamelled art works attracted praise and awards.

Carrie Copson (1883–1950), a student at the Birmingham School of Art's Vittoria Street School of Jewellers, created an enamel and silver lamp (fig. 7) sometime between 1905 and 1912. It was exhibited at the 1914 Paris Exhibition and is now in the permanent collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum.⁶² Her lamp is an Arts and Crafts object that satisfies both usefulness and beauty, recalling William Morris' demand for domestic objects to fulfil both these requirements.⁶³ The plique-a-jour enamelled shade has four round panels depicting the seasons of the moon represented as female figures. Plique-a-jour is a technique whereby the enamel liquid is placed in cells and once the enamel firing process is complete

⁶¹ Callen, *Angel in the Studio*, 1979, 3.

⁶² It was gifted to the V&A by her sister, Ellen Copson, c. 1954.

⁶³ William Morris, 'The Beauty of Life' lecture to the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design, 19 Feb 1880.

the backing support is removed to allow light to shine through the enamel producing an effect like stained glass. It is a technically challenging technique that requires a lot of time and has a high failure rate. Copson's enamel and silver lamp shows an awareness in the maker of how to execute and exhibit the plique-a-jour technique at its best, with a light shining behind (fig. 8). This demonstrates a sophisticated level of understanding by the artist. Copson clearly had a high level of expertise in the craft and this is supported by her prizes at the annual National Competition of Schools Art run by the government Science and Art Department.⁶⁴ Copson worked for the jeweller and silversmith Bernard Instone (1891–1987), probably at his Langstone Silver Works.⁶⁵ In 1907 Carrie Copson was listed as a prize-winner in a newspaper article: the only woman student listed out of sixteen.⁶⁶ Her art objects were mentioned in *The Studio* magazine several times and she exhibited other enamelled art objects at the RBSA and ACES exhibitions.⁶⁷ Copson's advanced technical proficiency is evident and indicates that Birmingham women artists were excelling at the highest of levels in studio enamelling. Her training at the Birmingham School of Art and art practice enabled her to produce enamel work of the highest standards resulting in their inclusion in national museum collections.

Studio enamelling was one of several art media practised in Birmingham that provided an opportunity for collaboration between artists. Objects made via the cooperation of two or

⁶⁴ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 16 Jan 1908, 6. The National Competition is discussed in greater detail in Chapter One.

⁶⁵ Alan Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 114.

⁶⁶ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 17 Jan 1907, 6.

⁶⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 11 Dec 1915, 6; Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, *Catalogue of the Eleventh Exhibition*, 1916.

more artists challenged dominant notions of individual artistic exceptionalism. The archetypal manifestation of this notion was typically understood to be a male artist. Collaboratively made objects dismiss that ideal and provide an opportunity for new understandings of who is an artist and that this can be women. Discovering and analysing the making of these objects provides evidence of the informal artist communities in Birmingham. These networks played an important role in the development of a professional artistic identity. This is apparent in the works of Effie Ward (1874–1960) who was a prize-winning student of the Birmingham School of Art. Ward often worked in collaboration with Georgina (1866–1934) and Arthur Gaskin (1862–1928), and is credited on at least thirty-five objects with them.⁶⁸ She exhibited at least thirty-seven objects under her own name, participating in Birmingham School of Art student exhibitions, RBSA exhibitions, ACES exhibitions in London and an Arts and Crafts Exhibition in Tunbridge Wells.⁶⁹

A silver and enamel pendant (fig. 9) created by Effie Ward and Georgina Gaskin is tangible evidence of collaboration between two Birmingham women artists. The pendant shows a girl in a white pinafore and blue dress, with her arms open, surrounded by spring flowers. The design of the girl matches Georgina Gaskin's illustration work for children's books.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ She won the Messenger Prize in 1901 and the J. H. Chamberlain Award silver medal for a Limoges enamel plaque. (Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 107). Hoban describes her as "a studio assistant" to the Gaskins and exhibited with them at the 1903 & 1906 ACES Exhibitions. (Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*, 4).

⁶⁹ *The Studio*, 73, April 1899, 199; ACES, *Exhibition Catalogues*, 1899, 1903, 1906, 1910 & 1912; RBSA, *Exhibition Catalogues*, 1902, 1909 & 1910; Tunbridge Wells Arts and Crafts Exhibition 1906 (*Kent & Sussex Courier*, 30 Nov 1906, 9)

⁷⁰ Georgina Gaskin, *ABC: An Alphabet*, London, 1895; Georgina Gaskin, *Hornbook Jingles*, London, 1896-7; Georgina Gaskin, *The Travellers and Other Stories*, London, 1898.

The inscription on the back reads, 'JV Gaskin 16 Bernards Rd Olton W'. Jocelyne Verney Gaskin was the daughter of Georgina and Arthur Gaskin and this indicates that it was a personal object. This pendant is almost identical to another that was exhibited at the ACES exhibition in 1903, credited to both Ward and Gaskin.⁷¹ The boundary between personal and commercial purposes was clearly blurred and reinforces the sense of friendship and community between the artists. The pendant can be read as a symbol of the informal artist community in Birmingham. The girl has her arms open wide, in a welcome embrace suggesting an openness to others, to community and co-operation.

The collaboration involved in the making of the pendant is evidence of cooperative art practices, which were a feature of the Birmingham art scene around the turn of the century. Collaboration was a regular feature of Ward's practice and thirty-two art objects were exhibited by Georgina and Arthur Gaskin at the 1906 ACES exhibition, listed in the catalogue as being assisted by Lily Dale, Effie Ward, Charles Morris and A. Jones. There are many other examples, across different art media, in the catalogues of exhibitions. Typically, the histories of the Arts and Crafts movement in Birmingham prioritise the collaborations between male artists.⁷² The art career of Effie Ward shows that this was also an important aspect for women artists. The ACES exhibition catalogues provide an important insight into the extent of artist collaboration amongst Birmingham artists. The objects are listed in the catalogues under the designer's name and if other names are not listed for an object, then

⁷¹ The pendant exhibited at the 1903 ACES exhibition was titled *Spring* and had a heart-shaped surround and a chain set with jade and pearls, priced at £7.7s. It is mentioned in George Breeze (ed.), *Arthur & Georgina Gaskin*, exhibition catalogue, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1981, 79.

⁷² Glennys Wild, *Edward Jones Metalcraftsman*, exhibition catalogue, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1980.

the designer, 'has been the craftsman and exhibitor'.⁷³ Annie Steen (1864–1955) is another example of a Birmingham artist who frequently collaborated with others, both women and men. Very few images of her art are available but the contribution of her objects to the story of artist collaborations is important. Examples of her exhibited collaborations are in Appendix 2, Table 4.

Margaret Jane Awdry (1854–1939), one of Annie Steen's colleagues and mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, also worked within a large network of collaborating artists, both women and men. Examples of her collaborations are listed in Appendix 2, Table 5. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, accurate descriptions of the nature of collaborations were important to women artists. The ACES policy of listing all makers and designers in their catalogues aided the recognition of women's involvement. A sample survey of the ACES catalogues reveals even more examples of Birmingham artists working together in a variety of media as shown in Appendix 2, Table 6. Birmingham artists also exhibited their collaborative objects internationally. There were several entries for Birmingham artists at the 1913 Ghent International Exhibition, in the British Arts and Crafts section, as shown in Appendix 2, Table 7.

These are just a sample of art objects, listed in the pages of exhibition catalogues, demonstrating the co-operative nature of the informal artists' community in Birmingham, often encouraged and enabled by their connection to the Birmingham School of Art as

⁷³ Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, *Catalogue of the Tenth Exhibition*, 1912. This same definition is given at the beginning of other ACES catalogues, often with different wording.

students and teachers. The ACES and Ghent International exhibitions held in London and Belgium respectively, attracted artists and viewers from all over the country and Europe. The community ethos of Birmingham artists was visible to other artists and visitors via the display of the objects and the details published about them in the catalogues and review articles, demonstrating the art community environment operating and emanating from Birmingham to the larger art world.

The School of Art was a central hub for the co-operative art community in Birmingham. It is where many of the artists met and worked together. Some artists lived very close to the School of Art. Florence Stern lived on Edmund Street and Geraldine Morris on Newhall Street, just around the corner from the art school fronting Margaret Street. Quite a few of the collaborating students mentioned above lived southwest of the town in areas such as Moseley, Acock's Green and Olton. Annie Steen, Margaret Awdry, Kate Eadie and Edith Linnell lived in Moseley, less than three miles from Acock's Green where Annie Stubbs, Effie Ward and Georgina Gaskin lived. Gaskin later moved to Olton where she and Arthur had a studio workshop. Edith and Violet Holden also lived in Olton, less than two miles from Acock's Green. This area was less than six miles from the School of Jewellery in Vittoria Street or the School of Art on Margaret Street.⁷⁴ These artists were able to get to and from the town and the School of Art via public transport such as the railway. The Moseley Railway Station, located in the heart of the village, was built in 1867 and the journey to the

⁷⁴ Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 106 & 147.

town centre was less than thirty minutes. By 1880, thirty trains per day were going to and from Moseley and the central Birmingham New Street Station.⁷⁵

The community of artists was aided by the close geography of their homes and studios. This geographical evidence shows that Birmingham women art students and artists traversed public spaces to access the locations necessary for their art studies and careers. This reinforces Lynne Walker's findings in her study of women consumers in the West End of London between 1850 and 1900.⁷⁶ Walker challenges the notion of separate spheres, the public realm for men and private domestic realm for women, with her evidence of women's autonomous presence and movement through the built environment in a particular area of London. The lived experiences of artistic women in Birmingham show that they also moved and occupied public spaces to access the locations important for their art education and practices. It is not possible to say, from the available evidence, whether the public spaces provided separate, physical rooms and gendered segregations such as 'ladies' waiting rooms in train stations. What is known is that they did move to and from their homes and the schools of art. It is also reasonable to assume that they visited each other's homes and home studios in the pursuit of their art endeavours.

An example of an art object that demonstrates community, cooperation and friendship is an enamel portrait by May Bunting (active 1902–1912) of fellow artist Mary Offlow

⁷⁵ Janet Berry, 'Moseley in the Nineteenth Century: Transport', *The Moseley Society*, moseley-society.org.uk [accessed 10th Nov 2020].

⁷⁶ Lynne Walker, 'Vista of Pleasure. Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London 1860-1900', Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Women in the Victorian Art World*, Manchester, 1995, 70-85.

Scattergood (1873–1910) (fig. 10). The friendship between the artist and the sitter is evident in the careful, painstaking detailing of the portrait, a technical challenge in the medium of enamel.⁷⁷ The precise details of the dress ruffles including light reflections and shading, the jewelled belt clasp, laced cuffs and wrinkles in the sleeves show the advanced technical ability of Bunting. The image of Scattergood is a striking likeness as seen in a photograph of her (fig. 11). The downward tilt of her chin and embrace of the dog shows something of her character.⁷⁸ Clearly, she favoured hats with flourish.

A dog is often symbolic of loyalty and the terrier in the portrait might speak of the loyal friendship and community between these artists that trained together at the Birmingham School of Art.⁷⁹ The unique and progressive art environment in Birmingham between 1860 and 1920 enabled and encouraged collaborations between artists. This is evidenced in the many art works that were created jointly. The art environment stemmed from a unique combination of the School of Art, the RBSA and the liberal views of the civic leaders, and provided opportunities for women artists to flourish. A focus on objects that involved collaboration demonstrates the importance of the informal artistic community that was present in Birmingham in the decades surrounding the turn of the century.

Further evidence of personal connections between women artists can be seen in the will of Birmingham born artist Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière. She bequeathed a portrait

⁷⁷ "the portrait as both the token and the sign of friendship" - Cherry, *Painting Women*, 51.

⁷⁸ If Mary Offlow Scattergood's visage seems familiar, she is, in fact, the Great-Great-Aunt to Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelite*, London, 2000, 45; Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire and Marriage in Victorian England*, New Jersey, 2009, 2; Vicinus, *Independent Women*.

painting of her father, the artist John Steeple, to her brother Charles.⁸⁰ The portrait was painted by the well-known artist Henrietta Rae (1859–1928). Unfortunately, the whereabouts of the painting are unknown; perhaps it is still with the Steeple family. Some portraits of artists were given to public collections as a means of legacy preservation, and this is discussed further in chapter five. However, this was not the case with this example, and it can be assumed that the portrait of Georgina's father was a cherished personal object that she desired be kept within the family as opposed to being gifted to a public collection. The extent of the relationship between Georgina Steeple and Henrietta Rae is not known. Perhaps they met when they both exhibited at the RBSA in the 1880s and at the Royal Academy in the 1890s. Their connection may have been via their families. The provenance of the painting suggests that there was a relationship that resulted in the painting of a portrait that was a cherished family object. This example demonstrates the connections made by Birmingham women artists in the wider art world community.

Many of the collaborative examples detailed above were items of jewellery and this leads to other examples of art partnership, those in metalwork. Art metalwork businesses in Birmingham, such as the Faulkner Bronze Company Ltd., Jesson, Birkett & Co. and those under the names of individuals such as A. E. Jones and others associated with the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, employed women artists and designers. The contribution of those women artists and designers to the success of art metalwork businesses in Birmingham have not been fully explored. Annie Stubbs Birkett (1879–1975) was a decorative artist and metalworker. Her contribution and participation in jewellery and

⁸⁰ The Last Will and Testament of Georgina Martha de L'Aubinière, proved at Bodmin on 28 March 1930.

metalwork, as a designer for metalwork firms in Birmingham, has received less attention than that of her male colleagues, such as Albert Edward Jones (1878–1954).⁸¹ Stubbs played an important role in the success of several Birmingham firms, yet only traces of her work can be found, usually within the discourses of her male colleagues. Stubbs attended the Birmingham School of Art from circa 1897 and won several National Competition medals and prizes.⁸² In 1905, she won a National Competition Silver Medal for a carved ivory statuette *Rosamund*.⁸³ Unfortunately, an image of this work does not exist but a sample of her drawing of drapery was published in the *Art Workers' Quarterly* the same year and (fig. 12) and gives an insight into her advanced art skills.

Between 1901 and 1910, she worked for Faulkner Bronze Co. and then Jesson Birkett Co. as a designer and maker.⁸⁴ In 1906, the *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* published an article titled 'Artificial Lighting' and images of lamps and light fixtures from several metalwork companies were included.⁸⁵ Three of Annie Stubbs' designs for Jesson, Birkett & Co., Ltd. were featured but, unfortunately, she was misnamed as 'Mr A. Stubbs'. Such an error contributed to her work being overlooked and led to the lack of representation of her work in histories of art.

One of her oil table lamps illustrated in the *Studio Yearbook* article (fig. 13) has a base of shaped metal strips with an openwork circle and with what appear to be roundel decorative

⁸¹ Wild, A. *Edward Jones Metalcraftsman*.

⁸² Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 113.

⁸³ *Arts & Crafts Magazine*, 1:16, Sept 1905, 187.

⁸⁴ Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 113; Wild, A. *Edward Jones Metalcraftsman*, 14.

⁸⁵ *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art*, 1906, 165-177.

pieces, and these were a feature of her designs. A further example of her metal design work with a similar, openwork circle motif feature can be seen in boxes made by A. E. Jones (fig. 14 and fig. 15). It is known that A. E. Jones was using many of Stubbs' designs. These examples demonstrate the collaboration and community that existed amongst artists and designers in the decorative metalwork industries of Birmingham. Knowledge of Annie Stubbs Birkett's activity in this community develops, enhances and expands the art history of Birmingham's art manufacturing business.

2.3 Visual and Literary Cultures

Appendix 2, Graph 2 shows that the 'history' genre category was also popular with Birmingham women artists. Paintings that depicted scenes and characters from literature and poetry were within that category, a prominent art trend in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁸⁶ Exhibition catalogues were liberally peppered with titles quoting lines and paragraphs from literature and poetry. As evidence of the vast quantity of paintings produced, Altick's research, limited to oil paintings exhibited in London, recorded between ten and twelve thousand examples.⁸⁷ Altick described the difficulties in identifying literary pictures that have not been preserved and are now invisible. Therefore, much of his research, as with mine, relied on original exhibition catalogues, published reviews and reproductions in periodicals, which in turn presents other difficulties in identification.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Richard Altick, *Paintings from Books. Art and Literature in Britain, 1760-1900*, Ohio, 1985.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Difficulties such as, titles may have changed at each subsequent exhibition, titles giving no clue to the literary connection, titles that seem to be connected to literature but are not (eg. *Twelfth Night* is not always Shakespeare), pictures of people and/or animals with the same name as famous literary characters (eg. Enid was a popular girls name after the publication of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*), paintings depicting historical scenes may have been interpretations directly from history or perhaps Shakespeare.

Other scholarship on literary painting has focused on the connection between Pre-Raphaelite art and poetry, centred on London.⁸⁹ This chapter section will show that the popular trend of literary paintings was not unique to London or male artists. Birmingham women artists were participating in considerable numbers and in a variety of media. Their activities expands the boundaries of existing scholarship. Appendix 2, Table 8 lists a sample selection of art works by women artists exhibited at the RBSA between 1860 and 1920 where the title directly connects with a literary source. This section will now look closely at individual artworks to demonstrate the complexity and diversity of their engagement with the wider literary and visual cultures.

Mary Vernon Morgan (1871–1927) exhibited her painting *The Sleepy Pool Above the Dam* (fig. 16) at the RBSA 1880 Autumn exhibition, priced at £30. The painting was purchased by Queen Victoria and is now in the Royal Collection.⁹⁰ The title of the painting is taken from a scenic stanza in Tennyson's poem *The Miller's Daughter*, published in 1832. Vernon Morgan's depiction of a scene from Tennyson's poem is an example of how her art contributed to and engaged with wider literary and visual cultures. The painting depicts a landscape featuring flowers and birds, genres that were popular with women artists, as seen in the examples looked at earlier in this chapter. However, Vernon Morgan's painting is also connecting with literature. Typically, depictions of scenes from Tennyson's poetry

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Prettejohn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Pre-Raphaelites*, Cambridge, 2012; Sophia Andres and Brian Donnelly (eds), *Poetry in Pre-Raphaelite Paintings: Transcending Boundaries*, New York, 2018; Leonee Ormond, 'Tennyson and the Artists', Jim Cheshire (ed.), *Tennyson Transformed. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture*, Surrey, 2009, 42-61.

⁹⁰ Oliver Miller, *Victorian Pictures in the Collection of HM The Queen. Plates*, Cambridge, 1992, plate 420.

focused on characters, usually women.⁹¹ Vernon Morgan's offering depicts a scene, a landscape, with no people present yet remains rooted to its source and complements and extends the reading of the poem. Her interpretation takes the focus away from the female character of the poem's title. However, it would be an oversimplification to categorise this picture as merely a landscape or still life study. There is movement in the sweep of light from the lilies at the bottom left of the picture, ascending through the line of lilies, across the water and following the swallows up to the clouds. Also, the detail of the dragonfly in the right foreground draws the eye to the illuminated section of water behind it. The landscape setting is an important element in Tennyson's poem, and it describes the woodland setting with meadows, streams and dams. Vernon Morgan's painting responds to that, taking the focus of the poetic moment beyond the characters and prioritising the importance of location to the poem.

Vernon Morgan created her interpretation from her own imagination. She did not copy an existing image, she did not mimic an existing scene, and this challenged notions that a woman's skill in art was in copying not creating. Her painting introduced a powerful interpretation of a well-known poem to the audience of a Birmingham exhibition. It also went beyond Birmingham when it caught the eye of Queen Victoria who purchased the painting. The water lilies, in various stages of opening, are the central characters of the painting. They are perhaps Victoria water lilies, named after Queen Victoria and described as 'the very queen' of flowers, which may explain her attraction to the painting.⁹²

⁹¹ Examples: John Everett Millais, *Mariana*, 1851; Frederick Sandy, *Vivien*, 1863; William Holman Hunt, *The Lady of Shalot*, c.1886-1905.

⁹² Anne Pratt, *Flowers and their Associations*, London, 1840, 360.

Many other art works in a variety of media, with a connection to literature were created and exhibited by Birmingham women artists. Tennyson was a popular theme and another example, in a different media can be seen in a gesso piano front design by Kate Muriel Mason Eadie (1880–1945). Eadie began her art career as a student at the Birmingham School of Art. In 1903 she won a silver medal at the National Competition of Schools of Art for the piano front design with inlaid coloured gesso (fig. 17). The design has five female figures on a vine and leaf background. The top and bottom of the design has the following quote from Tennyson’s lyrical poem *The Lotos-Eaters*; ‘There is sweet music here that softer falls than petals from blown roses on the grass. Music that gentler on the spirit lies than tired eye lids upon tired eyes.’⁹³ The poem is based on an episode from Homer’s *Odyssey* and the female figures in Eadie’s design are in the style of ancient Greece and suggestive of the nine muses, and connects with images on ancient Greek pottery, Roman mosaics and stone carvings.⁹⁴ This is especially impressive against the background of difficulty for women accessing a classical education.⁹⁵ Eadie’s design associates the narcotic effects of eating the fictional lotos plant, as described in the poem, with the potential effect the music played on the piano will have on its listeners. Eadie’s choice of poem was somewhat unusual, *The Lotos-Eaters* was not a popular subject, in comparison to other works by Tennyson. No other work was exhibited at the RBSA (between 1860 and 1920)

⁹³ Alfred Tennyson, *The Lotos-Eaters*, 1832.

⁹⁴ See Calyx-krater vase, 460-450BC, The British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1836-0224-143 [accessed 17th Sept 2020]; Roman mosaic of the Muses, 3rd-4th century AD, National Archaeology Museum of Lisbon, Portugal; Sarcophagus front, 200-220AD, The British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1973-0327-41 [accessed 17th Sept 2020].

⁹⁵ Isobel Hurst, *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics. The Feminine of Homer*, Oxford, 2006.

with a title or quotation referencing the poem and only seven paintings exhibited at the RA had titles that directly referenced it.⁹⁶ This demonstrates Eadie's originality of thought and in-depth knowledge of wider visual and literary cultures. She presents her message with great skill, achieving a balanced and harmonious design. The end figures complement each other via dark robes and, with the central figure, are playing musical instruments. The other two figures, either side of the central one, are holding scrolls and this gives a pleasing visual rhythm. Eadie's design skills were clearly very advanced.

Another example of Kate Eadie connecting with literature in another art media is her *Mariana* enamel plaque (fig. 18) created in 1904. Eadie made it when she was a student at the Birmingham School of Art and the labelling on the back suggests it was submitted for an exhibition or competition; perhaps the Birmingham School of Art's or the National Competition of Schools of Art. Mariana is a character in Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure* and the title subject of a poem by Tennyson published in 1830. In the play and poem, Mariana has been abandoned by her fiancé, and waits for his return in despondent isolation and weary, mental imprisonment. Mariana has been a popular art subject; an early, if not the first, depiction was John Everett Millais' (1829–1896) (fig. 19) *Mariana* painted in 1851 and displayed at the RA the same year with a caption quote from Tennyson's poem,

She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He commeth not, 'she said;

⁹⁶ They were *The Lotos eater* by E. Armitage exhibited in 1854; *Fair, quiet, and sweet rest* with extensive quote from Tennyson's *Lotos Eaters* by S. L. Fildes, exhibited in 1872; *Lotos-land* by Richard H. Wright, exhibited in 1889; *The gods together carelss of mankind' – Tennyson, 'The Lotos-eaters'* by Pepys Cockerell, exhibited in 1890; *The Lotos Land – Tennyson 'The Lotos eaters'* by Hugh G. Riviere exhibited in 1898; *Lotos eaters* by Constance Rae, exhibited in 1914.

She said, 'I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!'⁹⁷

Depictions of Mariana were a more popular source of inspiration than *The Lotos-Eaters*. Between 1851 and 1903, at least fourteen depictions of Mariana were exhibited at the RBSA and RA, four of which were by women artists.⁹⁸ Eadie's depiction is a part of the art and cultural history of the image of Mariana. Her version has several similarities to Millais', such as the use of strong colours, a blue dress, the red cushion, the embroidery and the stretching pose. Eadie positioned her work with a direct connection to Millais' via these similarities. However, there are also significant differences such as media and the size of the work, and Eadie's has a much more crowded pictorial space. Also, Eadie's has an open window that connects it to versions by Marie Spartali Stillman (1844–1927) (fig. 20), Henrietta Rae (1859–1928) (fig. 21) and Valentine Cameron Prinsep (1838–1904) (fig. 22). The open window is an interesting symbol. It is possible to read Mariana's confinement as symbolic of patriarchal ideology that restricts women to the domestic space. Therefore, the open window is an opening, a rupture to women's entrapment and isolation. However, in the three other images featuring an open window, Mariana has not been embroidering, she is just simply gazing out. In Eadie's work, Mariana is active with her embroidery and this alongside the open window connects the rupture of entrapment with art production. Rozika Parker's comprehensive examination of the connections between women, embroidery, domesticity and the fine arts allows for a re-evaluation of embroidery as more

⁹⁷ Christopher Ricks (ed.), *Alfred Lord Tennyson. Selected Poems*, London, 2007, 3-4.

⁹⁸ *Royal Academy of Arts Exhibition Catalogues* 1851, 1856, 1865, 1878, 1879, 1883, 1886, 1892 and 1903; *Royal Birmingham Society of Artists Autumn Exhibition Catalogues* 1878, 1881 and 1891.

than a pleasant, domestic hobby for women.⁹⁹ Eadie depicted Mariana at an activity, working in a space with an open window and therefore challenges Mariana's seclusion and confinement in an interior, domestic space as she has previously been portrayed by other artists.

Eadie's depiction of Mariana embroidering connects with her own art practice. Eadie's Mariana was a showcase of her technical art skills and training, probably for an art school competition. Enamelling is a versatile craft that can be used to decorate art objects such as jewellery but can also be, like painting, an aesthetic activity in its own right. The work measures only 19cm, including the frame yet, despite its small size, shows a skilful level of fine detail in the draped folds of the dress, the grain of the wooden window and embroidery frame, the patterned wallpaper and the rug demonstrating a high level of enamelling skills. These skills are also seen in her later jewellery work, which often included detailed enamelling. Eadie's Mariana is an example of an artwork, depicting a woman working at an art craft, in a space that challenges the domestic confinement of women, created by a Birmingham women artist. The work is an example of the participation and contribution Birmingham women artists made to the art culture of Birmingham and beyond. The existing literature on Tennyson's connection to visual arts demonstrates how images enabled its dissemination and grew its popularity. Colin Ford has examined the relationship between Tennyson and his friend, the photographer and artist Julia Margaret Cameron and her portraits of him and images of his works.¹⁰⁰ Leonée Ormand has

⁹⁹ Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*.

¹⁰⁰ Colin Ford, 'Tennyson and Julia Margaret Cameron, Jim Cheshire (ed.), *Tennyson Transformed. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture*, Surrey, 2009.

unpacked further connections between Tennyson's poetry and several male artists, some of whom were personal friends, others who knew the poet professionally.¹⁰¹ The artworks discussed in this chapter, by women artists with no direct connection to Tennyson, reflect their contemporary encounters with the texts and providing alternative meanings. The arts works by these women artists demonstrate a greater breadth and complexity of visual responses to Tennyson's poetry.

The poetry of women poets was an inspiration for women artists in Birmingham. In 1903, Fanny Bunn was awarded a silver medal in the National Competition of Schools of Art for an enamelled panel and box lid on the subject of Christina Rossetti's poem *Three Seasons* (1862).¹⁰² Unfortunately, the artwork or an image of it is not extant. As demonstrated by the examples discussed so far, different media were used to create art works inspired by well-known literary sources. However, literary connections were not always from famous poets, and some were inspired by more than one source. An example of this can be seen in two, complimentary embroidery panels by Mary Offlow Scattergood (1873–1910) (fig. 23 and fig. 24). Scattergood was an award-winning student at the Birmingham School of Art and won a gold medal for the panels and the Princess of Wales' Scholarship.¹⁰³ The panels, reproduced in *The Studio* magazine side-by-side, are companions to each other. They each depict a similar-looking female character, with wind-blown dark hair, and quotations at the bottom, each from a different literary source. The left panel reads, 'Mary,

¹⁰¹ Leonée Ormond, 'Tennyson and the Artists', Jim Cheshire (ed.), *Tennyson Transformed. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture*, Surrey, 2009, 42-61.

¹⁰² Esther Wood, 'The National Competition of Schools of Art, 1903', *The Studio*, 29:126, Sept 1903, 259.

¹⁰³ *The Studio*, 66, Sept 1898, 280.

Mary call the cattle home across the sands of Dee' from a Charles Kingsley (1819–1875) poem titled *The Sands of Dee* (1850). The right panel reads, 'Across the strand, far up the land the fierce wild waters swept!' from a song titled *When the Tide Comes In* (1873) composed by Harrison Millard (1830–1895). The common themes of the poem and song are the power of nature, love, death and grief. Kingsley's poem tells the story of a young girl, sent to fetch the cattle home but who got lost in the mist and drowned in the River Dee. Millard's song is about a sailor drowned at sea, sung by his waiting, grieving partner. Scattergood visually unites the two stories via the motifs of water and birds. The treatment of water is very similar in both panels, but they are depicted differently. In the Kingsley panel, the birds are all in flight, symbolic of the young girl's departed soul, no longer tethered to the mortal earth. The skirt of the dress is also in motion, sweeping forward towards the water. In the Millard panel the birds are all perched, symbolic of the stasis of waiting for the sailor to return. The repeated yet different use of birds in the panels demonstrates Scattergood's high level of intellectual and creative abilities and her advanced design skills in conveying the story of each literary source.

The depiction of female characters in three of the art works discussed above, and more below, shows the popularity of such subjects in art. A particularly popular trope of fictional women in art is the femme fatale.¹⁰⁴ Numerous, well-known paintings were created in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁵ An example of this is an enamel plaque titled *La*

¹⁰⁴ Jess Sully, 'Challenging the Stereotype: The Femme Fatale in Fin-de-Siècle Art and Early Cinema', Helen Hanson and Catherine O'Rawe (eds), *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, London, 2010, 46-59.

¹⁰⁵ Examples such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*, 1867, Franz von Stuck, *Kiss of the Sphinx*, 1895, Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin*, 1874-1877, Frederick Sandys, *Medea*, 1868.

Belle Dame sans Merci (1902) (fig. 25) by Birmingham artist Fanny Bunn (1871–1950). The plaque depicts a scene from John Keats' (1795–1821) 1819 poem of the same title. Fanny Bunn was also an award-winning art student at the Birmingham School of Art and an exhibitor at the RBSA and RA. In the poem, a fairy seduces a knight and traps him in a cycle of lonely wandering as a result of her seduction. The poem inspired paintings by artists such as John William Waterhouse (1849–1917) (fig. 26), Frank Dicksee (1853–1928) (fig. 27), Frank Cadogan Cowper (1877–1958) (fig. 28) and Arthur Hughes (1832–1915) (fig. 29). In all these examples, the forms of the fairy and the knight overlap, from as little as the hem of her dress (as in Frank Cadogan Cowper's version) to the knight's torso covering the fairy's legs (in Frank Dicksee's version). The overlapping forms enhance the intensity of the fairy's overpowering enchantment over the knight. Her power over him depends on their close contact. However, Bunn's version is different in that there is a clear space between the forms of the characters. Keeping their forms so clearly demarcated may have been a technical limitation of the enamel medium, so Bunn had to use a different way of communicating the same powerful enchantment. Bunn was able to do this by having the knight pull back hard on the reins of his horse, with his leg at full lock in the stirrup, whilst the fairy simply stands still, in a plain dress, merely gazing up at the knight. The contrast of the positioning and pose of the two characters communicates the same intensity of enchantment and seduction as the paintings mentioned above. Bunn clearly understood the limitations of her media and was able to skilfully create a potent narrative composition.

Continuing with the theme of the femme fatale, the character of Circe from Greek mythology was also a popular inspiration for artists. Circe the goddess and enchantress,

daughter of the Titan god Helios and ocean nymph Perse, lived on the mythical island of Aiaia, banished there by Zeus. Isolated on the island she developed skills of sorcery and with her potions and wand she could turn humans into animals. When Odysseus visited her island, she transformed some of his men into pigs, but upon befriending Odysseus she turned them back to men and they stayed on the island with her for many years. Circe had a son with Odysseus, Telegonus, who later has a larger part to play in the mythologies.¹⁰⁶ Yarnall has argued that Circe's role in Homer's *Odyssey* is pivotal. She provides support and direction to Odysseus following this loss of his comrades by the Cyclops and Laistrygones.¹⁰⁷

Circe has been depicted by artists for over 2,500 years and interpretations in literature and art vary widely from her being a ruler of a dangerous animal kingdom, to a witch lounging in a bower of roses waiting for young lovers, to a strong, independent, powerful woman. Yarnall has written that the presentation of Circe has metamorphosed over time and in the nineteenth century she was often depicted naked, in a sexually seductive pose, reflecting the imaginations, fears and dreams of the times. Yarnall describes how the image of Circe as a devil-woman was in direct opposition to the societal ideal of woman as the chaste 'angel in the house'.¹⁰⁸ Nineteenth-century depictions of Circe include paintings such as *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* (1891) (fig. 30), *Circe Invidiosa* (1892) (fig. 31) both by John William Waterhouse (1849–1917), *Circe* (1893) (fig. 32) by Arthur Hacker (1858–

¹⁰⁶ Robin Hard (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology*, London, 2004; Judith Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress*, Illinois, 1994.

¹⁰⁷ Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

1919), *Circe* (1885) (fig. 33) by John Collier (1850–1934) and *Circe* (c.1889) (fig. 34) by Wright Barker (1864–1941). These examples portray Circe as a voluptuous, alluring, seductress often semi-clothed or fully naked and designed to heighten anxieties about the power of female sexuality over men. Such depictions were not exclusive to male artists. Angelica Kauffmann's (1741–1808) *Ulysses and Circe* (1786) (fig. 35) depicts Circe as slightly more chaste but still utilising her sexuality with her breast exposed and her hand on Ulysses' thigh. Alice Pike Barney's (1857–1931) (fig. 36) *Circe* (no date) interprets her as more sexually assertive with wild, tousled hair, breasts exposed, mouth open and a direct stare at the viewer.

The menacing sexuality often associated with Circe makes her an interesting subject choice for women artists of the late nineteenth century. In 1879, the London artist Charlotte Elizabeth Babb (1830–1906) exhibited a painting titled *The Maids of Circe* at the RBSA 1879 Spring exhibition. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of the painting today are unknown. However, at least three Circe artworks by Birmingham women artists are extant. In 1901, the Birmingham artist Helen 'Nellie' Brightwell (1876–1967) portrayed Circe in a gesso panel (fig. 37) for which she received a special prize. Kate Eadie was also inspired by Circe in her 1901 stained glass design (fig. 38) as was Ida Kay in her Circe stained-glass design exhibited in 1902 (fig. 39).¹⁰⁹ In contrast to the versions of Circe mentioned above, these artworks depict Circe fully clothed and without sexually seductive poses. The subject choice and presentation exercised by these artists contrasted with the established trend. Some of the images mentioned above might have been known to Brightwell, Eadie and Kay and they

¹⁰⁹ It was entered into the 1901 National Competition. (*The Studio*, 109, April 1902, 203).

chose to depict Circe in a different way.¹¹⁰ Their depictions enable the myth of Circe to be told without the use of sexual seduction, anxiety-inducing menace or titillating appeal to the male gaze. In this regard they are in keeping with Julia Margaret Cameron's (1815–1879) earlier photograph *Circe* (1865) (fig. 40).

Their objects were created between 1901 and 1902, in temporal proximity to each other and, as detailed earlier in this chapter, there was an informal and sociable artist community in Birmingham. Therefore, it is feasible to imagine these artist-colleagues producing their art works following discussions and exchanges of ideas. Their depictions show some similarities with Circe holding a bowl or jug, active in brewing her spells, drawing attention to the source of her power. Eadie, Kay and Brightwell reconstituted the portrayal of a female character from within a female artistic community. Cherry described it succinctly, 'No longer limited to a signifier of masculine desire, woman as sign was re-signed around the pleasure invoked by and invested in cultural exchanges between women.'¹¹¹ Eadie, Kay and Brightwell's depictions also connect with the Pre-Raphaelite trend for powerful images of strong women that Prettejohn argues was initiated by women Pre-Raphaelite artists.¹¹² The depictions of Circe discussed here enable a reading of Circe that disregards the usual femme fatale trope and enables her story to be understood as a character with supernatural powers over humans.

¹¹⁰ John William Waterhouse, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* was exhibited at the New Gallery in 1891 and an etching was published in *The Magazine of Art*, Jan 1892, 272; John William Waterhouse, *Circe Invidiosa* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1892; Wright Barker, *Circe* was exhibited at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool in 1889 and the Royal Academy in 1900; Arthur Hacker, *Circe* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1893 and described as 'satisfactory as a piece of flesh-painting' (*The Magazine of Art*, Jan 1893, 256); John Collier, *Circe* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1885.

¹¹¹ Cherry, *Painting Women*, 199.

¹¹² Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, 71.

The applied art media used by the three artists - gesso and stained-glass designs - indicate their works were intended for spaces beyond the art gallery. The training in applied arts that these artists undertook in Birmingham provided them with the opportunity to represent Circe in a wider range of art objects, possibly even to adorn domestic spaces typically occupied by women. All three of the artists went on to work commercially in art after their training. Kay was employed by Camm Studios, stained-glass manufacturers in Smethwick.¹¹³ Eadie had an art studio in New Street, advertised in Kelly's commercial business directory.¹¹⁴ After leaving the School of Art, Brightwell was employed as a head designer for a leading jewellery firm.¹¹⁵ The art practices and intellectual considerations of subject matters demonstrate the involvement of women artists in the art manufacturing and culture of Birmingham. Brightwell, Eadie and Kay's presentations of Circe offer an alternative interpretation of a well-known, much-depicted, female literary character to art audiences and consumers of Birmingham and beyond.¹¹⁶

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, literary culture was a popular source of inspiration for artists. This trend was as popular in Birmingham as in other British art locations. The art works produced by women artists in Birmingham were no exception. As demonstrated above via a close focus on specific art works, the contribution these Birmingham artists made to the art culture was important in a multitude of ways. Their

¹¹³ Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*, 132.

¹¹⁴ *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, 1912, 1921, 1932, 1933, 1936, 1937 & 1938.

¹¹⁵ Levetus, 'The Birmingham School of Art', 442.

¹¹⁶ Circe continues to inspire, a recent depiction in literature is Madeline Miller's *Circe*, published in 2019 and is a feminist retelling that prioritises female independence and power.

engagement with literary culture, across different media, enabled alternative presentations and broader understandings of both literary and artistic cultures.

This chapter argues via analyses of objects in a wide range of media, that Birmingham women artists' intellectual and creative engagements had a greater breadth and depth than has been typically acknowledged.¹¹⁷ The object-orientation of this chapter demonstrates how their art works and practices were an important part of Birmingham's art culture and, with the example of metalwork, connected to local art manufacturing. Birmingham's art world during this period was shaped by key organisations such as the RBSA, the School of Art, the Public Art Gallery, the municipal government and the many art manufacturing businesses in the town. This art world was also shaped by artists and their art works and some of those artists were women who were an active part of all those organisations. Furthermore, the art object focus of this chapter has shown the prevalence of collaboration in the making of art objects, demonstrating the existence of an informal and productive artistic community. The participation and contribution of women artists was a vital part of Birmingham's art culture and art history.

¹¹⁷ Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*; Ellis, Osborne & Barringer, *Victorian Radicals*; Joseph Hill & William Midgley, *The History of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, Birmingham, 1930; Stephen Wildman, *The Birmingham School: Paintings, Drawings and Prints by Birmingham Artists from the Permanent Collection*, Birmingham, 1990; Hartnell, *Pre-Raphaelite Birmingham*.

CHAPTER THREE – ART EXHIBITIONS

The Private View of the RBSA 48th Autumn Exhibition in 1874 elicited the following newspaper comment, ‘The artists ... mustered in great force, and welcomed their visitors, who were also their customers, with the *empressement* which befitted such merry, merry men on their opening day.’¹ This description demonstrates the vibrancy and enthusiasm for art exhibitions in the nineteenth-century British art world. Art exhibitions were an important occasion for artists and collectors and a popular activity with the public with 18,000 visitors in a week recorded in Birmingham in 1888.² Some were loan exhibitions that gave patrons an opportunity to show off their collections.³ Others were for the display of works by contemporary artists, providing an opportunity for them to attract patrons and make sales. Scholarship on nineteenth-century British art exhibitions charts their history, development and connection to the emerging art market, providing valuable perspectives that often prioritise male artists and London.⁴ This chapter will expand and enhance the subject of art exhibitions with a focus on women artists in Birmingham from 1860 and 1920.

In the latter half of the nineteenth-century, Birmingham had an active and nationally-recognised art exhibition culture.⁵ In 1880, an article in the *Art Journal*, reviewing provincial

¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 Aug 1874, 5.

² Kate Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850-1914*, London, 2016, 126.

³ Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*.

⁴ Luckhurst, *The Story of Exhibitions*; Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*; Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, *The Triumph of Art for the Public 1785-1848: The Emerging Role of Exhibitions and Critics*, Princeton, 1984; Gordon Fyfe, *Art, Power and Modernity: English Art Institutions, 1750-1950*, London, 2000; Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*; Fletcher & Helmreich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market*; Patricia de Montfort, ‘The Fine Art Society and the Rise of the Solo Exhibition’, Charlotte Gould and Sophie Mesplède (eds), *Marketing Art in the British Isles 1700 to Present: A Cultural History*, London, 2012, 145-163.

⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 28 March 1868, 3; *Express*, 25 July 1868, 2.

art exhibitions, stated that Birmingham had, 'beyond question the finest range of exhibition galleries in the provinces – indeed, excepting those of the Royal Academy, there are none in London to compete'.⁶ Exhibitions were the main vehicle for artists to promote their work to potential customers. Local, national and even international artists regularly submitted their works for exhibition in Birmingham. The RBSA was the preeminent art organisation in Birmingham between 1860 and 1920.⁷ The two annual RBSA exhibitions provided a regular opportunity for the artists to show their works with the possibility of selling. The price of each painting was published in the exhibition catalogues except for the minority that were on loan from collectors.⁸ The opportunity for generating income was not just for the benefit of the artists, it was also an important income-stream for the society. It charged a five percent commission for each sale.⁹ The cultural purpose of exhibitions, or the 'cultural pleasure and instruction' was entwined with the desire to improve the morals and civic enlightenment of the visiting public, particularly those of the lower classes and this aspect of Birmingham culture is discussed further in chapter five.¹⁰ The RBSA responded to this purpose by re-opening their exhibitions, after the main season, to the lower classes at a reduced admission rate. Women artists, via their exhibiting of their artworks at the RBSA, played a part in both purposes and their involvement is an important part of the history of the RBSA.

⁶ 'Provincial Art Exhibitions. The Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham, *Art Journal*, Nov 1880 337.

⁷ A summary history of the RBSA is in Appendix 7.

⁸ Nearly all paintings had a price, very few were listed without one.

⁹ 'Notice to Exhibitors' in each RBSA Exhibition Catalogue.

¹⁰ Luckhurst, *The Story of Exhibitions*, 11.

Joseph Hill and William Midgley's book (1930) on the history of the RBSA via their personal recollections gives scant attention to women artists despite a few of them achieving associate membership before 1930.¹¹ They state that the purpose of their written record was 'to recall the names of the men who founded and carried on the institution for so long, whose work our fathers and grandfathers esteemed so highly, and to complete a record of the art of our fellowship down to our day'.¹² The male dominance of this statement completely wipes out the contribution and impact of women artists, patrons, donors and supporters of the RBSA. This chapter redresses that imbalance by providing the statistics and stories of women artists who regularly participated in Birmingham exhibitions. Scholarship that examines women artists and art exhibitions in the nineteenth-century overwhelmingly focuses on London, including those from a wider scholarship examining industrial exhibitions, world fairs and expositions.¹³ Sally Hoban's PhD thesis (2013) on the Birmingham School of Art and opportunities for women in the Arts and Crafts Movement industries is a rare example focused on women artists and Birmingham, and makes some mention of their commercial exhibition activity in relation to their careers.¹⁴ Claire FitzGerald's PhD thesis (2016) also focuses on Birmingham women artists but does not examine their exhibition activities.¹⁵ The lack of attention to Birmingham's women artists

¹¹ Joseph Hill and William Midgley, *The History of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, Birmingham, 1930.

¹² *Ibid.*, Preface.

¹³ Peter Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas. The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs 1851-1949*, Manchester, 1988; T. J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn (eds), *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs*, Illinois, 2010; Rebecca Rogers and Myriam Boussahba-Bravard (eds), *Women in International and Universal Exhibitions 1876-1937*, London, 2010; Pamela Gerrish Nunn, 'Beyond the Parlour', Jan Marsh (ed.), *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, exhibition catalogue, London, 2019, 96-101; Patricia Mainardi, 'Show and Tell. Exhibition Practice in the Nineteenth Century', Michelle Facos and Dana Arnold (eds), *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Art*, New Jersey, 2019, 69-82.

¹⁴ Hoban, *Birmingham Municipal School of Art*.

¹⁵ FitzGerald, *Women, Craft and the Object*, 2016.

also occurred contemporaneously. The 1874 RBSA exhibition mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter had 674 artworks from 373 artists. The journalist labelled all the artists as male, disregarding the fifty (13.4%) women artists who displayed a total of seventy-six paintings (11.3%).¹⁶ Further compounding the neglect of these artists, the local newspaper reviews of the exhibition mentioned only two of them.¹⁷ The lack of, or minimised attention, given to women artists in print media was not unique to Birmingham. For example, the *Art Journal* periodical, a nationally recognised art publication, regularly reviewed the Birmingham exhibitions. If the women artists were mentioned at all it was typically towards the end of the article, as a sort of afterthought or appendage. They were often herded together in a single paragraph under the designations of 'lady artists' or 'lady exhibitors'.¹⁸ Their mention was usually just a list of some of their names, acknowledging their participation but with no mention of their exhibited pictures, in stark contrast to the paragraphs devoted to the pictures of men artists. Sometimes the mention of the women was immediately following a paragraph discussing men artists designated as 'local amateurs'. The hierarchy suggested here is that women artists were of lesser importance than amateur men artists, which precludes any notion of them being considered professional or at the same level as the men artists thoroughly reviewed in the earlier sections of the articles. This chapter will examine the exhibition experience of Birmingham women artists to recover and document their over-looked contribution and involvement. This will expand current understanding of nineteenth-century art exhibitions locally,

¹⁶ RBSA, *The Autumn Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, 1874. Note that the count relies on their first name or title being identifiably a woman, if they were listed by initials only, they were not included in the count.

¹⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 Aug 1874, 5; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 Aug 1874, 5.

¹⁸ 'Provincial Art Exhibitions', *Art Journal*, Nov 1880, 337; 'The Royal Birmingham Society of Artists', *Art Journal*, Oct 1873, 317; 'Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham. Spring Exhibition', *Art Journal*, May 1872, 142.

nationally and internationally by showing that women artists exhibited in greater numbers than has previously been understood. This knowledge is crucial for understanding nineteenth-century art exhibition culture.

The exhibition activity of Birmingham women artists was an important facet of their art careers and they participated in many different exhibitions in Birmingham during the period under consideration in this thesis. This chapter focuses on the RBSA exhibitions as they were the largest, most popular and most regular of the Birmingham exhibitions. The first two sections of this chapter utilise a quantitative approach, grouping the artists together by gender to examine the number of exhibiting women artists and their art works in comparison to the men artists. This will establish the level of participation by women artists. Section one includes an analysis of the home locations of the exhibiting women artists to understand the popularity and significance of RBSA exhibitions to women artists living locally and nationally. The results enable a geographical expansion of the London-centric view of nineteenth-century exhibitions by establishing the level of participation of artists in the town's exhibitions from outside Birmingham. Section two examines the art critics' responses to the women artists as a gender-based group by comparing a sample of data to look at the numbers of mentions and the language used for women and men artists in local newspaper exhibition reviews. This will demonstrate the importance and impact of gender in notions of artistic worth during this period. The source materials used for this are RBSA and RA exhibition catalogues and Birmingham newspapers.

The last three sections of this chapter utilise a qualitative, case study approach and are concerned with the enterprise and agency of individual women to develop an understanding of the context for their circumstances, choices and careers. These latter sections acknowledge that gathering them together as a homogenous group only tells part of the story, concealing the importance of the breadth and depth of their individual circumstances and activities. The case studies in section three comprise six women artists from Birmingham: Mary Ann Preston (1831–1885), Mary Vernon Morgan (1846–1927), Margaret Jane Awdry (1854–1939), Georgina Steeple de L’Aubinière (1848–1930), Florence Westwood Whitfield (1854–1925), and the sisters Annie Townley (1849–1935) and Amelia, known as Minnie Townley (1851–1903). These artists were all regular exhibitors at Birmingham art exhibitions during the period of 1860 to 1920. They conducted their art careers in a variety of different ways and these sections show the importance of recovering and listening to what those different stories can tell us. The individual stories feed in to and compliment the group numbers detailed in the first section, allowing the rich layers behind those numbers, to tell a more complex, nuanced and complete history of Birmingham’s art world. The source materials used for these sections are census documents, RBSA, RA and Birmingham Art Circle exhibition catalogues and local, national and international newspapers.

3.1 Birmingham Women Artists at Local and National Exhibitions

The RBSA was the primary location for artists to regularly exhibit their work in Birmingham.¹⁹ Initially, this section will examine the level of involvement of women artists

¹⁹ Appendix 7 gives a brief history of the RBSA.

in the RBSA exhibitions between 1860 and 1920. Women artists exhibited alongside men artists at every RBSA exhibitions from its first contemporary exhibition in 1814.²⁰ Wider scholarship has explored women's separatist art groups and exhibitions such as the Society of Female Artists in London, the Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries in Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester and Paris.²¹ However, there is no evidence of an organised, women-only artists groups or exhibitions in Birmingham in the second half of the nineteenth-century or early twentieth century. This suggests the exhibition opportunities available via the main RBSA venue were at least satisfactory. Deborah Cherry has explained the complexity of advantages and drawbacks of women art exhibitions, such as those facilitated by the Society of Female Artists, London.²² Whilst they provided an opportunity for women at the start of their careers it did not provide a serious challenge to the main exhibitions and the opportunities they gave. Cherry gives the example of the leading artist Henrietta Ward (1832–1924) sending minor drawings and sketches to the Society of Female Artists exhibitions whilst sending her major works to the Royal Academy.²³ Furthermore, some women artists avoided women art group exhibitions to avoid the patronising and derogatory criticism published in art reviews.

²⁰ The inaugural exhibition displayed 118 pictures from thirty-eight artists, three of whom were women, 'Miss and Miss E Barber (...) Miss Heape (Hill & Midgley, *Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, 5). The second exhibition, in 1827, displayed 247 exhibits by eighty-four artists and included a landscape by Miss Chawner and 'six miniatures of extraordinary beauty by the Miss Sharpes, and others by Mrs Wright, Miss Jabet and sister, Miss Saunders, &c. &c.' (*Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 17 Sept 1827, 3).

²¹ Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*; Cherry, *Painting Women*; Burkhauser, *Glasgow Girls*; Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*; Charles Baile de Laperriere (ed.), *The Society of Women Artists Exhibitors. A Dictionary of Artists and Their Works in the Annual Exhibition of the Society of Women Artists: 1855-1996*, four volumes, Hilmarton, 1996; Emma Ferry, 'A Novelty Among Exhibitions: The Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries, Bristol 1885', Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (eds), *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*, London, 2007, 51-68.

²² Cherry, *Painting Women*, 67.

²³ *Ibid.*

Appendix 3, Graph 1 shows the numbers of women artists and the number of artworks they exhibited at RBSA Autumn exhibitions between 1860 and 1920 from a selection of exhibitions across that time frame. Their identification is possible because the catalogues included a list of artists' names and addresses at the back and entries for women artists typically included their titles.²⁴ The number of women exhibiting in 1860 was quite small: 27 out of 318 artists (8.5%), but their involvement steadily increased as shown by the graph. Their numbers reached a peak in 1900 with 179 (35%) women artists out of 506 exhibiting at RBSA Autumn exhibitions. Appendix 3, Table 1 shows the overall numbers and percentages of exhibiting artists and artworks per exhibition by gender. The percentage of women artists exhibiting at the RBSA Spring exhibitions was even higher, peaking at 43% at the 1900 Spring exhibition. For comparison, Katy Deepwell has recorded the number of artworks exhibited by women artists as approximately one-third of all exhibited artworks across three major London exhibitions in the early decades of the twentieth century.²⁵ The percentage of women artists exhibiting each year at the RBSA Spring and Autumn exhibitions for an earlier period was an average of 20%. This evidence supports the argument that Birmingham was a favourable and progressive environment for women artists to exhibit their artworks to a public audience. The RBSA exhibitions bear comparison to other popular art exhibition locations such as London. Appendix 3, Table 2 shows the percentage of women artists at seven exhibition galleries, six in London and the RBSA in Birmingham, for sample years between 1860 and 1900. The figures show that the percentage was consistently high at the RBSA. This demonstrates the popularity of the

²⁴ The titles used were Miss, Mrs and occasionally Lady and Madam.

²⁵ The three London exhibitions are Royal Academy, New English Art Club and the London Group. (Deepwell, *Women Artists Between the Wars*, 180).

RBSA exhibitions for women artists. The Dudley Gallery, London had the highest percentage, and an 1871 article in the *Art Journal* described it as the 'best venue for female artists, over and above those at the Society of Female Artists'.²⁶ The RBSA's high percentage of exhibiting women artists put it in the same positive light as the Dudley.

What impact did the growing number of exhibiting women artists have on the RBSA? Until 1879, women had no role or official recognition from the RBSA despite their constant presence. In 1879 the title of Honorary Member was given to painter Florence Westwood Whitfield (1854–1926).²⁷ It was nine years before the next woman artist was recognised; Kate Bunce in 1888. When Westwood Whitfield was recognised, the percentage of exhibiting women artists had reached about 20%. Her designation was changed to Associate in 1884 when the RBSA restructured its memberships.²⁸ Westwood Whitfield was not, however, a full member of the society and did not have the privilege of the associated responsibilities for the running and governance of the society.²⁹ Her recognition by the RBSA was much earlier than the RA's which was not until 1922 when Annie Swynnerton (1844–1933) was elected as the first woman RA Associate.³⁰ However, the Manchester Academy of Arts was ahead of both the RBSA and RA when Annie Swynnerton and Emma Magnus (1856–1936) were elected in 1884. In 1897 Isabel Dacre (1844–1933), Mary

²⁶ *Art Journal*, March 1871, 85.

²⁷ Appendix 7, Table 1 lists women members and associates from 1879 to 1952.

²⁸ Hill & Midgley, *Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, 58.

²⁹ A description of the responsibilities of full members in Hill & Midgely, *Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, 29.

³⁰ The first woman Royal Academician was Laura Knight, elected in 1936.

Florence Monkhouse (c.1856–1946) and Emma Magnus were made members of the council.³¹

Full membership of the RBSA was not awarded to a woman artist until 1952.³² Until that time, the women Associates had no voting powers and held no positions of management or decision making in how the Society's operation.³³ As exhibitors, they were governed by the rules and regulations created by the all-male membership. Being excluded from full membership of the RBSA also meant they were unable to take advantage of the visible, professional designation of the post-nominal initial 'M' in the RBSA exhibition catalogues.³⁴ However, despite being outside the society's executive authority, women artists were increasing their involvement as active participants in the Society's exhibitions.

The RBSA Spring exhibitions were instigated in 1866 and were principally for the display of water colour paintings and drawings whilst the Autumn exhibitions were predominantly for oil paintings.³⁵ The figures in Appendix 3, Table 1 show the difference in the number of exhibiting women artists between the Autumn and Spring exhibitions. Appendix 3, Graph 2 shows the percentage of women artists at each exhibition by year.³⁶ There was often a

³¹ Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*, 99-100; Susan W. Thomson, *Manchester's Victorian Art Scene and its Unrecognised Artists*, Warrington, 2007, 43.

³² Teresa Clarke was elected as a Member in 1952. (Lauren Godwin and Louise Palfreyman, 'Women Artists at the RBSA: How they Shaped British Art History', www.rbsa.org.uk [accessed 10th Oct 2019]).

³³ Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*, 98.

³⁴ Deborah Cherry writes about the 'distinct material benefits' of the Royal Academy's 'RA' post-nominal title. (Cherry, *Painting Women*, 65). Associates of the RBSA were allowed the post-nominal title of 'ARBSA' or just 'A' in the exhibition catalogues. Also, Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*, 77.

³⁵ 'The Society of Artists intend this year, in addition to their ordinary exhibition, to open a Special Exhibition of Water-colour Drawings and Studies; and to this may possibly be added a collection of architectural designs. The Exhibition will be opened in February and will close in May.' (*Birmingham Daily Post*, 11 Jan 1866, 5)

³⁶ Statistics for the 1866 Autumn exhibition are not available, hence starting from the 1867 exhibition.

greater percentage of women artists at the Spring exhibitions compared to the Autumn exhibitions of the same year. Water colour painting and drawing were deemed appropriate accomplishments for a lady to pursue, often framed as non-commercial, for domestic circulation amongst family and friends.³⁷ However, the graph above shows that Birmingham women artists were exhibiting their artworks outside of domestic seclusion in growing numbers. They were challenging the non-commercial status of their works by often selling their water colours at the exhibitions and those works were also, sometimes, re-sold via auctions and dealers thereby having a circulation well beyond the domestic. Their art market activities are discussed in Chapter Four. As will be examined further on in this section, art works by Birmingham women artists sometimes went beyond the town, in even greater circulation, nationally and internationally.

The RBSA itself encouraged a gendered interpretation of their Spring and Autumn exhibitions. The Spring exhibitions were considered to be of more interest to women visitors and this was reflected in the benefits offered to subscribers and donors, 'That each SUBSCRIBER OF TWO GUINEAS per annum shall have free admission to the Society's Autumn Exhibition for himself and five friends, and free admission to the Spring Exhibition for himself and two ladies.'³⁸ Therefore, when the RBSA began Spring exhibitions, in order to provide an outlet for the growing numbers of water colours, they were also responding to the increase in exhibiting women artists and viewers at their annual exhibitions. The first Spring exhibition was held in 1866 and the percentage of women artists exhibiting at that

³⁷ Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, 19; Cherry, *Painting Women*, 83.

³⁸ RBSA, *The Autumn Exhibition*, 1875 exhibition catalogue.

first event was 15.8%, and continued to increase, reaching a peak of 43% in 1900.³⁹ The impact of women artists exhibiting at the RBSA can be seen in the instigation of a second, annual exhibition in the Spring months. It was unusual for an art society to hold two exhibitions a year and unheard of outside of London.⁴⁰ It can be argued, with support from the figures, that their activity and participation, whilst not overtly recognised and documented as the cause, was a major factor in the decision to run two exhibitions per year.

In response to the growing trend of arts and crafts being exhibited around the country and the persistent call for art training to be more design led to support the town's industries, the RBSA included Arts and Crafts exhibits from 1909. These were initially included in the annual Autumn exhibitions but with separate catalogues and later listed within the Autumn catalogue.⁴¹ The first in 1909 received a positive response and justified the second exhibition in 1910, which was mainly devoted to jewellery.⁴² Data from a sample of these exhibitions, showing the percentage of women artists and their artworks is in Appendix 3, Table 3. The percentage of women artists and their exhibited art objects is significantly greater than for the regular annual RBSA exhibitions of paintings and pictures. This demonstrates the significant involvement of women in the Arts and Crafts happenings in Birmingham during this time. The data examined in this section support the argument that women artists were a significant presence at RBSA exhibitions, and that their numbers

³⁹ These figures may change as more data is gathered.

⁴⁰ *Art Journal*, Oct 1866, 32.

⁴¹ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 23 Nov 1909, 4.

⁴² *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 22 Nov 1910, 2.

increased over the period. The Spring watercolour exhibitions were particularly popular with women artists as were the Arts and Crafts exhibitions. Their presence and involvement impacted on the membership of the Society with the election of the first woman as an honorary member in 1879. Their involvement with the RBSA is a significant aspect of the Society's history that has not previously been fully explored.

Many Birmingham women artists exhibited beyond Birmingham, contributing to national art exhibition culture. Between 1860 and 1920, seventy-four women artists listed with a Birmingham address exhibited at the Royal Academy, exhibiting ninety-two artworks. The participation of Birmingham women artists at the ACES exhibitions, London also demonstrates their involvement on the national stage. The ACES held eleven exhibitions in London between 1888 and 1916 and the exhibitors were from all areas of the country. Seventy-four Birmingham women artists exhibited at these ACES exhibitions (coincidentally, the same number that exhibited at the RA as mentioned above).⁴³ Many of these artists continued to exhibit in Birmingham as well as beyond demonstrating their commitment to disseminating their work and seeking sales.

3.2 RBSA Exhibition Reviews

It is important to consider exhibition reviews, published in the Birmingham newspapers when examining the involvement of women artists in Birmingham's art world. The reviews reached a wide audience and could influence the opinions of those later attending the exhibitions. They could impact the potential for exhibited artworks to sell by guiding the

⁴³ Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Exhibition Catalogues between 1889 and 1916.

opinion of potential purchasers and patrons. Heather Haskins has written, 'in the process of writing art history, the importance of the art critic cannot be underestimated.'⁴⁴ Haskins argues that for women artists, the review was often negative if their work did not accord with the critic's concept of femininity. Worse still, if critics ignored their work, they were left out of the critical literature entirely. The reviews did not provide a comprehensive list of what was exhibited because what was published was mediated by the whim and preference of the writer. However, they can support and enrich other sources such as exhibition catalogues. The reviews also provide a glimpse of how women artists and their work was received and the social environment within which the artists were working. The newspapers had a wide readership across the town and beyond and therefore had an influence on the viewing and buying public. As many of the artworks were for sale, the comments published could influence sales and prices, both positively and negatively. This chapter section explores these issues for Birmingham's women artists via analysis of review mentions, how they were written about, and the type of language used to understand their exhibition experiences.

A woman artist's gender was an important identifier in newspaper exhibition reviews. They were often grouped together with labels such as; 'the lady artists', 'the lady-artist phalanx' and 'lady exhibitors'.⁴⁵ The use of the word 'phalanx' is interesting; its definition is a group

⁴⁴ Heather Victoria Haskins, *Now You See Them, Now You Don't: The Critical Reception of Women's Work at the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, 1888-1916*, unpublished PhD thesis, Concordia University, 2005, 7-8.

⁴⁵ *Birmingham Journal*, 29 Aug 1868, 10; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 4 June 1868, 6; *Birmingham Pictorial and Dart*, 24 Sept 1897, 7: 'the currency of the word 'lady', shorn from its eighteenth-century aristocratic associations and increasingly used from the 1840s to identify a middle-class femininity ordered around conduct and appearance rather than given by birth or rank' (Cherry, *Painting Women*, 120); 'Let women notice that with the term *lady* in our language, as used to supplant *woman*, arose the school of men which sneered at females of cultivated mind under the name of bluestockings ... The word *lady*, generically used,

‘a compact body’.⁴⁶ This compact grouping allowed the reviewer a shorthand for simple, sweeping comments about a group of artists, often only giving a passing comment on their presence.⁴⁷ The men artists were not referred to as a group or category and many were mentioned, by name, as individuals. Writing about women artists as a group made it easier to position them as one entity in the review articles, ‘finally, though it is somewhat rude to put them late, the ladies make an important show, as regards both number and quality’.⁴⁸ Such comments were often at the end of review articles.

The gender labelling tendency has aided this research, by enabling identification of women artists. However, the labelling was not comprehensive and there are instances of women artists being identified only by initials. In cases where the woman artist can still be identified (via address, for example) they have been. Unfortunately, some may have been missed. Men artists were usually referred to by first name and surname or initials and surname. Women artists were usually referred to by first name and surname and often with the titles ‘Mrs’ or ‘Miss’. Married women were often referred to by their husband’s first name, eg. Mrs George Whitfield.⁴⁹ The data showing the number of mentions of women artists at RBSA exhibitions in Birmingham newspaper reviews across a sample of

ought to be odious as the product of a time in which women were taken to be necessarily frivolous.’ (Lady Morgan Sydney, ‘Women versus Ladies’, *Athenaeum*, 30 Oct 1847).

⁴⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary Online* www.oed.com [accessed 10 May 2022].

⁴⁷ ‘Because women artists were treated, as were all women, collectively as a homogeneous group by virtue of their shared gender, and separately from artists of a different gender, women were effectively placed in an absolutely different sphere from men. Thus, art by women was subsumed into bourgeois notions of femininity and furthermore, art historically, relegated to a special category which was presented as a distinct from mainstream cultural activity and public professionalism – the preserve of masculinity.’, Parker & Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 44.

⁴⁸ *Birmingham Journal*, 28 March 1868, 12.

⁴⁹ This was from the principle of coverture, a common law doctrine in which a married woman’s legal rights and identity were subsumed by her husband’s. See Tim Stretton and Krista J. Kesselring (eds), *Married Women and the Law: Coverture in England and the Common Law World*, Montreal, 2013.

exhibitions can be seen in Appendix 3, Graph 3. The data shows, by percentage, how many women artists exhibited and how many times they were mentioned for each exhibition in the sample.⁵⁰ The graph shows that there was a significant difference between the exhibitions and the mentions. The men artists received a greater share of the review comments in relation to their exhibiting. Additionally, for a sample of three RBSA Arts & Crafts exhibitions, 55.3% were women, yet the press coverage was in favour of the male artists with 56.3% of the newspaper review mentions.⁵¹

It is clear that their presence in the written discourse was significantly lower than their actual exhibition participation. The journalistic discourse hides the truth of their level of participation. The articles were not published with a byline, so the name and gender of the writer is unknown. However, it is a fair assumption that they were male; Gerrish Nunn has argued, 'the Victorian art critic's voice as a public noise can be generalised as a male voice'.⁵² The women artists were dependant on male standards and judgement because, typically, women were not art dealers, curators or critics so had little access to authority voices. As Haskins has written, 'the reception of women's fine art was dependent on the experiences and judgment of men'.⁵³ Perhaps it was not in the interests of the (assumed) male critics to promote the work of the women artists too much because of the challenge that their presence posed to social ideology on gender. If the critics view was that women

⁵⁰ The overall numbers of artists, by gender are in Appendix 3, Table 1.

⁵¹ The sample from RBSA Arts & Crafts Exhibitions are 1909, 1910 and 1914 exhibitions.

⁵² Nunn, *Problem Pictures*, 109.

⁵³ Haskins, *Now You See Them*, 1.

artists were not as 'great' as male artists and that they had limited capabilities, this might explain the lack of attention.

The gender labelling of women artists had the effect of putting the idea in the readers' minds that they were women first and artists second.⁵⁴ It identified them as different from a 'normal' artist; a male artist.⁵⁵ The notion of women's limited capabilities was expressed in the language used in newspaper exhibition reviews. Being mentioned in reviews could be important for attracting attention and potential sales but so was how they were written about.⁵⁶ An examination of the language used in the reviews shows differences in types of words employed for men and women artists.⁵⁷ Appendix 3, Table 4 shows certain keywords used for each gender and a clear difference in the type of language used. Women artists were often praised for technical skills such as colouring and handling but not for creative, innovative, genius-like abilities, which were reserved for male artists.⁵⁸ This limiting attitude is expressed in the following quote from a review of the first Society of Female Artists, London exhibition, 'strength of will and power of creation belonging rather to the other sex, we do not of course look for the more daring efforts in an exhibition of female artists'.⁵⁹ This attitude is reflected in the words used for the male artists, listed above, such as 'original', 'masterly' and 'vigour'. These words speak of creation and invention. These

⁵⁴ Gender divisions were an important aspect of middle- and upper-class identities in this era. See Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History*, Cambridge, 1992.

⁵⁵ Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, 21-2.

⁵⁶ Fletcher & Helmreich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market*, 19.

⁵⁷ Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked. Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, London, 1990, 177.

⁵⁸ Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, 19. Frederika Jacob locates the origins of the idea that 'genius' was a male-only ability in Aristotle's writings and their influence in the Renaissance. (Frederika Jacob, 'Woman's Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguissola', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47:1, Spring 1994, 74-101). Also, Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius. Towards a Feminist Aesthetics*, London, 1989.

⁵⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 6 June 1857, 10.

sample data shows a common trend in the Birmingham newspaper reviews. The tone of reviews was also sometimes patronising, 'it would, however, be ungallant to pass over the works of the lady artists of local standing'.⁶⁰ Gallantry suggests chivalry and invokes notions of male valiant heroes offering support and protection to women. However, not all reviews used language that reflected notions of women's limited abilities. A review of Kate Bunce's *Mariana* painting, exhibited in 1891, described it as having 'vigorous and original conception'.⁶¹ Also, Helen Howard Hatton's work was described in 1884 as having, 'no lack of either strength or character' and Louise Jopling's *Portrait of the Artist* painting, exhibited in 1891 was described as, 'a powerful study'.⁶² Therefore, it can be presumed that women artists' persistent participation in RBSA exhibitions contributed to changes in attitudes about their artistic capabilities.

3.3 Case Studies of Birmingham Women Artists

The first two sections of this chapter have used a quantitative approach to examine the numbers of women artists as a group. The artists examined in this section were purposely chosen to show a variety of art careers ranging from those that remained local to Birmingham and those whose careers were more actively pursued beyond Birmingham on the national and international art-stages. Brief biographies of the case study artists discussed in this section can be found in Appendix 6. The art careers of the case study artists were interwoven with Birmingham's art organisations and the interconnectedness of those organisations.

⁶⁰ *Art Journal*, May 1869, 143; *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 1 May 1869, 7.

⁶¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 Sept 1891, 4.

⁶² *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 Sept 1884, 5; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 31 March 1891, 4.

The Birmingham School of Art was an important art organisation holding annual, public exhibitions of students' work.⁶³ The early relationship between the RBSA and the Society of Arts, which ran the School of Art, had been contentious. The two organisations originally formed in 1809; a split occurred in 1842 with the professional artists forming the Birmingham Society of Artists (later RBSA) and the patrons setting up the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design.⁶⁴ The rift was significant and the participation of art students in the professional RBSA exhibitions showed a recovered and strengthened bond between two key, Birmingham art organisations. Women artists, as students at the School of Art and artists participating in the RBSA commercial exhibitions played an important role in strengthening the collaborative bond that benefited Birmingham's art world. A specific example of this is the art career of Mary Ann Preston, an outstanding art student passing numerous exams and winning prizes and medals. In 1859 she was awarded a prize scholarship; in 1861 she was awarded a National Medal by the Science and Art Department and in 1862 she was awarded a National Medal in a Pupil Teachers' Works category of the competition. The first record of her professional exhibiting was at the Birmingham Society of Artists annual exhibition in 1863, when she was thirty-two years old, with a painting titled *Flowers*, priced £5.⁶⁵ She continued to regularly exhibit at the RBSA whilst working as an art teacher at the Birmingham School of Art. As a teacher of the female classes, her influence on future generations of artists was significant and many of those students

⁶³ It is explored further, in relation to women artists, in Chapter One.

⁶⁴ Hill & Midgley, *Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*. Appendix 7 gives brief history of the RBSA.

⁶⁵ Birmingham Society of Artists, *Exhibition of Modern Works of Art*, exhibition catalogue, 1863.

progressed to exhibiting at the RBSA and beyond the town, possibly inspired by the example she set with her frequent exhibiting at the RBSA.

Other examples of women artists who were significant contributors to the accord between the two organisations are Florence Westwood Whitfield and the sisters, Annie and Minnie Townley. All three exhibited at the RBSA whilst they were students at the School of Art. Records show that they exhibited in some years at both the RBSA and the School of Art student exhibitions. Annie Townley first exhibited at the RBSA in Spring 1868 when she was nineteen years old.⁶⁶ She was also a student at the School of Art with the first recorded mention of her in 1879 when she was thirty years old.⁶⁷ Her RBSA exhibiting started before her art school training. Florence Westwood Whitfield's career trajectory can be tracked from the age of nineteen when she first exhibited at the RBSA's 1873 Autumn exhibition whilst she was a student at the Birmingham School of Art. Two years later she won a silver medal for oil painting.⁶⁸ The healed rift and close collaboration between the School of Art and the RBSA, an alliance that formed the nucleus of Birmingham's art world, is evident in the histories of these women artists.

The status of an artist was enhanced by membership of professional art societies, such as the RBSA. Awarding such status gave a circular benefit to both artists and the RBSA. The artist's public profile was enhanced by the title and the RBSA's stature was enhanced by

⁶⁶ Birmingham Society of Artists, *Third Spring Exhibition of Paintings in Water-Colours*, exhibition catalogue, 1868.

⁶⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 11 Aug 1879, 8.

⁶⁸ Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham, *The Autumn Exhibition, 1873*; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 4 Feb 1875, 5.

the participation in its exhibition of professionally recognised artists. Such status-enhancing privilege was rare for women artists in the second half of the nineteenth-century. Florence Westwood Whitfield was a Birmingham trailblazer as the first woman artist to be elected by the male dominated RBSA. As mentioned in Section One, she was awarded the title of Honorary Member in 1879 but her title was later changed to Associate Member, defined as a probationer, in 1884 when the RBSA restructured its memberships.⁶⁹

By 1879, Westwood Whitfield had participated in eleven RBSA exhibitions and exhibited thirty art works. The frequency of exhibiting does not appear to be a factor in her election because during the same period, Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière had participated in twenty-nine exhibitions, exhibiting sixty-nine artworks and Mary Vernon Morgan had participated in twenty-seven exhibitions, exhibiting ninety artworks. This is significant because it endorses the recognition of Westwood Whitfield's ability and skill as an oil painter, not the frequency of her exhibiting. Westwood Whitfield was soon joined by other women Associates; Kate Bunce (1856–1927) in 1888, Mary Vernon Morgan in 1892, Margaret Gere (1878–1965) and Mary Newill (1860–1947) in 1909 and Kate Eadie (1880–1945) in 1914.⁷⁰ Westwood Whitfield's election set a precedent and signalled a permanent change to the formation of the RBSA and paved the way for other artists. Electing women artists as Associates, based on their artistic abilities was a public recognition of their capabilities and professionalism. Their memberships were a disruption to the commonly

⁶⁹ Hill & Midgley, *Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, 58.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 50-1. A more detailed list of women RBSA memberships from 1879 to 1952 can be found in Appendix 7.

held notions that professional artist status was male and demonstrated that women could hold a position, albeit not a full membership position, in a professional art society.⁷¹

The RBSA is one of the oldest art exhibition societies in the UK and the largest in Birmingham. Other groups existed in the latter half of the nineteenth century and some included women members. Mary Vernon Morgan, the most prolific RBSA exhibitor of the artists discussed in this chapter, first exhibited at the RBSA in 1862, at the age of sixteen and continuously exhibited until the age of eighty. During that sixty-five-year period she exhibited at nearly every RBSA Spring and Autumn exhibition. Mary Vernon Morgan did not attend the Birmingham School of Art and it is likely that she was trained within her family. Her father, William Henry Morgan (1820–1909) was an artist, as were her sisters Norah (1848–1939), Florence (1850–1905) and Ellen (1853–1920). Hill and Midgley have described RBSA members as showing, ‘remarkable steadiness and constancy’ and she certainly demonstrated those qualities in her career.⁷² Vernon Morgan’s extensive history of exhibition activity comprehensively establishes her as an important artist at the RBSA. Her importance to Birmingham’s art culture is further evidenced by her membership of local art societies, which is discussed further in chapter five. As already mentioned, she was elected as an Associate member of the RBSA in 1892 but before that, in 1885, she also regularly exhibited with the Birmingham Art Circle as the first woman member.⁷³ The Birmingham Art Circle started in 1879 with the purpose of, ‘encouragement of unity and

⁷¹ Cherry, *Painting Women*, 53 & 65; Orr, *Women in the Victorian Art World*, 6.

⁷² Hill & Midgley 1930, p.28

⁷³ Birmingham Art Circle, *Summer Exhibition of Oil and Water Color Paintings*, exhibition catalogue, May 1885.

friendship amongst the young artists of the town'.⁷⁴ She was joined by Kate Bunce in 1888.⁷⁵ As a woman, in a male-dominated professional organisation, she was included in their 'unity and friendship'.

3.4 Professional Careers, Reputations and Exhibitions

A professional art career involved strategies for reputation building and the promotion of artworks for sale. Local, national and international art exhibitions played a crucial role in an artist's career. Birmingham women artists engaged in a variety of exhibition activities. Some were active solely within Birmingham, whilst others ventured further and exhibited nationally and even internationally. They were involved with exhibitions of pictures as well as those focused on Arts and Crafts objects. Exhibiting their work publicly and building professional reputations challenged societal attitudes that disapproved of a woman drawing attention to herself. Research has explored the suppressing power of calumny, humiliation and threat of damage to a woman's reputation if she attracted too much public attention.⁷⁶ However, the exhibition practices of Birmingham women artists were not entirely constrained by such concerns as is explored below.

Frequent participation in RBSA and other local exhibitions, as detailed above, was an important activity for Birmingham women artists. An artist's frequent exhibiting and participation in other public events facilitated their fame, which in turn enabled their name

⁷⁴ Birmingham Art Circle, *The Art Circle Exhibition of Oil and Water Color Paintings*, exhibition catalogue, Nov 1881.

⁷⁵ Birmingham Art Circle, *Summer Exhibition of Oil and Water Color Paintings*, exhibition catalogue, April 1888.

⁷⁶ Orr, *Women in the Victorian Art World*, 25.

to be leveraged in advertisements for local, commercial art sales and auctions.⁷⁷ Mary Vernon Morgan's name was frequently listed in such notices by art dealers such as John Ward and John Hopwood and on occasion as the only woman artist in the list of artists of 'important exhibited works' by 'popular artists'.⁷⁸ The topic of women artists' interactions with the art market, including art dealers, is discussed further in chapter four. The development of an artistic reputation by Birmingham women artists is also evinced in estate sales of wealthy, Birmingham industrialists and businessmen. Newspaper notices of the posthumous estate sales show the artists that these wealthy businessmen had patronised. Such notices show that Mary Vernon Morgan's and Florence Westwood Whitfield's paintings were owned by such patrons. Estate sales notices for William Marston Warden (iron merchant), William Stephen Potter (stockbroker) and Charles Rainsford (manufacturer and philanthropist) had top-billing listings for paintings by Westwood Whitfield alongside other well-known local artists such as John Steeple and Walter Langley.⁷⁹ Westwood Whitfield was listed as a water-colour artist of importance and her reputation was leveraged to attract buyers to the estate sale. This testifies to the strength of her art reputation and her well-regarded presence within Birmingham's local art world.

Birmingham artists also participated in other local art exhibitions held in towns across the country. Mary Vernon Morgan's exhibiting history illustrates such a national presence. A summary timeline of her exhibiting activity is as follows:

⁷⁷ See Chapter Four for a more in-depth discussion of this issue.

⁷⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 30 May 1883, 1; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 26 May 1888, 1; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 Nov 1889, 1; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Feb 1895, 1.

⁷⁹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 March 1891, 1; *County Advertiser & Herald for Staffordshire and Worcestershire*, 29 Oct 1892, 1.

- 1897 Walsall Art Gallery Exhibition⁸⁰
- 1896, Bristol Fine Arts Academy Exhibition 1896⁸¹
- 1896, Evesham Arts & Crafts Exhibition⁸²
- 1898 and 1899, Cheltenham Fine Art Society's Exhibition⁸³
- 1901 Worcester Victoria Institute Art Exhibition⁸⁴
- 1901 Dudley Art Gallery Autumn Exhibition⁸⁵
- 1905 Walker's Gallery, London⁸⁶

The 1905 exhibition held in the Walker Gallery, a well-known London gallery, was a collective with her brother-in-law, Walter, titled *Gardens and Flowers; Italy and the East*.⁸⁷ Mary provided the floral pictures, Walter provided those of Italy and the East.⁸⁸ Exhibiting nationally also enabled inclusion in private art sales and auctions across the country. Mary Vernon Morgan, Florence Westwood Whitfield and Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière were listed in such sales in locations such as Walsall, Stourbridge, Sheffield, Sussex and Cornwall.⁸⁹ Vernon Morgan also contributed to the Cornish art world, via fellow Birmingham artist Walter Langley.⁹⁰ Exhibition information shows that Mary exhibited at

⁸⁰ *Walsall Advertiser*, 9 Oct 1897, 5.

⁸¹ *Bristol Mercury*, 6 April 1896, 5.

⁸² *Evesham Standard & West Midland Observer*, 21 March 1896, 4; *Worcester Journal*, 21 March 1896, 3.

⁸³ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 12 Feb 1898, 4; *Cheltenham Examiner*, 22 Feb 1899, 8.

⁸⁴ *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 23 Feb 1901, 1.

⁸⁵ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 4 Oct 1901, 6.

⁸⁶ *Morning Post*, 17 March 1905, 9; *The Queen*, 18 March 1905, 429.

⁸⁷ *Morning Post*, 17 March 1905, 9.

⁸⁸ *Globe*, 22 March 1905, 4.

⁸⁹ *Walsall Observer and Staffordshire Chronicle*, 17 Dec 1887, 4; *County Advertiser & Herald for Staffordshire and Worcestershire*, 29 Oct 1892, 1; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 1885, 4; *Kent & Sussex Courier*, 14 March 1902, 1; *Lake's Falmouth Packet and Cornwall Advertiser*, 14 Feb 1903, 4.

⁹⁰ Roger Langley, *Walter Langley, From Birmingham to Newlyn*, Bristol, 2011.

least ten paintings with titles referencing either Cornwall or the sea.⁹¹ Her contribution to Cornwall has been recorded in research on the Cornwall Artists Index.⁹²

London was considered the centre of the exhibiting art world in England, and this is reflected in the dominant, London-centric focus of much research on the nineteenth-century art world. Birmingham artists frequently participated in London art exhibitions. Vernon Morgan exhibited at the Royal Society of British Artists three times; 1888, 1889 and 1891.⁹³ During the period of interest to this thesis, seventy-three women artists from Birmingham exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, including Mary Vernon Morgan, nine times; Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière, nine times; Florence Westwood Whitfield, three times and Minnie Townley, once.⁹⁴ Exhibiting art at a national level enhanced and widened the scope of an artist's professional reputation. Selling their paintings to well-regarded patrons would have also reinforced their reputations and aided further sales. In the second half of the nineteenth-century, Queen Victoria was a significant art patron, bestowing a royal seal-of-approval. Georgina Steeple and Mary Vernon Morgan each had paintings purchased by Queen Victoria during their lifetimes. In the RBSA 1880 Autumn exhibition, Vernon Morgan exhibited her oil painting, *Water Lilies: The Sleepy Pool Above the Dam* with a price tag of £30.⁹⁵ It was purchased by Queen Victoria and

⁹¹ The entry for Walter Morgan on the Cornwall Artists Index suggests that the three Morgans possibly visited in 1881.

⁹² *Cornwall Artists Index*, www.cornwallartists.org.

⁹³ *The Queen*, 15 Dec 1888, 824; *Women's Penny Paper*, iss. 35, 22 June 1889, 2; *Birmingham Mail*, 28 Oct 1891, 2.

⁹⁴ Birmingham women artists exhibited at the RA (during the period of interest to this thesis) in 1872, 1874, 1876-77, 1883-96, 1899-1901 and 1904-20.

⁹⁵ RBSA, *The Autumn Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, 1880.

transferred from Windsor to Osborne in 1881 and remains in the Royal Collection today.⁹⁶ Vernon Morgan's reputation was enhanced by the endorsement of arguably the most famous art patron in the country.

Art exhibiting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also involved the exhibition of an assortment of art objects, not just paintings and pictures. For example, Birmingham women artists were significantly involved in the Arts and Crafts movement, which included exhibiting their art objects in local, national and international exhibitions.⁹⁷ The case studies discussed so far in this chapter have been about the exhibition of pictures. The exhibition activity of the artist Margaret Jane Awdry (1854–1939) provides an expanded example of a Birmingham women artist working as part of the Arts and Crafts movement. Her collaborative work is discussed in chapter two with details of such works listed in Appendix 2, Tables 5 and 7. Margaret Awdry designed and made items of art jewellery and she regularly exhibited these items for sale, as well as pictures and sketches, throughout her career. Her known exhibition history spanned nearly thirty years, between 1887–1919, and included regular participation at RBSA exhibitions. As a student and later teacher at the Birmingham School of Art she also participated in the school's student exhibitions. She was a regular exhibitor at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibitions, London, participating in at least four, and is listed in the catalogue for the 1908 Cambridge

⁹⁶ Millar, *Victorian Pictures*; Royal Collection Trust website, www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/403648/the-sleepy-pool-above-the-dam [accessed 17 Sept 2019]

⁹⁷ Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*; FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object*; Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*.

Arts and Crafts Society exhibition.⁹⁸ In 1913 her jewellery was exhibited in the British Arts and Crafts section at the Ghent International Exhibition and in 1914 she participated in the Decorative Arts of Great Britain and Ireland Exhibition in Paris, organised by the British Government.⁹⁹ The example of her career demonstrates that Birmingham women artists participated in exhibition histories with a breadth of art objects both in Britain and across international boundaries. A further example of international exhibition activity is evidenced in the career of Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière.

Georgina and her husband Constant used a variety of exhibition strategies to build their reputations and generate sales. This included leveraging proximity to Queen Victoria for an exhibition of their paintings for sale. In 1879 they went on a seven-month working-tour of the Baveno region of Italy, immediately following Queen Victoria's stay in the region earlier that year. When the L'Aubinières returned home, they held an exhibition of over forty artworks created during their trip and the publicity for the exhibition was centred around the connection with the Queen's holiday. The sales tactic was successful and resulted in the Queen purchasing three of Georgina's paintings.¹⁰⁰ The patronage of the Queen had a positive impact on the price of Georgina's paintings and allowed her to use the accolade in future publicity.¹⁰¹ She exhibited the landscape *Baveno, from the shores of the Isola Pescatore, or Fisherman's Isle* at the 1880 RBSA Autumn exhibition. It is listed in the exhibition catalogue at a price of £52.10s (approx. £3,400 today). Previously, the highest

⁹⁸ *Cambridge Independent Press*, 20 Nov 1908, 5.

⁹⁹ Ghent International Art Exhibition Catalogue, 1913; Decorative Arts of Great Britain and Ireland Exhibition Catalogue, held at Palais du Louvre Pavillon de Marsan, April-Oct, 1914, 89

¹⁰⁰ *London Daily News*, 19 June 1880, 3.

¹⁰¹ The same has not been found with Mary Vernon Morgan's work post-Royal patronage.

advertised price for one of her paintings was £12.12s. Later in her career, her paintings were fetching high prices and she sold sixty works for over £1,000 (approx. £82,000 in today's money) at a sale in 1891.¹⁰² Today, two of Georgina's paintings are in the Royal Collection Trust.¹⁰³ As with Vernon Morgan, this demonstrates the impact a Birmingham woman artist had on the art world beyond Birmingham.

In 1882 Georgina and Constant set off on an extended working tour of North America, staying in Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Canada. In Chicago and New York, they held exhibition sales of their art works, sometimes with Constant conducting the sales.¹⁰⁴ In San Francisco, they socialised with the city's elite, attending dinner parties at the Governor's mansion and hosting their own soirées at their studio in the iconic Phelan building. As reported in the local papers, the soirées were an opportunity for them to advertise their works to wealthy patrons. Newspaper reports of their hosting includes detail on how the walls were covered with their art works and that they gave ballot tickets to their guests, the prize being one of their paintings; 'The rooms were made very attractive by the tasteful arrangement of flowers and bric-a-brac, and the paintings and sketches of M. and Mme. de L'Aubinière, with which the walls were covered.'¹⁰⁵ Georgina also participated in several 'Lady Artists' exhibitions in the city. She was a member of the organising committee and involved with the musical entertainment that accompanied the

¹⁰² Mr Horatio Lane's fine art sale, reported in *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Nov 1891, 1; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 Nov 1891, 4.

¹⁰³ Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière, *View of the Lake and Bluebell Time in the Grounds of the Queen's Cottage in Kew Gardens*, Royal Collection Trust website www.rct.uk [accessed 17 Sept 2019].

¹⁰⁴ *New York Times*, 26 March 1884, 5; *Chicago Tribune*, 27 June 1884, 8.

¹⁰⁵ *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 March 1886, 2.

exhibitions.¹⁰⁶ In 1886 the L'Aubinières continued their working art-tour and travelled to Canada, staying in Victoria and Montreal and visiting many places such as Niagara, Yosemite Valley and Chaudière Falls and painting the scenery.¹⁰⁷ They exhibited paintings of English scenery whilst in Montreal.¹⁰⁸ It is possible to track some of the couples' travels by piecing together newspaper articles and advertisements, and it is clear that their intention was to generate North American landscapes to be sold whilst there. They held at least seven exhibitions during the seven years they were in North America. Unfortunately, at times, they only had modest success with their sales, 'It is to be regretted that M. and Mme. De L'Aubinière did not meet with better success in the sale of their paintings and colors now at Stevens' Gallery'.¹⁰⁹

The influence Georgina's professional art career had on Birmingham's art world can be seen in an 1891 advertisement for a sale of her works in, 'most important unreserved sale of the interesting and valuable collection of water-colour drawings by Madame De L'Aubinière, (Née Georgina M. Steeple, of Birmingham)'.¹¹⁰ The collection had previously been exhibited at Shephard's Gallery in London and included works from her North American and Italian trips. It also mentions, 'Her majesty the Queen commanded that the collection be submitted to her at Buckingham Palace and was graciously pleased to purchase three of the works'. Georgina's reputation, enhanced by the Royal patronage and international travelling, was large enough to sustain a solo art sale in Birmingham. Georgina

¹⁰⁶ *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 Dec 1885, 3; *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 March 1886, 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Morning Post*, 19 May 1890, 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 30 March 1889, 6.

¹⁰⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, 22 June 1884, 6.

¹¹⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Nov 1891, 1.

Steeple de L'Aubinière's exhibition strategies were intertwined with art market activities, and these are discussed further in Chapter Four.

3.5 Women Artists from Beyond Birmingham, Exhibiting in Birmingham

The address data for women artists has been analysed to examine where the exhibiting women artists lived to understand the impact of the Birmingham exhibitions to the wider community of women artists. Exhibiting artists from beyond Birmingham had an important role in Birmingham's art exhibitions and conversely, Birmingham's art exhibitions played an important role in their careers. Much previous research has focused on London as the main location of art exhibition activity and typically emphasises women artists sending major works to the RA and smaller works to other London venues.¹¹¹ A London-centric perspective conceals the role of Birmingham in the nineteenth-century art world. The popular and frequent exhibiting of artists from outside Birmingham, and especially from London, challenges the London-centric view. Women artists with national fame who regularly exhibited at RBSA exhibitions include Emily Mary Osborn (1828–1925), Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827–1891), Louise Jane Jopling (1843–1933), Lady Elizabeth Thompson Butler (1846–1933), Sophie Gengembre Anderson (1823–1903) and the sisters Adelaide (1841–1927) and Florence (1838–1920) Claxton. Cherry has written, 'at the mid-century, women artists ambitious for professional success sent their major works to the Royal Academy, reserving small studies and sketches for other London venues.'¹¹² This view

¹¹¹ Yeldham, *Women Artists*; Cherry, *Painting Women*; Hamilton, *A Strange Business*; Nunn, 'Beyond the Parlour'; Quirk, *Women, Art and Money; Exhibition Culture in London 1878-1908*, online database, University of Glasgow, 2006 www.exhibitionculture.arts.gla.ac.uk.

¹¹² Cherry, *Painting Women*, 96.

fails to recognise the importance of exhibitions outside London, including Birmingham. The artists mentioned above regularly sent work to Birmingham, often soon after they had been exhibited at the RA. The RA had a rule that work could not be exhibited 'which have already been exhibited' but the wording of this rule changed in 1869 to 'no works which have already publicly exhibited in London'. The impact of women artists from outside Birmingham can be seen in the following quote from the *Art Journal* review of the 1873 RBSA Autumn exhibition; 'among the works of lady-contributors some are by Mrs W. Oliver, Constance Phillott, Adelaide Burgess, E. M. Osborn, &c., &c. These, with other contributions of artists at a distance, may be said to comprise the extraneous aid received by the Society'.¹¹³

Appendix 3, Graph 4 shows the number of exhibiting women artists' addresses, by the categories of Birmingham, London, other locations and address not published. The data show the popularity of the RBSA exhibitions for artists living in London. A small number of those artists were originally from Birmingham and moved to London and other locations. The figures from London include well-known artists such as Emily Mary Osborn (1828–1925), Louise Jopling (1843–1933), Clara (1840–1929) and Hilda (1846–1919) Montalba and Gertrude (1840–1924) and Edith Martineau (1842–1909). It is clear from the data that the RBSA exhibitions were an important venue for professional artists from across Britain. Primary source evidence shows that many well-known women artists exhibited their large works in Birmingham that they had previously exhibited at the Royal Academy.¹¹⁴ Examples

¹¹³ *Art Journal*, Oct 1873, 317.

¹¹⁴ RA exhibiting rules stated, "No works which have been already publicly exhibited" and "in London" was added from 1869 onwards.

for Emily Mary Osborn and Louise Jopling are listed in Appendix 3, Table 5, demonstrating the popularity of Birmingham's exhibitions. This facilitates a decentring of London as the nucleus of the national art world.

Emily Osborn was born in London, became a well-known artist during her lifetime, and is famous today for her painting *Nameless and Friendless* (1857).¹¹⁵ She exhibited at the RA twenty-five times, exhibiting forty-three paintings. However, she exhibited more often at the RBSA, participating in forty-one exhibitions, exhibiting eighty-one paintings. Several of the paintings Osborn exhibited in Birmingham had been exhibited at the RA first, no doubt because of the RA rules, as detailed above. Louise Jopling was another well-known woman artist during the second half of the nineteenth century and she was also very active in Birmingham RBSA exhibitions. She exhibited at the Royal Academy thirty-five times, exhibiting sixty-nine paintings. She exhibited in Birmingham thirty-six times, exhibiting sixty-three paintings. However, a recent biography of her life and career makes no mention of her exhibiting activity in Birmingham.¹¹⁶

The numbers of their exhibiting histories show that Birmingham was an important and frequently used exhibiting venue for both Osborn and Jopling. The importance of Birmingham to such artists was perhaps motivated by financial reasons, providing an opportunity to reach art buyers outside of London, particularly those in a manufacturing

¹¹⁵ Cherry, *Painting Women*; Charlotte Yeldham, 'Osborn, Emily Mary', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sept 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/48916.

¹¹⁶ De Montfort, *Louise Jopling*.

town with many wealthy business owners.¹¹⁷ The RBSA exhibitions often included contributions from Royal Academicians, 'and other artists of note'.¹¹⁸ Birmingham's standing within the national art world has been somewhat overlooked in previous research. Its reputation also struggled to gain the foothold, nationally, that it perhaps deserved at the time, 'Birmingham, it seems, hardly obtains the credit it deserves as an art-loving town'.¹¹⁹ The town's reputation as an industrial centre often preceded its reputation in the art world, 'Birmingham, the metropolis of the Black country, the centre of a thousand industrial occupations, is also not without reputation in the domain of art.' The Royal designation, granted in 1868, resulted in a much-needed boost to its cultural credentials, 'to the lovers of art in the Midland Counties is something even more than the Royal Academy Exhibition is to the metropolis'.¹²⁰ Birmingham was also praised for its consistent contribution to 'public taste and diffuse of knowledge of the principles of art' and was lauded in comparison to other large metropolises, 'an undertaking in which Manchester and Liverpool have both failed'.¹²¹ The reputation of Birmingham as an important centre for art was further upheld by Roger Fry's exhibition of modern, post-impressionist artists held at the RBSA in 1917, following its first showing in London.¹²²

The significance of Birmingham as a centre for art exhibitions is evident in the participation of women artists from outside the town. It is not clear whether the artists themselves

¹¹⁷ Evidence of art by women artists in collections of wealthy business owners is discussed in Chapter Four. Birmingham's wealthy art collectors are discussed in Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*.

¹¹⁸ *Illustrated London News*, 20 Sept 1862, 10.

¹¹⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 28 March 1868, 3.

¹²⁰ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 Aug 1868, 6.

¹²¹ *London Evening Standard*, 24 March 1870, 7.

¹²² RBSA, *Post-Impressionist Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, 1917.

attended the Birmingham exhibitions or simply sent their works, perhaps via an art agent, to the RBSA. The evidence suggests that Jopling and Osborn valued Birmingham as much as the Royal Academy as a site for exhibiting as an opportunity for selling their paintings. A comparison of prices for art works they exhibited in both venues is detailed in Appendix 3, Table 5. The paintings were typically exhibited first at the RA, sometimes with a higher price.¹²³ The pattern of the data suggests that if the work did not sell at the RA, it was exhibited again in another location, such as Birmingham. Sometimes the price was higher in London, but not always, and challenged notions of the RA and London being the more premium exhibition and sales location.

One of the most famous paintings in the second half of the nineteenth-century was *The Roll Call* by Lady Elizabeth Thompson Butler. It was exhibited in Birmingham in 1874 and was described as ‘the artistic event of the year’.¹²⁴ The painting caused a national sensation, ‘[it] captured the imagination of the country when exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1874, turning the artist into a national celebrity. So popular was the painting that a policeman had to be stationed before it to hold back the crowds and it went on to tour the country in triumph’.¹²⁵ It was purchased by Queen Victoria and remains in The Royal Collection. Birmingham was a prominent location that forms part of the story of this famous painting by a renowned woman artist.

¹²³ ‘No works which have already publicly exhibited in London’ (The Royal Academy of Art, *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts. MDCCCLXX. The One Hundred and Second*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1870.

¹²⁴ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 Nov 1874, 4.

¹²⁵ Lady Elizabeth Southerden Butler, *The Roll Call*, Royal Collection Trust, www.rct.uk/collection/405915/the-roll-call [accessed 17 Sept 2019].

The professional and commercial art careers of the sisters Adelaide and Florence Claxton, well known for their illustration work as well as exhibiting paintings, have been explored by Catherine Flood.¹²⁶ She focuses on their careers as illustrators and art exhibition activities in London. The history of their exhibition activity in Birmingham further develops Flood's work on their careers. Between 1860 and 1880 each sister participated in eight RBSA exhibitions. Florence exhibited eleven paintings and Adelaide exhibited fourteen. Exhibiting in Birmingham gave them a further opportunity to sell their paintings and from the limited records available, Florence sold at least one painting, via the Art Union and Adelaide sold at least two paintings via the RBSA exhibitions. Flood writes that Adelaide's artistic career seems to have been the main income for her family; her husband and children. Her husband is described on the 1874 census as managing his wife's art business.¹²⁷ This evidence demonstrates that the professional art activities the Claxton sisters undertook went beyond their hometown of London and included sending works to exhibitions outside London for an opportunity to make further sales. Flood also discusses how the names and reputations of the Claxton sisters were used in advertisements for the publications they illustrated. The same harnessing of their fame was used in Birmingham. In 1878, two newspaper advertisements for Birmingham auctioneers Ludlow, Daniell and Roberts included Adelaide Claxton's name as headline artists.¹²⁸ This demonstrates that the fame of Adelaide Claxton was known beyond London and in Birmingham would have

¹²⁶ Catherine Flood, 'Contrary to the Habits of Their Sex? Women Drawing on Wood and the Careers of Florence and Adelaide Claxton' Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and Patricia Zakreski, *Crafting the Woman Professional in the Long Nineteenth Century. Artistry and Industry in Britain*, Surrey, 2013, 107-121.

¹²⁷ Flood, 'Contrary to the Habits', 118.

¹²⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 Feb 1878, 1; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 Dec 1878, 1.

been enhanced by her exhibition activities in the town. This again demonstrates the significance of Birmingham as an art exhibiting location for women artists.

It could be argued that the women artists from outside Birmingham were encouraged to exhibit in Birmingham because of the participation and impact of the local women artists. At times these artists may have crossed paths with each other or known each other socially and discussed their activities, such as the exhibitions they submitted their work to. Women artists in Birmingham did not exhibit separately from their male colleagues and so avoided the issues that were at times raised about the Society of Female Artists, London. One of the main concerns was that the society's exhibitions were not a serious challenge to the dominant venues, which resulted in some notable women artists not participating. There was also concern that a separate exhibition venue for women perpetuated the idea that women's work was different and unequal to men's and therefore exhibiting at the leading venues, alongside men, was mainly preferred by women artists.¹²⁹ The mixed gender exhibiting environment at the RBSA was perhaps encouraging for women artists from outside Birmingham, providing opportunities for them to compete with male artists for sales to wealthy, industrialist, patrons.¹³⁰

This chapter has explored the role of exhibitions in the careers of Birmingham women artists. It examined the participation and contribution of Birmingham women artists to the local, national and international art world between 1860 and 1920. The reputations they

¹²⁹ Cherry, *Painting Women*, 67–8.

¹³⁰ This topic of patrons is explored further in Chapter Four.

built via frequent exhibition enabled their names to be leveraged in the promotion of art sales and auctions to attract buyers. This chapter has also demonstrated that there was substantial recognition of Birmingham as an important cultural centre for artists from outside the city. Several women artists who had a degree of fame and reputation during the second half of the nineteenth century also regularly exhibited in Birmingham. When a woman artist's work was noticed by a visitor, as having been created by a woman, with the identification supported by the listing in the exhibition catalogues and comments written in local press review, it would have informed and possibly challenged that visitor's notion or understanding of what and who is an artist.

CHAPTER FOUR – THE ART MARKET

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Birmingham had a thriving art market that included a more consistent and significant participation of women artists than has previously been understood.¹ Work by women artists were sold at exhibitions, via Art Union ballots, auctions, estate sales and commissions. Art market studies is a vibrant field that has typically centred on London.² Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich argue that London was of central, global importance for the development of the modern art market.³ However, the centrality of London has overshadowed the value of other British locations such as Birmingham. Research on the art dealer, Agnews, has looked beyond London to their branch locations in Manchester and Liverpool.⁴ However, Birmingham has not yet benefited from such detailed examination.⁵ In 1968, Richard Ormond described Birmingham's art patronage climate in the second half of the nineteenth century as 'apathetic'.⁶ Ormond ascribes this to the Nonconformists in the town viewing expenditure on art as 'frivolous' and philanthropy as more deserving. However, this view does not accord with the two, well-attended RBSA exhibitions staged each year in Birmingham with

¹ Richard Ormond, 'Victorian Paintings and Patronage in Birmingham', *Apollo*, 87, April 1968, 240-51; Catherine Coan, *Birmingham Patrons, Collectors, and Dealers, 1830-1880*, unpublished MA thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980.

² Fletcher & Helmreich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London*; Pamela Fletcher, 'Creating the French Gallery: Ernest Gambart and the Rise of the Commercial Gallery in Mid-Victorian London', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 6:1, Spring 2007; Thomas M. Bayer and John Page, 'Arthur Tooth: A London Dealer in the Spotlight, 1870-71', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 9:1, Spring 2010; Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, 'The Lu(c)re of London: French Artists and Art Dealers in the British Capital', *Monet's London: Artists' Reflections on the Thames 1859-1914*, exhibition catalogue, Florida, 2005. 39-54.

³ Fletcher & Helmreich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London*

⁴ Barbara Pezzini, *Making a Market for Art: Agnew's and the National Gallery, 1855-1928*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2017.

⁵ Dianne Sachko Macleod's book, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, does have a chapter on some Birmingham patrons.

⁶ Ormond, 'Victorian Paintings and Patronage in Birmingham', 241.

the majority of exhibited paintings for sale and a high level of participation by artists from London. In 1866, the *Art Journal* noted the excellent exhibitions in Birmingham, commenting that ‘two exhibitions in one year are rarely undertaken by even Metropolitan societies’.⁷ This is testament to the popularity of Birmingham’s exhibitions and the opportunities for sales they provided to artists. Ormond’s comment does not account for the large number of artists from beyond Birmingham, including many famous ones, regularly transporting and exhibiting their works for sale in the town. It can safely be assumed that these artists considered Birmingham a valuable and worthwhile art market location and were not at all apathetic or provincial. This chapter provides the first investigation of women artists’ involvement and influence on Birmingham’s art market in the late nineteenth century and uncovers new research material on its art dealers and auctions.

Recent art market scholarship has examined the wider, international connections of the art market, challenging views that individual locations operated as isolated markets.⁸ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel’s article (2017) reconceptualises the concept of connections to that of circulations, flows and exchanges. The concept of circulations allows for networks, connections and the mobility of objects to be considered as important elements in the flow of art market activities. This is in addition to the usual focus on the economic analysis of

⁷ ‘Birmingham Society of Artists’ Exhibition’, *Art Journal*, Oct 1866, 321.

⁸ Cecilia Riva, ‘An Art World Insider: Austen Henry Layard and the Nineteenth-Century European Art Trade’, *Journal for Art Market Studies*, 2:2, 2018, doi.org/10.23690/jams.v2i2.28; Zoe Cormack, ‘Violence, Globalization and the Trade in “ethnographic” Artefacts in Nineteenth-Century Sudan’, *Journal for Art Market Studies*, 4:1, 2020, doi.org/10.23690/jams.v4i1.98; Jan Dirk Baetens and Dries Lyna, *Art Crossing Borders. The Internationalisation of the Art Market in the Age of Nation States, 1750-1914*, Leiden, 2019.

supply, demand, prices and purchases. This allows a greater level of complexity to conceptualisations of the processes and influences within the art market.⁹ Furthermore, this is useful for considerations of women artists because they often used strategies that were outside those usually considered as art market activities. Scholarship on women artists and the art market is scarce. Maria Quirk's (2019) examination of women, art and money in London is of particular note. Despite her main geographical focus being London, Quirk does establish the necessity for a broader geographical context for understanding women artists' involvement in local, national and international art markets.¹⁰ The field of art market studies intersects with the topic of professionalisation for artists and craft workers. Scholarship that examines women artists and craft workers strategies for professionalisation includes analysis of how they exhibited and sold their art works. Zoë Thomas has examined how women artists within the Arts and Crafts movement used innovative strategies, more suitable to their circumstances and social expectations, for generating sales. Their tactics included the formation of formal, women's societies that organised their own exhibitions to mitigate their exclusion from men-only groups. Women craft workers also leveraged their proximity to the domestic environment by holding home-based events.¹¹ These studies by Quirk and Thomas facilitate a wider understanding of the overall experience of women artists and craft workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The field of art market scholarship is incomplete without considerations of the fuller remit of art market activities by all participants, regardless of

⁹ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, 'Circulation and the Art Market', *Journal for Art Market Studies*, 1:2, 2017, doi.org/10.23690/jams.v1i2.13.

¹⁰ Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*, 4.

¹¹ Zoë Thomas, 'Between Art and Commerce: women, business ownership, and the arts and crafts movement', *Past & Present*, 247:1, 2020, 151-196.

gender. The definition of an art market used for this chapter includes the direct and indirect selling of art works. It includes sales via exhibitions, art union lotteries and direct purchases from buyers including private individuals, public galleries, art dealers and art auctions, and posthumous estate sales. It also includes artists engaging with the art market via private and public commissions, the sale of copyrights for the reproduction of artwork images, and women owning and operating businesses that supplied materials and services to artists.

The British and European art markets saw significant changes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹² The old system of patronage by church, state and the aristocracy was superseded by a modern market involving wealthy middle-class customers.¹³ This shift had an impact on the production of art.¹⁴ Previously, artists had a direct relationship with their patrons, centred on commissions. The new, less direct relationship between artists and buyers resulted in a more speculative type of production; artists could no longer rely on personal relationships with their customers or direct knowledge of what their customers wanted. The new art market included an expanded group of participants in the space between artists and art buyers such as dealers, auctioneers, critics and agents as well as institutions such as picture galleries, museums, periodical press, academies and artists'

¹² Warren & Turpin, *Auctions, Agents and Dealers*; Bayer & Page, *The Development of the Art*; Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*; Fletcher & Helmreich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market*; Gould & Mesplède, *Marketing Art in the British Isles*; Hamilton, *A Strange Business*; North & Ormrod, *Art Markets in Europe*; Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*.

¹³ Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations Between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, London, 1980.

¹³ Bayer & Page, *The Development of the Art*.

¹⁴ Frederick Antal, *Florentine Painting and Its Social Background. The Bourgeois Republic Before Cosimo De'Medici's Advent to Power. 14th and Early 15th Centuries*, London, 1947; Andrew Martindale, *The Rise of the Artist in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, London, 1972; Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, London, 1981.

organisations.¹⁵ These third parties were positioned to wield an influence over artists and buyers with activities such as publishing reviews, advising on purchases and featuring certain artists at their galleries.

Legal and social restrictions meant that women artists interacted with the art market in a different manner to their male colleagues. All artists had to negotiate the paradoxical and complex relationship between art and commerce. The business, money side of art was considered an anathema to the true, noble, refined, cultural and lofty purposes of art.¹⁶ This inconsistency was even more difficult for women artists, especially those of the middle and upper classes, because societal conventions censured and inhibited any direct connection to commerce.¹⁷ However, as scholarship in areas such as women's entrepreneurship and women's activity in finance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has demonstrated, women were active in these areas despite being overlooked in previous histories.¹⁸

Women artists' interactions with the art market were further complicated by the uneven, gendered connotations of the concepts of amateur and professional. The greater the

¹⁵ Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, New York, 1965; Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, 'The Periodical and the Art Market: Investigating the 'Dealer-Critic System' in Victorian England', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 41:4, Winter 2008, 323-51.

¹⁶ Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*.

¹⁷ Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*.

¹⁸ Aston, *Female Entrepreneurship*; Josephine Maltby and Janette Rutterford, 'She Possessed Her Fortune'. Women Investors from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Early Twentieth Century' *Business History*, 48:2, 2006, 220-253; Hannah Barker, *The Business of Women. Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England, 1760-1830*, Oxford, 2006; Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business, 1700-1850*, Woodbridge, 2006; Alison C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship. Enterprise, Home and Household in London, c.1800-1870*, London, 2009.

reputation of an artist, the greater the chances of their artworks selling and for higher prices, and their reputation was often qualified by their status as either amateur or professional. However, the status of amateur or professional was unequally assigned based on the gender of the artist. When men artists displayed the qualities of amateurism their artistic reputation was elevated, when women artists displayed the same qualities, they were denigrated. Quirk has given the example of the artist and President of the Royal Academy, Frederic Leighton (1830–1896) who deliberately distanced himself from commercial art market activities in striking contrast to the art world he inhabited in the most commercialised state it had ever been. His desire to keep his art reputation away from the business of money went so far as to physically remove himself from the room when commercial art dealers visited his studio to see his works. Leighton leveraged his reputation as an artist painting for pleasure, disinterested and unblemished by monetary transactions and relying on notions of the higher, noble calling in the service art world. However, as Quirk has pointed out, when women artists displayed similar motivations, they were quickly dismissed and denigrated as ‘dabblers’ and amateurs.¹⁹ The indicators of a professional artist, such as education, qualifications and memberships of professional societies, were proscribed for women. Furthermore, the concept of professionalism was supported by qualifications of earning, ‘making a living’ and this discounted the activity of many middle- and upper-class women artists. Definitions and designations of ‘professional’ must be considered with caution when exploring women artists’ interactions with the art market. However, despite the differences and challenges for women artists, they prevailed as active and consistent participants in the art markets in Birmingham and beyond.

¹⁹ Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*, 3.

4.1 Women Artists and Birmingham's Art Market

Birmingham's economy in the nineteenth century was centred on art manufacturing businesses.²⁰ This resulted in a large proportion of the population with an advanced knowledge and understanding of art and design aesthetics, which in turn shaped and supported a thriving art community.²¹ This feature of Birmingham's local art scene made it unusual in comparison to other English towns such as Manchester whose industry was dominated by textile manufacturing. This characteristic resulted in a local populace, including collectors, with a high regard for art technique. As a result, Birmingham's art patrons, in comparison to Manchester's, were less influenced by third parties such as art dealers and critics, in their art purchasing choices.²² Quirk has described the approach of art dealers and critics as having a primary focus on artists' biographies and reputations, and less on the aesthetics of individual paintings.²³ The lack of art dealer influence, effectively third-party gatekeeping, on Birmingham's art buyers, coupled with buyers being more attentive to aesthetics resulted in a unique opportunity for women artists to prosper. The art market environment in Birmingham included the direct sale of art via the RBSA exhibitions and this, coupled with the new art market widening the distance between art producer and art purchaser, mentioned earlier, allowed for greater anonymity for artists. This space provided an opportunity for women artists, needing to negotiate social constraints, to participate in the art market in a way that did not draw attention to themselves or require close personal relationships with patrons. In this regard,

²⁰ Tilson, *Made in Birmingham*.

²¹ Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, 89.

²² *Ibid.*, 90.

²³ Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*, 5.

Birmingham's distinctive art environment was encouraging and enabling for local women artists and those from locations across England.

Birmingham's art market consisted of and was shaped by several interrelated components. One of the most significant elements during the period of interest to this thesis, was the RBSA exhibitions.²⁴ One of the main incentives for setting up the RBSA was to provide local, contemporary artists with regular opportunities to sell their paintings.²⁵ The RBSA exhibition catalogues between 1860 and 1920 included prices for most of the exhibited works and this provided artists with a direct connection to art buyers and the art market.²⁶ This was similar for regular exhibitions held in other areas of the country such as the Royal Manchester Institution (RMI) and the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts (MAFA) exhibitions. However, this practice of direct engagement with the art market contrasted with the Old Watercolour Society and RA exhibitions that did not publish prices in their catalogues.²⁷ The RA included a 'Sale of Works' paragraph at the front of their catalogues, directing buyers to a separate Price Catalogue placed in one of the galleries and managed by the Secretary.²⁸ The RA, the foremost exhibition location in Britain at that time, had to negotiate conflicting understandings of its purpose and function.²⁹ On the one hand it was

²⁴ Chapter three has a more detailed examination of exhibitions.

²⁵ Fawcett, *The Rise of English Provincial Art*; Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, 68.

²⁶ Occasionally artists and collectors exhibited their owned objects, particularly portraits, without a price but they were in the minority.

²⁷ Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, 68.

²⁸ A statement on the 'Sale of Works' was published in the front pages of RA exhibition catalogues; 'The Prices of Works to be disposed of may be communicated to the Secretary, and will be entered in the Price Catalogues placed in one of the Galleries. Communications with regard to the Price and Sale of Works must in all cases be made by the Artists, and be addressed in writing to "The Secretary." All purchases will be registered, but the Academy can undertake no responsibility with regard either to the payment for the Works purchased, or for their delivery to the purchaser.' (Royal Academy, *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts. MDCCCX. The One Hundred and Forty-Second*, exhibition catalogue, 1910.

²⁹ Bayer & Page, *The Development of the Art Market*, 192.

tasked with providing contemporary artists a venue for pecuniary opportunities, but on the other it had to navigate accusations of prioritising financial gain over service to the nation.³⁰

The RA negotiated this conflict of rationale by maintaining an indirect connection to the art market. Its desire to put distance between the exhibitions and sales of pictures echoes the distancing enacted by the President of the RA, Frederic Leighton, mentioned above.

The RBSA and the RA allowed non-member artists to exhibit. In Manchester, all artists could exhibit at the RMI annual exhibitions, however, between 1859 and 1875, MAFA, a membership organisation similar in constitution to the RBSA and RA, comprised of academicians, associates and students, required exhibitors to have attended Manchester Academy training. Women art students were barred from MAFA's life drawing classes until 1875 and this excluded them from exhibiting at the Academy's exhibitions.³¹ Therefore, in comparison to the RA and MAFA, Birmingham provided greater opportunities for women artists to directly engage with the art market via exhibitions.

However, despite the opportunities in Birmingham, women artists' interaction with the art market was different and uneven in comparison to their male colleagues. This is clear in the difference in prices for exhibited artworks at the RBSA. An analysis of the published prices in the RBSA catalogues shows a difference in average prices for artworks by men and women artists. The average price of an artwork for sale at a sample of RBSA exhibitions between 1860 and 1909 was £29.4s. The average price for those by men artists was £32.16s

³⁰ Paula Gillett, *Worlds of Art. Painters in Victorian Society*, New Jersey, 1990, 43-7.

³¹ Nunn, 'Beyond the Parlour', 99; Sheila Dewsbury, *The Story So Far: The Manchester Academy of Fine Arts from 1859 to 2003*, Manchester, 2003.

and for women artists was £13.0.³² The average prices can be compared with another location such as Manchester. At four exhibitions during a comparable period in both Birmingham and Manchester, the average price for women artists was two-thirds less than the men's prices in both locations, despite the average prices overall in Manchester being about double those in Birmingham.³³ However, comparing prices by gender should include considerations of the uneven and circumscribed circumstances for women artists, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

An examination of the numbers and prices of paintings women artists offered for sale at RBSA exhibitions shows the level of their involvement with the art market. Appendix 3, Graph 1 shows the number of women artists and their artworks exhibited at RBSA exhibitions for a selection of years between 1860 and 1900. Most of the artworks had prices published in the exhibition catalogues. The graph shows a steady increase in engagement with the art market by women artists over time. For comparison, Appendix 4, Graph 1 shows the number of artworks by women artists for sale per year at the Manchester RMI exhibitions, which also published prices in their exhibition catalogues, for some of the years between 1886 and 1901. These figures show a different, descending trend. Manchester had two main exhibiting organisations at that time, the RMI and MAFA, and between the years 1880 and 1883 the Manchester Society of Women Painters held exhibitions in reaction to their unequal access to training and exhibiting at MAFA.³⁴ From 1884 MAFA

³² These figures have been calculated from fifteen RBSA exhibition catalogues for the following years – 1860, 1862, 1866, 1874, 1875, 1877, 1880, 1885, 1890, 1895 and 1909.

³³ The four Autumn exhibition dates compared were 1886, 1887, 1888 and 1889.

³⁴ Cherry, *Painting Women*, 69-70.

allowed women art students to attend life classes and participate in their exhibitions. This change may have attracted more women artists to MAFA post-1884 and hence may partly explain the non-linear trend of women exhibiting at the RMI.³⁵ In comparison to Manchester, women artists increased their interaction with the art market via the Birmingham RBSA exhibitions. This supports the argument that Birmingham was a relatively progressive location for women artists during the period of interest to this thesis.

Further analysis of women artists' engagement with the art market can be made by looking at the number and value of actual sales they made. An almost complete collection of RBSA exhibition catalogues with prices is available for the period under consideration for this thesis. However, information on the actual sales of art works is less complete. For a limited period, between 1859 and 1872, and covering twenty RBSA exhibitions, local newspapers published lists of paintings sold at the end of each exhibition's run.³⁶ Artists exhibiting at the RBSA sold their paintings either directly from the exhibition walls or by being selected as prizes by Art Union winning ticketholders. Lists of the paintings selected by prize winners were published alongside those sold directly from the exhibition.

Art Unions operated alongside art exhibitions in many locations around the country.³⁷ The Birmingham Art Union started in 1841 and merged with the Birmingham and Midland

³⁵ Further research is needed on this which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

³⁶ Published lists available for 20 exhibitions - annual exhibitions from 1859 to 1865 and the Spring and Autumn exhibitions from 1866 to 1872 but excluding 1863 annual exhibition.

³⁷ Lyndel Saunders King, *The Industrialization of Taste: Victorian England and the Art Union of London*, Michigan, 1982; Roger Smith, *The Art Union Movement in England c1835-1866*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980; Cordelia Amy Smith, *The Art Unions, Gambling and Culture 1834-1934*, unpublished PhD thesis, Birkbeck University of London, 2012.

Counties Art Union in 1842.³⁸ Art Unions gave an opportunity for a wider cross-section of people to own art for very little cost. This meant that people who would ordinarily not be able to afford paintings had a chance of taking one home. Sometimes the Art Union ballot winners immediately sold the paintings as can be seen in advertisements in the local papers. They would have been cashing-in on the recent publicity of the exhibitions. Winning ticket holders selected their prize and the above-average aesthetic knowledge of the population of Birmingham (as discussed earlier in this chapter) would have informed prize selections. Some prize winners might have had in-depth knowledge about the exhibiting artists and the value of their works; others might have made their choice purely on aesthetic preferences. Either way, art works by women artists were regularly selected as prizes and that was an important art market opportunity for those women artists.³⁹ Details of which paintings were selected as prizes, the value and who selected the prize were recorded after each ballot in the Birmingham newspapers between 1842 and 1873. The Art Union of Great Britain occasionally purchased pictures from RBSA exhibitions for its ballot that advertised tickets for sale across the nation meaning the paintings it selected were circulated nationally.⁴⁰ This demonstrates a further opportunity for Birmingham women artists to participate in the wider, national art scene.

As mentioned previously, information on paintings sold was published in local newspapers. The figures for the period from 1860 to 1872 show the number of paintings by women

³⁸ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 3 Oct 1842, 3.

³⁹ Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*.

⁴⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 Jan 1864, 2. However, there was controversy with the Art Union of Great Britain resulting in a formal investigation, see *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 June 1873, 6 and Smith, *The Art Union Movement in England*.

artists sold directly at RBSA exhibitions was 203 with a total value of £2,224.8s.⁴¹ The number sold via the Birmingham Art Union ballots was 74 with a total value of £588.10s.⁴² The total number of paintings sold by all artists, directly and via the Art Unions was 2,862.⁴³ Of this figure, women artists had 9.7% of the sales and men artists 90.3%. However, it is important to caution again that women and men artists did not have an equal relationship to the art world. Therefore, it is useful to consider the percentage of sales against the number of paintings exhibited, by gender. Appendix 4, Graph 2 shows the percentage of paintings sold (in blue), by gender, calculated from the total number exhibited (in orange), by gender. As can clearly be seen in the graph, women artists were selling an equivalent percentage of works exhibited as the men artists, and sometimes more, when the number of sales by gender is analysed against the number exhibited, by gender. For the vast difference between the number of art works exhibited by men and women you might expect there to be a corresponding difference in the number of art works sold. However, when calculating the number of art works sold as a percentage based on how many art works were exhibited, the result is somewhat surprising. Relative to the number of art works exhibited, the women artists sold approximately the same number of art works as their male colleagues.

⁴¹ Paintings sold at the exhibitions were listed in the local papers: *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 2 Feb 1861, 2; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 Jan 1862, 2; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 21 Jan 1863, 3; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 19 Jan 1864, 3; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 17 Jan 1865, 3; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 Jan 1866, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 June 1866, 6; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 17 Jan 1867, 5; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 13 June 1867, 6; *Birmingham Journal*, 18 Jan 1868, 11; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 11 June 1868, 4; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 21 Jan 1869, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 10 June 1869, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 Jan 1870, 5; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 16 June 1870, 5; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 18 Jan 1871, 5; *Birmingham Mail*, 8 June 1871, 3; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 Jan 1871, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 14 June 1872, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 Jan 1873, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Bayer and Page have demonstrated a similar trend in the average price of paintings sold for over £100 in the auction sales records of Algernon Graves and George Redford.⁴⁴ They list 42,117 sales in England between 17th March 1709 and 19th December 1913.⁴⁵ Their data show that the number of paintings with prices for women artists was 301 and for men artists was 34,496.⁴⁶ However, the average price by gender was £210 for women artists and £158 for men artists.⁴⁷ Their finding suggests that despite the significantly smaller number of sales, women artists were able to command a slightly higher average price. Their data further support a like-for-like comparison because they were also able to provide average painting size by gender with women artists' canvases as 645in.² and for men artists' canvases as 650in.².

The participation of women artists in Birmingham's art market was not limited to artists from Birmingham; women artists from all over England exhibited and sold works in Birmingham. A similar phenomenon also occurred in Manchester, but Birmingham had greater numbers. Appendix 4, Table 1 shows the numbers of women artists exhibiting in Birmingham and Manchester by location for Autumn exhibitions between 1886 and 1901. The artists' locations are based on their addresses published in the back of exhibition catalogues. The table shows that Birmingham had a greater number of women artists exhibiting overall, nearly double, with a total of 1,922 during that period compared to 979

⁴⁴ Bayer & Page, *The Development of the Art*.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

in Manchester. In Birmingham, 1,403 (73%) of those women artists were not local to Birmingham and in Manchester 731 (75%) not local to Manchester. These figures demonstrate that Birmingham and Manchester were popular locations for women artists from across the country to engage with the art market.

Furthermore, from the available data on art sales in Birmingham between 1860 and 1920, 2760 artworks by women artists were sold, including via the Art Union. Those data are comprised of 124 artists living in Birmingham and Warwickshire⁴⁸ and 136 from non-local locations such as London, Bath, Bradford, Bristol, Durham, Edinburgh, Surrey and Kent. Approximately half of the women artists who sold works were from beyond Birmingham. For these artists to exhibit at the RBSA they either had to bring their paintings to the exhibition themselves or go to the expense of having them safely transported.⁴⁹ The potential of a sale clearly made such effort and expense worthwhile. As detailed in chapter two, women artists from outside of Birmingham, exhibiting in Birmingham must have considered it worthwhile because of potential sales and building their reputation. An example of how exhibiting in Birmingham was valuable to women artists from outside of Birmingham is Agnes Bouvier (1842–1892), from London, who gained seven commissions because of her first exhibition at the RBSA.⁵⁰ This example supports the argument that

⁴⁸ Includes one from Coventry and six from Leamington.

⁴⁹ 'works of art themselves could travel quickly because of the ease and speed of transportation and the development of international networks of rail and shipping' (Anne Helmreich, 'Traversing Objects: The London Art Market at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', Charlotte Gould and Sophie Mesplède (eds), *Marketing in the British Isles, 1700 to Present*, London, 2012, 139).

⁵⁰ She gained a commission from Arthur Ryland, the Mayor of Birmingham. (Ellen Clayton, *English Female Artists: Volume 2*, London, 1876).

Birmingham was a progressive art environment for women artists, providing good opportunities for them to sell their art.

Section 4.1 above has examined women artists' participation in the Birmingham art market via the number of paintings and their prices. This chapter is further enriched by a case study approach to demonstrate how opportunities and involvement in the art market were experienced by women themselves. Mary Vernon Morgan (1846–1927) was elected as an Associate of the RBSA in 1882 and was the first woman member of the Birmingham Art Circle group.⁵¹ She participated in 113 RBSA exhibitions between 1862 and 1926, showing over 280 paintings, mostly for sale.⁵² At least 96 of her paintings were exhibited with no price for a variety of reasons such as they were already being sold or, perhaps, they were works she wanted to keep for herself, friends or family. Vernon Morgan mostly painted still life depictions of flowers, fruit and dead game birds but she also exhibited landscape scenes later in her career. An examination of the published prices for her paintings in the RBSA exhibition catalogues shows the price range for her paintings was between £1.10s and £60.0s. The average price was £11.17s. The total value of all her paintings with prices exhibited at the RBSA was £2,927.0s. Mary Vernon Morgan had a significant, consistent and long-term engagement with Birmingham's art market.

Florence Westwood Whitfield (1854–1926), the first woman Associate Member of the

⁵¹ Hill & Midgley, *The History of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, 62; Birmingham Art Circle, *Summer Exhibition of Oil and Water Color Paintings*, exhibition catalogue, May 1885.

⁵² Royal Birmingham Society of Artists exhibition catalogues 1862-1926.

RBSA, was also a prolific exhibitor of floral paintings at the RBSA exhibitions.⁵³ An examination of her published prices for exhibitions between 1873 and 1917 shows a range of £3.3s to £35.0s with an overall average price of £16.0s.⁵⁴ Her average price increased from £14.18s to £16.14s after becoming an Associate Member and this is evidence of the impact of art society membership for women artists engaging with the local art market.

Sophie Gengembre Anderson (1823–1903) was a well-known and prolific artist active during the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1871, she became the first living woman artist to have a painting purchased for an art gallery from public funds.⁵⁵ She lived and worked in France, America, Italy and England but had a connection to Birmingham with her regular participation in the RBSA exhibitions.⁵⁶ Between 1863 and 1899 she exhibited at twenty-eight RBSA exhibitions.⁵⁷ She is of interest to this chapter because the limited sales data from the RBSA exhibitions show that she sold six paintings in Birmingham that are listed in Appendix 4, Table 2. Her painting *The Story*, exhibited at the 1872 Autumn exhibition was the most expensive painting, by a woman artist, sold in Birmingham at that time.⁵⁸ It represents the extreme end of art world activity of women artists participating in Birmingham's art market via exhibition sales. Her paintings were also a frequent feature of art auctions in Birmingham.⁵⁹ Her participation in Birmingham exhibitions and the art

⁵³ *The Englishwoman's Review*, 15 April 1879, 169.

⁵⁴ Royal Birmingham Society of Artists exhibition catalogues 1873-1917.

⁵⁵ Her painting *Elaine* was purchased by the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. (Kate Nichols, 'A Cosmopolitan Victorian in the Midlands. Regional Collecting and the Work of Sophie Anderson (1823-1903)', *Midlands Art Papers*, 1, 2017-18).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Royal Birmingham Society of Artists exhibition catalogues 1863-1899.

⁵⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 Jan 1873, 7.

⁵⁹ See Appendix 4, Table 3.

market demonstrate the wider appeal of Birmingham to well-known women artists. There are other examples, such as Louise Jopling, Henrietta Ward and Emily Osborn, who also frequently exhibited in Birmingham and sold paintings at those exhibitions. These three different case studies considered together demonstrate the variety of art market activities women artists engaged in. They range from local women artists with prolific engagement to those from further afield choosing Birmingham to seek sales of their works.

4.2 Art Dealers, Auctions and Estate Sales

The elements of Birmingham's art market that women artists interacted with included art dealers, auctions and estate sales. Available primary source materials reveal transactional evidence of art by women artists. Sales records, auction advertisements and local newspaper reports demonstrate that artworks by women artists were bought and sold by art buyers in Birmingham, making women a meaningful part of the town's art market. Contemporary art dealers operated in a variety of ways, woven tightly in among the many threads of the art market.⁶⁰ For example, the *Art Journal* publication was edited by art dealers, and they used it to promote their activities.⁶¹ As mentioned previously, the influence of art dealers on the purchasing decisions of art buyers was more limited in Birmingham than other locations. Art dealers often operated as a buffer between an artist and a buyer. The analogy of a chaperone could be used, and this may have made it a more socially acceptable way for women artists to conduct business transactions.

⁶⁰ Hamilton, *A Strange Business*; Barbara Pezzini, 'The "Art" and the "Market" Elements of the Art Market: John Linnell, William Agnew and Artist-Dealer Relationships in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Journal for Art Market Studies*, 2:4, 2018; Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siecle Europe*, New Jersey, 1997, 53-4.

⁶¹ Marcus Huish was editor from 1880-92 and was also the manager of the Fine Art Society. David Croal Thomson was editor from 1893-1902 and also worked at the Groupil Gallery. (Helmreich, 'Traversing Objects', 135-146).

Art dealers often placed advertisements in local newspapers for their forthcoming auctions. They would frequently list the names of well-known artists to attract attention to their sales and these often included the names of women artists. An example is J. Hopwood, described as a carver, gilder and fine arts dealer, based at 4 Broad Street Corner, Birmingham but originally from Manchester. He held private exhibitions and often sold the post-exhibition stock via auctions.⁶² He sold art on behalf of clients and actively sought items in his advertisements, 'gentlemen having Pictures to Dispose of may enter them in J. H.'s Fortnightly Sales. Terms moderate.'⁶³ Hopwood used premises at the Auction Mart and Art Gallery, 294 High Street, West Bromwich, circulating his stock to these locations to reach a wider audience.⁶⁴ Hopwood worked with auctioneers such as John Ward who also had a private art gallery and sale room on 8 Cannon Street, Birmingham and at times held art auctions on behalf of other art dealers such as J. Hopwood. This indicates a close-knit and cooperative community of art dealers and auctioneers in the town.

The lists of artists' names in auction advertisements would often feature locally well-known artists: no doubt these reputations were rooted in their RBSA exhibition activities. Appendix 4, Table 3 is a sample list of Birmingham art auctions that included artworks by women artists. They were identified via newspaper advertisements that included the names of featured artists. Mary Vernon Morgan is mentioned in at least six of Hopwood's

⁶² *Birmingham Daily Post*, 26 May 1888, 1.

⁶³ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 23 Sept 1889, 1.

⁶⁴ *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle*, 24 Aug 1889, 4.

auctions.⁶⁵ Vernon Morgan's reputation was known beyond the Birmingham town centre and into the bordering towns. The auctioneers Watkins and Powell employed the same tactic in advertisements for their art sales in Walsall. A list of twenty-six artists was displayed to advertise their auction of 120 'valuable oil paintings' in 1887 and included Mary Vernon Morgan as a headliner.⁶⁶ This indicates that her fame and reputation in Birmingham and the surrounding towns were significant. Her fame was used even further afield from the Birmingham region when, in 1885, Messrs. W. H. and J. A. Eadon held an auction of 150 'highly-important' modern paintings in Sheffield. Their advertising campaign listed artists that they hoped would catch the eye of potential buyers and included Mary Vernon Morgan.⁶⁷ Anna Blunden Martino, who moved to Birmingham later in life, was listed in the advertisement for an auction of the collection of Mr William Cox held by Messrs. Foster in Pall Mall, London.⁶⁸ She was the lead headline artist in an advertisement for the auction of George Bacon, Esq. art collection held in Leeds.⁶⁹ Appendix 4, Table 3 shows that artworks by women artists were included in different types of art auctions and sales such as dealer, estate and private collection sales. Some of the auctions were held due to the collector relocating. For example, Mr James Watkley held an auction of his art collection in February 1895 due to his forthcoming relocation to Bournemouth. Mary Vernon Morgan is listed in the advertisement for the auction.⁷⁰ In 1877 J. Barrows held an auction of his oil painting collection because he was changing his residence. The auction

⁶⁵ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 30 May 1883, 1.

⁶⁶ *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle*, 17 Dec 1887, 4.

⁶⁷ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 1885, 4.

⁶⁸ *The Athenaeum*, 17 Dec 1864.

⁶⁹ *The Athenaeum*, 10 April 1875.

⁷⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Feb 1895, 1.

catalogue lists eight paintings by women artists including Miss Braken, Mrs Oliver and the sisters Ellen, Norah, Florence and Mary Vernon.⁷¹ The sale of paintings by local artists, including women artists, to a local audience suggests that the reputation and therefore value of the artworks might not transport so well to other locations. However, the table does include some auctions held further afield and shows that art by Birmingham women artists was included in local and national art markets.

The newspaper advertisements and catalogues for dealer auctions for the estates of wealthy Birmingham citizens featured the names of women artists. These provide evidence of who was collecting the work of women artists and serve as further evidence of women artists' participation in the art market. These collectors were typically middle- and upper-class citizens living in areas such as Edgbaston and Handsworth who formed part of the social scene and milieu of Birmingham at that time.⁷² The connection between the collectors and the artists whose work they purchased also echoes Birmingham's art world socialising and networking, discussed further in Chapter Five. The names of collectors also appeared from time to time in newspaper reports of art-based social events.⁷³

The art market activity of collectors and women artists can also be seen via the exhibitions held by private collectors. In 1899 Sir John Jaffray (1818–1901), a local newspaper proprietor, held an exhibition of his private collection at his home, Park Grove in Edgbaston

⁷¹ Thomas & Betteridge, *Sale Catalogue of Oil Paintings etc., property of John Barrow*, auction catalogue, Birmingham, 13 Sept 1877.

⁷² Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*.

⁷³ The social aspects of Birmingham's art scene are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

including artworks by Rosa Bonheur (1822–1899), Myra Bunce (1854–1918) and Annie Feray Mutrie (1826–1893). All three artists exhibited several times at the RBSA and that may have been where Jaffray purchased their artworks. Myra Bunce was from Birmingham and evidence of her work, and that of the other two listed artists, in a large private collection demonstrates further that wealthy Birmingham art collectors admired and invested in art by women artists.⁷⁴

Private collectors sometimes held auctions of their painting collections for a variety of reasons such as moving locations or fund raising. Chapter 60 of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871) begins with a delightful description of an at-home auction of the furniture, books and pictures belonging to Edwin Larcher, Esq. as a result of his great success and relocation to an already-furnished mansion near Riverston,

At Middlemarch in those times a large sale was regarded as a kind of festival. There was a table spread with the best cold eatables, as at a superior funeral; and facilities were offered for that generous drinking of cheerful glasses which might lead to generous and cheerful bidding for undesirable articles. [...] In short, the auction was as good as a fair, and drew all classes with leisure at command: to some, who risked making bids in order simply to raise prices, it was almost equal to betting at the races.⁷⁵

The location of Eliot's novel, set in the fictional Midlands manufacturing town of Middlemarch, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, allows for an imaginative connection between her story and what similar auctions held in Birmingham might have been like. The sociability and merriment of the occasion is well illustrated and suggests a leisured middle- and upper-class audience with money to spend on art for its homes. The

⁷⁴ Sir John Jaffray, *Catalogue of Pictures at Park Grove*, Birmingham, 1899.

⁷⁵ George Eliot and Rosemary Ashton (introducer), *Middlemarch*, London, 2003, 602-3.

auction host cleverly understood their clientele by using a social gathering to generate profitable sales, blurring the lines between commerce and the domestic environment. This blurring of business and home, public and private, provided a less prohibitive space for women and the associated financial transactions for their artworks.

In addition to exhibitions and auctions of private collections, estate auctions provide evidence of the art market activity of artworks by women artists. Appendix 4, Table 3 includes posthumous auctions of private art collections that included artworks by women artists. Six of them mention Mary Vernon Morgan and/or Florence Westwood Whitfield in their newspaper advertisements. The deceased were often local industrialists and local business owners, providing evidence of the collectors who purchased art works by local women artists.⁷⁶ In 1891 the estate auction for William Marston Warden, a wealthy iron merchant, was held at his residence, Fairlawn, Westbourne Road, Edgbaston and Florence Westwood Whitfield was listed as a headline artist in the newspaper advertisement.⁷⁷ The estate of W. W. Boulton, glass manufacturing business owner, of Audnam House, Stourbridge, was auctioned, and the advertisements also included Florence Westwood Whitfield as a headline artist.⁷⁸ An auction in 1939 of the estate of Charles Rainsford, a local manufacturing business owner, included paintings by Mary Vernon Morgan and Florence Westwood Whitfield.⁷⁹ The names of the same well-known local women artists crop-up

⁷⁶ This builds on MacLeod's work on prominent middle-class art collectors in Birmingham and Manchester (MacLeod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*).

⁷⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 March 1891, 1; *The Athenaeum*, 4 April 1891.

⁷⁸ *County Advertiser & Herald for Staffordshire and Worcestershire*, 29 Oct 1892, 1.

⁷⁹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 June 1939, 2.

time and time again, alongside those of more nationally famous women artists. This reinforces the value of reputations of national and local artists to the local art market.

Auctions were held on behalf of artists for reasons such as relocation, to reduce their stock and, of course, to increase their funds. These are further examples of the ways in which women artists participated in the art market both directly and indirectly. For example, the artist William H. Vernon (1820–1909), father of Mary Vernon Morgan, held at least two auctions of his own works that included paintings by his daughters; two paintings by Ellen Vernon in 1888 and in 1890, three paintings by Mary Vernon Morgan, three by Florence Vernon and two by Ellen Vernon.⁸⁰ The Birmingham artist John Steeple moved to London in 1874 following the death of his wife. Just prior to his move he held a picture sale in Birmingham that included the sale of six water-colour drawings by his daughter Georgina Steeple, who was twenty-six years old at the time, for a grand total of £51.5s. Her involvement with the art market started from her earliest days as an artist.⁸¹

Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière's artistic reputation and popularity grew throughout her career and was large enough to warrant a solo auction sale of her works. It was held by Horatio Lane of Temple Row, Birmingham on 5th Nov 1891. A large advertisement was taken out in the local newspapers and included at the bottom, 'Her Majesty the Queen commanded that the collection be submitted to her at Buckingham Palace and was

⁸⁰ Ludlow, Roberts & Weller, *Catalogue of Pictures and Drawings by W. H. Vernon*, auction catalogue, 8 May 1888; Ludlow, Roberts & Weller, *Catalogue of Pictures and Drawings by W. H. Vernon*, auction catalogue, Birmingham, 22 April 1890.

⁸¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 19 June 1874, 4.

graciously pleased to purchase three of the works'. The leveraging of royal patronage as an advertising tactic is clear and comes a few years after Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière and her husband undertook a publicly advertised art trip to Italy following in the direct footsteps of Queen Victoria and Princess Beatrice.⁸² It also pre-dates Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière and her husband undertaking an art project within Kew Gardens.⁸³

4.3 Expanded Art Commerce and Business

Typically, art market studies have focused on the financial transactions, the buying and selling, of fine art objects such as paintings and sculpture. For the purposes of this thesis, and to fully understand the breadth of women's involvement in art commerce, it is necessary to expand the area of enquiry to include a wider range of financial transactions and businesses. This aligns with the wider definition of 'art' discussed in the introduction to this thesis, to include crafts and designs. The sale of copyright of an artwork was an area that Birmingham women artists engaged with as a further means of income generation from their creative endeavours. The modern intellectual property framework emerged during the period of 1850 to 1911. The developments in technology, such as engraving, photography and other forms of image reproduction, opened up new opportunities for artists to make money from their creative works.⁸⁴ For example, in February 1881, the artist Florence Westwood Whitfield sold the copyright of a 'drawing in colours, a glass cup holding sprays of light and dark fuschias' to John Bucher of 33 Whittall Street,

⁸² The 1879 trip to Italy is discussed further in Chapter Three.

⁸³ The Kew Gardens project is also discussed further in Chapter Three.

⁸⁴ Elena Cooper, *Art and Modern Copyright. The Contested Image*, Cambridge, 2018.

Birmingham.⁸⁵ It is not known how much Whitfield sold the copyright for or how Bucher used the image. It is interesting to note that Whitfield sold the copyright a year before the 1882 Married Women's Property Act that gave women the right to own and control property in her own right. This suggests that Whitfield viewed this copyright sale, as part of her family's income. The selling of copyrights provided an additional and diverse source of income for professional artists.

Florence Stern (1868—1952) was an artist, decorative metalworker and silversmith from Birmingham, and a student at the Birmingham School of Art. She often exhibited her art objects and paintings in Birmingham and across the country in locations such as Liverpool and London. In 1901, Florence Stern registered her own hallmark, the initials 'FS', at the Birmingham Assay Office. Her maker's mark could then be combined with at least three other marks to form a full, traditional hallmark stamp. Fig. 41 is of a silver spoon with a tourmaline gemstone set in the handle made by Florence Stern in 1901 and purchased by the Birmingham Assay Office in 1902 for its collection of silver objects made in Birmingham. The purchase of the spoon signifies an understanding of it as a good example of a well-made Birmingham object and validation of the high quality of Florence Stern's work. Fig. 42 shows a close-up detail of the reverse of the spoon's handle showing the object's hallmark. The hallmarks, read from left to right, are Florence Stern's unique 'FS' maker's mark, the anchor that is Birmingham's Assay Office's mark, the lion for sterling silver and a lower case 'b' for the year 1901. Registering her own maker's hallmark and having her

⁸⁵ *Register of Proprietors of Copyright in Paintings, Drawings and Photographs*, National Archives ref. COPY 1/52/285

objects tested and stamped by the Assay Office provided a guarantee to the purchaser of the standard of purity of silver used and the provenance of the work. This would make the object more valuable and desirable to purchase. Therefore, it can be argued that Florence Stern's registering of her own hallmark was a professional and commercial strategy, intended to enhance the saleability of her made objects and enabling Stern to put a higher price on the object than she would without the hallmark.

Women artists from Birmingham were also involved in commissioned art projects which demonstrate a further development of their interactions with the wider art market. In 1903 a group of Birmingham artists was commissioned by Countess Beauchamp to decorate the chapel at Madresfield Court, Malvern as a wedding gift to her husband. The artists Georgina Gaskin, Effie Ward and Edith Payne were part of the group.⁸⁶ Gaskin and Ward worked on the silver and enamel alter cross and Payne carried out gilt work on the chapel's reredos. Two of the Munn sisters, daughters of the Rector of Madresfield, executed embroidery work for the alter frontal and two banners. It is not known how much the artists were paid for their work, but it is an example of Birmingham women artists exchanging their artistic productions for financial recompense.

Another example of a commissioned artwork by a Birmingham women artist occurred in Victoria, the capital city of British Columbia, Canada and was unfortunately surrounded by some controversy. In 1887 the local government in Victoria commissioned the artist, Mr T.

⁸⁶ FitzGerald, *Women, Craft and the Object*, 118-119

J. A. Tiedemann, to 'engross' the golden jubilee address to Her Majesty Queen Victoria.⁸⁷ However, when it came to paying the bill for the commission, the government balked at Mr Tiedemann's work and refused to pay him. They then commissioned the artist Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière to create an alternative version and her work was considered 'very fine'.⁸⁸ Both versions were displayed in the windows of rival shops for the public's inspection. Perhaps Georgina hesitated to become involved in such a dispute but clearly the desire to undertake paid work took precedence. The controversy of the commission aside, it serves as a further example of a Birmingham woman artist being paid to create an artwork and is an example of an interaction with the wider art market.

The artist Edith Linnell was a jewellery designer and maker with her own art jewellery business. She was born in Birmingham and studied at the school of art in the 1890s and 1900s. In 1903 she won a gold medal at the National Competition of schools of art. Linnell specialised in art jewellery, decorative metalwork and ivory carving. Her jewellery business was initially based in Birmingham but later had a showroom on Sloane Street, Knightsbridge, London. Linnell used a variety of strategies and tactics for her art business. One example was making and selling of artistic war souvenirs that were popular jewellery objects for women during the wartime. The souvenirs, also called 'sweetheart brooches', were worn by women to show publicly their support and affiliation to the regiments of the enlisted men in their families.⁸⁹ Linnell leveraged the public's feelings about the war to

⁸⁷ *The Victoria Daily Times*, 11 June 1887, 1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Penelope Streeter, *Symbolic Jewels. The Military Sweetheart Brooch in Wartime Britain*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2018.

make and sell art jewellery and she received positive praise for it in newspaper articles. There was a considerable amount of war jewellery on the market with differing levels of quality. However, Edith Linnell's was considered to be of the highest quality and was recognised by the Victoria and Albert Museum when it was put on permanent exhibition there.⁹⁰ An art jewellery business required capital to purchase the materials needed for making including gemstones. Linnell undertook international travel to source high quality gemstones for her jewellery. It was suggested that this commitment to her products gave them the reputation of being of the finest quality.

Women were also involved in Birmingham's art commerce via businesses of supply and support connected to the art world. Jennifer Aston has examined the overlooked involvement of women entrepreneurs in England in the nineteenth century. She has argued that women's involvement in business challenges understandings of their retreat from the public realm of commerce. One example related to Birmingham's art world was Penelope Gore (1801—1888), the proprietor of an artist's repository business at 28 Colmore Row, Birmingham from 1859 until 1869.⁹¹ She sold artists' stationary, pencils and brushes and hired out drawings and prints for artists to practice from. She was known for supplying art paint brushes to Queen Victoria.⁹² Gore would have known many of the local Birmingham artists through supplying them with the materials they needed for their practices. Her shop, less than a five-minute walk to the RBSA gallery on New Street, would have been a location

⁹⁰ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 April 1916, 9.

⁹¹ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 13 June 1869, 3.

⁹² Aston, *Female Entrepreneurship*, 153.

where artists crossed paths and probably discussed art topics. Art-related businesses such as Gore's were a part of the expanded art world of the town.

The examples of art commerce discussed in this chapter section do not fit with traditional definitions and academic focus of the art market. The examples given are art-based activities that involved financial transactions and income generation for the artists and others connected to the art world. An expanded understanding of the art market has been used in this chapter to fully explore women artists' interactions which were often beyond the usual boundaries of the art market.

4.4 Public Art Collections

BMAG opened in 1885 and was also a component of the local art market, purchasing artworks by women artists for its permanent collection. In 1891 BMAG purchased, via the Art Gallery Purchase Fund, Helen Allingham's paintings *Valewood Farm, Haslemere, Surrey* and *Old Cottages at Pinner*.⁹³ In 1918 BMAG added Alice Maude Taite Fanner's *Yachting in the Solent* to its collection.⁹⁴ These are examples of a public institution using public funds to acquire artworks and are a further example of works by women artists as transactions in the art market.

There are artworks by women artists in BMAG's collection that were bequeathed by private collectors. For example, Sophie Anderson's *The Children's Story Book* was bequeathed by

⁹³ Public Catalogue Foundation, *Oil Paintings in Public Ownership in Birmingham*, London, 2008.

⁹⁴ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 April 1918, 4; Public Catalogue Foundation, *Oil Paintings in Public Ownership in Birmingham*.

Mrs Thurton in 1892.⁹⁵ The accession histories of such artworks demonstrate previous art market transactions. A portrait of Thomas Wright Hill by Mary Martha Pearson (1798–1871) was bequeathed to BMAG by Frederick Hill in 1897. Pearson was a portrait painter from London who frequently exhibited at the Royal Academy and was an early member of the Society of British Artists. It is reasonable to assume that the portrait of Thomas Wright Hill, a mathematician and schoolmaster from Worcestershire, was a paid commission and at that point was an example of an art market transaction. Kate Bunce's painting *Musica* was presented to BMAG by Sir John Holder in 1897. It is reasonable to assume that he purchased the painting, perhaps directly from the artist.⁹⁶ These examples demonstrate that public collections were also an important element of the art market. Barbara Pezzini has established the important interaction between the commercial art dealer, Agnews, and the National Gallery's public collection.⁹⁷ The involvement of women artists in these interactions can be traced via the public collections' accession histories. Chapter five develops the significance of women's involvement in public collections via philanthropy and legacy building.

4.5 National and International Art Markets

Women artists from Birmingham interacted with national art markets. At least 90 women artists from Birmingham interacted with the London art market via exhibited objects, for sale at ACES exhibitions.⁹⁸ Furthermore, many Birmingham women artists exhibited at the

⁹⁵ The painting was exhibited at the RBSA 1872 Autumn exhibition as *The Story* and sold for £210 at the exhibition. (Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, *Autumn Exhibition of Paintings*, 1872).

⁹⁶ No evidence has been found of it being publicly exhibited before 1897.

⁹⁷ Pezzini, *Making a Market*.

⁹⁸ *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society Exhibition Catalogues*, 1888-1916.

RA. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the RA did not publish prices for the exhibited artworks in their catalogues. They held a separate price list available to view within the gallery spaces. From this limited material there is evidence of at least ten sales made at RA exhibitions by women artists from Birmingham.⁹⁹ The first recorded was in 1876 when Minnie Townley sold *Fir-trees, Malvern Wells* for £7.7s.¹⁰⁰ The most expensive was in 1879 when Georgina Steeple L'Aubinière sold *Between the Daylight and the Dark* for £84.¹⁰¹ Mary Vernon Morgan sold at least three paintings; in 1884 *On the Edge of a Cornish Cliff* for £20, in 1885 *Marguerites and Thistle-Down* for £21 and in 1890 *Apple Blossom* for £20.¹⁰² Appendix 4, Table 4 is a sample list of sold paintings at the RA by women artists from Birmingham.

Women artists from Birmingham also exhibited their artworks for sale at commercial exhibition and gallery spaces in London. In 1905 Mary Vernon Morgan held an exhibition with her artist brother-in-law, Walter Morgan (1848–1920) at the Walker Gallery, New Bond Street, London.¹⁰³ The exhibition received attention from many London newspapers, which would have generated valuable publicity and possibly sales.¹⁰⁴ Also in 1905, the 'well-known Birmingham lady', Rosa Wallis held an exhibition at Graves's Gallery, Pall Mall, London.¹⁰⁵ Agnes M. Ellis from King's Norton, Birmingham held a solo exhibition of her

⁹⁹ The RA Research Library holds a collection of original 'Master' catalogues with sales notes.

¹⁰⁰ Royal Academy 1876 Exhibition Master Catalogue, RAA/SEC/23/12/17, 11.

¹⁰¹ Royal Academy 1879 Master Catalogue, RAA/SEC/23/12/20, 34.

¹⁰² Royal Academy 1884 Master Catalogue, RAA/SEC/23/12/25, 36; Royal Academy 1885 Master Catalogue, RAA/SEC/23/12/26, 22; Royal Academy 1890 Master Catalogue, RAA/SEC/23/12/31/2, 32.

¹⁰³ *Morning Post*, 17 March 1905, 9; *The Queen*, 18 March 1905; *Morning Post*, 20 March 1905, 7; *Globe*, 22 March 1905, 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 14 March 1905, 4. It is likely that this Rosa Wallis was the daughter of George Wallis, the Keeper of Fine Art Collection at South Kensington Museum.

water-colour drawings at the Sphinx Gallery, Pall Mall, London.¹⁰⁶ Birmingham women artists sometimes engaged with the London art market in conjunction with others, but they also demonstrated resolve and confidence in the business of selling their art by holding solo exhibitions and pursuing sales.

In 1891 Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière held an exhibition at the Shepherd's Gallery, King Street in the St. James area of London. The artworks that did not sell at the exhibition were later auctioned in Birmingham by Horatio Lane.¹⁰⁷ Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich have observed that locations outside London, such as Birmingham and Liverpool, served as secondary markets for London artists. Paintings that were unsold at London exhibitions were sent to the provinces for another attempt.¹⁰⁸ Georgina Steeple deployed the same tactic, sending her unsold painting to her hometown for auction. The two-stranded approach demonstrates a determination to sell her artworks with no reservation about engaging publicly with the art market.

Georgina's career involved a variety of tactics including partnership with her husband, and publicity-enhancing connections to royalty. Georgina and Constant Auguste Ceartien de L'Aubinière (1844–1910) married in 1874 and their thirty-five-year marriage was also an effective and productive art-business partnership. They created, exhibited and sold art works as individual artists and undertook joint art-business projects together. At least two

¹⁰⁶ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 24 Nov 1913, 4.

¹⁰⁷ This is mentioned earlier in this chapter. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Nov 1891, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, 'Epilogue. Reframing the "International Art Market"', Baetens & Lyna, *Art Crossing Borders*, 327-341.

of their projects sought publicity-generating connections to Queen Victoria. In 1896, the couple produced a book titled, *The Poetry of Kew Gardens* that reproduced twenty-four paintings and included an introduction and short history by W. T. Thiselton-Dyer (1843–1928), botanist and director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The couple were granted permission to paint in the gardens, whenever they desired, by Mr Thiselton-Dyer. They were also granted special permission to paint the Queen’s Cottage, not available to the general public.¹⁰⁹ The first copy of the book was gifted to Queen Victoria with much publicity in the national press. The original paintings were exhibited for sale at the North Gallery, Kew Gardens. The book gifted to Queen Victoria is still in the Royal Collection Trust.¹¹⁰ The couple harnessed the opportunity for marketing their works via the most famous art patron in the country with newspaper articles about the book-gift to Queen Victoria gaining valuable publicity for their sale exhibition.¹¹¹

Georgina and Constant also purposefully participated in international art markets, travelling to France, Italy, American and Canada to create, exhibit and sell artworks. Jan Dirk Baetens and Dries Lyna have examined the increased internationalization of the art market during the nineteenth century.¹¹² They analyse the multiplicity of ways this happened across various sites, contexts and borders. However, they have not included the activities of women artists such as Georgina Steeple de L’Aubinière.¹¹³ In 1882 she travelled

¹⁰⁹ *The Sketch*, 17 March 1897, 332.

¹¹⁰ Royal Collection Trust, www.rct.uk/collection/search#/3/collection/1076911/the-poetry-of-kew-gardens-from-paintings-by-m-and-mme-c-a-de-laubiniere-including [accessed 17 Sept 2019].

¹¹¹ *London Evening Standard*, 24 Aug 1896, 2; *The Sketch*, 17 March 1897, 332.

¹¹² Baetens & Lyna, *Art Crossing Borders*.

¹¹³ They do give some mention to women art collectors.

to America with her husband for the purpose of creating, exhibiting and selling paintings. They were possibly wanting to take advantage of the rapid expansion of the American art market at this time.¹¹⁴ Baetens and Lyna note that import and export duties and even bans made international art trade difficult.¹¹⁵ Perhaps the de L'Aubinières took themselves abroad to circumnavigate such difficulties. The couple were adept at using a variety of methods to engage with the local art markets to generate publicity and sales, and held at least eight sale exhibitions and auctions in five different locations across North America during their seven years on the continent. Their activities were widely publicised in local newspapers and the publicity was leveraged to generate exposure and sales. The L'Aubinières landed in New York in October 1882 with a newspaper announcement of their arrival including their intention to hold an exhibition that winter.¹¹⁶ A few years later, in June 1884, they advertised an auction of their paintings in Chicago at Elison, Flersheim & Co.'s art gallery with Constant de L'Aubinière conducting the sale.¹¹⁷ This may have been a tactic to enhance their reputation with local art buyers, endowing authenticity to their artworks. Between 1885 and 1886 the de L'Aubinières were in San Francisco where they participated in social activities to bolster their connections to potential art buyers. In Dec 1885 it was reported that a 'Lady Artists' exhibition was to be held and Georgina de L'Aubinière was listed as a member of the executive committee. It is likely that she exhibited works too.¹¹⁸ In March and April 1886 the de L'Aubinières held two 'music and art' evenings at their studio in the Phelan Building, San Francisco: 'the rooms were made

¹¹⁴ Swinth, *Painting Professionals*.

¹¹⁵ Baetens & Lyna, *Art Crossing Borders*, ch 1.

¹¹⁶ *The Times-Picayune*, 19 Oct 1882, 9.

¹¹⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, 24 June 1884, 8.

¹¹⁸ *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 Dec 1885, 3.

very attractive by the tasteful arrangement of flowers and bric-a-brac, and the paintings and sketches of M. and Mme. de l'Aubinière, with which the walls were covered'. Clearly, an ambition of the evening was to integrate socialising and cultural pursuits to enhance exposure and potential sales of their paintings.¹¹⁹ The evening also included a tombola, 'a pretty landscape by M. de L'Aubinière was drawn for by the guests, each of whom was furnished with a numbered card'. For their second 'music and art' evening, the tombola prize was 'to have a portrait painted by the hostess'.¹²⁰ This demonstrates that the desired exposure was for both Georgina's and Constant's art and reinforces the idea that they worked together, equally, as an art-business team.

In November 1886, the couple travelled to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and undertook a further variety of social and art market engagements.¹²¹ One of their strategies to generate greater exposure involved displaying examples of their paintings in local shop windows, making them visible to people walking past thereby providing a greater level of exposure than could be had if they were inside gallery buildings.¹²² In 1887 the de L'Aubinières presented the editor of the *Victoria Daily Times* newspaper a portfolio of photographs of their oil paintings of views of local scenery. Copies of the portfolio were offered for sale with \$1 from each sale donated to the Jubilee Hospital.¹²³ Their offer received mention and publicity in the newspaper and no doubt their charitable act encouraged sales. This demonstrates a savvy understanding of how to endear themselves

¹¹⁹ *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 March 1886, 2.

¹²⁰ *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 April 1886, 2.

¹²¹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 3 Nov 1887, 1.

¹²² *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 June 1887, 4.

¹²³ *The Victoria Daily Times*, 17 June 1887, 1.

to the local, art buying population. In 1888 the couple were in Montreal with an auction held by M. Hicks & Co. in which one of Georgina's painting *The Harvest of the Poor* was described as 'probably the finest water color in the world'. This was a confident statement to make and appeared to have the desired effect because it was later reported that the painting was purchased by Sir Donald Alexander Smith, 1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal and Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom (1820–1914).¹²⁴ In 1900, the painting was mentioned in an article about Lord Strathcona's London residence.¹²⁵ The case study example of Georgina Steeple de L'Aubinière demonstrates how a women artist from Birmingham actively participated in local, national and international art markets. Her art career involved travelling and socialising in many locations and fostered the creation, exhibition and sale of her art.¹²⁶

In conclusion, this chapter provides evidence that Birmingham women artists participated in a wide range of art market activities across multiple locations. Their involvement ranged from the traditional art market activities of exhibiting and selling paintings to commercial activities in an expanded realm of art commerce and business. These professional strategies and tactics shared the intention to promote and enhance art-based financial transactions. This wider knowledge of women's commercial art world endeavours is an important expansion of the field of art market studies. Women's conduct in art commerce was shaped by their gender and required a range of tactics and strategies such as

¹²⁴ A. A. den Otter, 'Smith, Donald Alexander, first Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 6 Jan 2011, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36132.

¹²⁵ *The Winnipeg Tribune*, 19 March 1900, 4.

¹²⁶ Sociability is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

partnerships and group projects, often with family members, blending social occasions with sales. However, as the artist case studies discussed show, despite the challenges they achieved sales that enhanced their professional status. This status and fame warranted their names being used as headliners in art dealer advertisements. The art market across local, national and international borders was traversed by Birmingham women artists. Their pursuits were part of the multiple ways the art market developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

CHAPTER FIVE – SOCIABILITY & PHILANTHROPY

Women were involved in Birmingham's art culture in many ways beyond their activities as artists. The impact of their socialising and philanthropic activities have not been fully recognised and this chapter, organised in two sections, examines their influence. Section one explores their socialising and networking as students and artists undertaking field trips and participating in organised social events such as *conversazioni*. Section two considers the impact of women's art world philanthropic activities such as donating art works to Birmingham's public collections, giving substantial financial support to key art facilities such as the School of Art and the wider connections between art philanthropy and civic charities.

5.1 Women, Art and Socialising

The germ of a beautiful sisterhood in Art, of which we have all dreamed long, and by which association we might be enabled to do noble things.¹

Anna Mary Howitt's (1824–1884) quote succinctly expresses a desire for an empowering, supportive and creative community of women.² Many women artists in Birmingham were part of similar, informal communities, and this chapter section will demonstrate how their affinities were established and maintained by sociability and shared interests in art. Socialising and networking were a vital aspect of Birmingham's civic culture in the second half of the nineteenth century.³ The participants were overwhelmingly from the middle-

¹ Anna Mary Howitt, *An Art-Student in Munich*, Boston, 1854, 95.

² Anna Mary Howitt was an artist, writer and feminist.

³ Anne B. Rodrick, *Self-Help and Civic Culture: Citizenship in Victorian Birmingham*, London, 2019; Toshihiko Iwama, 'Shaping Civic Culture Through Public Discussion: The Debating Societies of Birmingham, c. 1850-1890', *Midland History*, 41:1, 2 Jan 2016, 57-70; Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art*; Hartnell, 'Art and Civic Culture'; Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, New York, 1963.

classes who relied on social occasions for the formation and maintenance of their identities and civic aspirations.⁴ An artist's identity, reputation and career depended on social contact with patrons, art dealers, colleagues and the wider public.⁵ Art socialising involved a layering of professional and private lives; an intersection of personal, private and public activities that informed and supported art practices. Societal constraints could regulate women's access to the world beyond the domestic sphere, making socialising problematic for some women.⁶ However, as this section will demonstrate, women artists were able to negotiate the limitations to become active and vital participants in Birmingham's vibrant art milieu despite the gendered social restrictions. Birmingham women artists formed friendship groups, went on art trips together and participated in social art events for the Birmingham School of Art, the RBSA and the wider community. It is not possible to understand Birmingham's art world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries without including women's sociability.

⁴ Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class. Ritual and authority and the English industrial city 1840-1914*, Manchester, 2000; Michael E. Rose, 'Culture, Philanthropy and the Manchester Middle Classes', A. J. Kidd & K. W. Roberts (eds), *City, Class and Culture. Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester*, Manchester, 1985; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, London, 1987; Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism. Middle-class identity in Britain 1800-1940*, Manchester, 1999; Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects. The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-century England*, Cambridge, 1994; Graeme Morton, Boudien de Vries and R. J. Morris (eds), *Civil Society, Associations and Urban Places: Class, Nation and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Aldershot, 2006; Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives. Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain*, New Haven, 2003.

⁵ Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*; Hamilton, *A Strange Business*.

⁶ Martha Vicinus (ed.), *Suffer and Be Still. Women in the Victorian Age*, Indiana, 1972; Martha Vicinus (ed.), *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, Indiana, 1977; Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place.*; Walker, 'Vista of Pleasure', 70-85; Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Basingstoke, 2001; Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens. Women Gender, and Political Culture in Britain 1815-1867*, Oxford, 2009; Susan Moller Okin, 'Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 11:1, Winter 1982; Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*; Lynn Linton, 'Unchaperoned', *The Queen*, 16 Dec 1893, 31.

The Birmingham School of Art and the RBSA were key art institutions in the town and so were locations that enabled opportunities for women artists to encounter other artists and form bonds with each other. Alan Crawford has demonstrated the importance of the Birmingham School of Art as a communal location that enabled the flourishing of the Arts and Crafts movement in Birmingham. Crawford's premise prioritises the cooperative relationships and friendships amongst men artists in Birmingham, 'the talented artist-craftsmen known as 'The Birmingham Group''.⁷ This chapter section extends Crawford's argument by demonstrating that women art students, artists and talented craftspeople, were also key participants in the distinctive cooperative artist community in Birmingham. This thesis employs a wider remit than Crawford's focus on the Arts and Crafts movement and is uncircumscribed by any specific art movement or style which enables a fuller understanding of women artists art socialising activities.

Socialising enabled and empowered women to do things in groups that they might not have otherwise done individually.⁸ The specific phenomenon of socialising and networking amongst women artists in various contexts and other locations such as London and Scotland has had some scholarly attention. It has drawn attention to the importance of kinship and friendship to the development of women artists' careers.⁹ It shows that women artists formed sophisticated networks, sometimes with shared political commitments

⁷ Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, 28.

⁸ Philippa Levine, 'Love, Friendship, and Feminism in Later 19th-Century England', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13:1-2, 1990, 63-78; Marcus, *Between Women*; Deborah Epstein Nord, 'Neither pairs nor odd, female community in late nineteenth-century London', *Signs*, 15, 1990, 733-754; Pat O'Connor, *Friendships Between Women: A Critical Review*, Hemel Hempstead, 1992; Liz Stanley, *Feminism and Friendship*, Manchester, 1985; Vicinus, *Independent Women*.

⁹ Cherry, *Painting Women*; Deborah Cherry, *Beyond the Frame. Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900*, London, 2000.

alongside professional ambitions.¹⁰ In a society organised and regulated by gender differences, women, more particularly those of the middle-classes, were able to navigate constraints as a group that would be a risk if alone.¹¹ This included geographical mobility and financial independence via a layering of personal and professional strategies.¹² In Birmingham, the School of Art enabled friendships and networks to develop and flourish, fostered by social activities and shared interests. The informal, friendship networks enabled women art students to develop connections and opportunities beyond the boundaries of the School of Art. The objects they created out of collaborative working practices are discussed in Chapter Two. This chapter section examines the events that facilitated their social connections and relationships.

Constance Smedley Armfield (1876–1941), born in Handsworth, Birmingham, was a student at the Birmingham School of Art.¹³ She wrote in her autobiography about ‘all the joys of student life’ and how ‘the school was a world of its own into which I was suddenly set free’.¹⁴ Her use of the phrase ‘set free’ demonstrates the opening up of possibilities and experiences with people who shared her interests and passions that she was otherwise unable to experience. The confines of her familial, domestic environment were a constraint

¹⁰ Liz Arthur, ‘The Artistic, Social and Suffrage Networks for Glasgow School of Art’s Women Artists and Designers’, Miranda Garrett and Zoë Thomas (eds.), *Suffrage and the Arts. Visual Culture, Politics and Enterprise*, London, 2019, 43-63.

¹¹ Jan Marsh, ‘Art, Ambition and Sisterhood in the 1850s’, Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Women in the Victorian Art World*, Manchester, 1995.

¹² Helland, *Professional Women Painters*.

¹³ Constance Smedley was well-known as a playwright, author and founder of the International Association of Lyceum Clubs for Women Writers and Artists in 1904; Grace Brockington, ‘Smedley [*married name Armfield*], (Annie) Constance’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sept 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/76293; Grace Brockington, ‘A World Fellowship: The Founding of the International Lyceum Club’, *Transnational Associations*, 1, 2005, 15-22.

¹⁴ Constance Smedley, *Crusaders: The Reminiscences of Constance Smedley*, London, 1929, 15.

that she was able to come away from when attending the School of Art. This sentiment is further reinforced when she wrote, 'I had found my own world whose interests lay quite apart from my family's'.¹⁵ Her juxtaposition of this new world with that of her family succinctly demonstrates the expanding opportunities the School of Art afforded its women students.

The social and intellectual aspects of art student life can be seen in Smedley's mentions of a studio evening gathering where 'the poems of Rossetti and Morris were read aloud' and 'occasional journeys to London with other girl students'.¹⁶ Clearly, life as an art student in Birmingham involved much more than just art lessons. Smedley thoroughly embraced her social role at the school when she organised a Christmas gathering of students, with entertainment. The student-led social activities at the school were endorsed by the school's executive. When Smedley asked the headmaster, Edward Taylor (1838–1911), for permission, he was happy to promote a 'desirable esprit de corps'.¹⁷ For the Christmas event Smedley wrote a play, titled *The Lay Figure* that was 'about art students, and is to show the importance of working hard and having high ideals'.¹⁸ Other students at the school organised a 'living tableaux of famous pictures' for additional entertainment.¹⁹ These social events, supported by the school's leadership, were important for bringing the students together in co-operative, informal activities that, for women, would otherwise be

¹⁵ Ibid., 17.

¹⁶ Ibid., 16-17.

¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁹ Ibid., 22.

difficult to undertake for reasons of impropriety.²⁰ These events are emblematic of the wider art community ethos in Birmingham that intertwined art making and exhibiting with social and familial bonds.²¹

Smedley's time at the School of Art was short, as she soon changed direction from art to writing, but organising the Christmas entertainment contributed to the friendships and networks that developed amongst the students at the School of Art. As discussed in chapter two, such networks carried on beyond the school and into the careers of the artists when they collaborated on art objects. Smedley went on to establish the Lyceum Club for women writers and artists in London in 1904 which developed around the world and are still running today.²² She also considered setting up a club for women art workers in Birmingham, along the same lines as the Lyceum Club in London.²³ However, it seems the idea never got off the ground.²⁴

Constance Smedley mentioned in her autobiography day trips with friends from school and 'occasional journeys to London with other girl students' in her autobiography.²⁵ These excursions would have strengthened the bonds of friendship and intellectual engagement via shared experiences. The friendship networks of Birmingham women art students had to operate within society's gendered conventions and restrictions. As discussed in chapter

²⁰ Florence Hartley, *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness. A Complete Handbook for the Use of the Lady in Polite Society*, Boston, 1873.

²¹ This is also discussed in Section 2.2 of this thesis.

²² Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.

²³ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 19 July 1905, 6.

²⁴ It is unclear as to why a Lyceum Club in Birmingham failed to materialise.

²⁵ Smedley. *Crusaders*, 16-17.

one, students were taught in gender segregated classes and gender segregation was also used for art educational activities beyond the classroom. As early as 1856, School of Art sketching field trips were undertaken in gendered groups. A local newspaper article describes outings to the Edgbaston Botanical Gardens with women and men students kept apart by going on different days.²⁶ The activities included sketching as well as recreations such as boating and were successful enough for a resolution to be adopted to make them an annual occurrence. These activities enabled and encouraged the formation of friendships and professional working relationships outside the boundary of families, which otherwise would have been difficult to develop.

Groups of women art students in public spaces, such as those mentioned above, were operating in what Anne Digby has described as a 'social borderland'; an acceptable third space between the simplistic binary of separate spheres often described as men-public and women-private.²⁷ Digby's notion of a social borderland, 'a positive place for women to colonise', accurately describes the circumstances for Birmingham women art students and how they negotiated the expectations and boundaries of their social worlds. It is possible to imagine a group of women art students in a public setting invoking an invisible border around themselves as protection from unwanted contact from others in that public space. Being in such a group in a public space instilled confidence to venture beyond their local environs and gain wider experiences and knowledge. The mention of these trips in local newspapers suggests that the public was interested in the activities of the art students. The

²⁶ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 15 Sept 1856, 2.

²⁷ Digby, 'Victorian Values', 198.

articles also contributed to the growing change in the wider public's attitudes towards gendered expectations in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The newspaper mentions also supply evidence of the importance of sociability and community to Birmingham's art milieu and how women art students were an integral part of it.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the School of Art social activities were not always gender segregated and they provided art students a greater opportunity to network with all their colleagues and friends in a manner that did not challenge society's prescribed decorum and constraints. One such example was a School of Art trip to London in October 1890 involving 300 women and men students and requiring a special train that left Snow Hill at 6.15am and returned at 10.47pm. Women art teachers were also in attendance; namely, Jannette Bayliss, Mary Newill, Elsie Pardoe and Etty Taylor. These teachers were specifically mentioned in a newspaper article about the trip that was perhaps intended to give reassurance of suitable supervision of the women art students.²⁸ The students were given the opportunity to visit the ACES exhibition, Grosvenor Gallery, National History Museum and the South Kensington Museum. The visit to the ACES exhibition may have inspired the women art students, representing Birmingham, to exhibit there in future, which more did after the 1890 exhibition.²⁹ As examined in chapter two, many art objects exhibited at the ACES by Birmingham women artists post-1890 were made collaboratively. Perhaps the London trip had an impact on this trend by building confidence from seeing

²⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 28 Oct 1890, 7.

²⁹ At the first three ACES exhibitions only two Birmingham women artists, Georgina France Gaskin and Gertrude Bradley, exhibited. From the fourth (1893) exhibition the numbers of Birmingham women artists exhibiting increased.

the exhibition first-hand. It is possible to speculate that cooperatively made art objects, relying on common bonds, were fostered by the London trip and seeing the exhibition together. Digby has highlighted that the borderland needed to be quite malleable as the second half of the nineteenth century saw a lot of changes in gender expectations and certainly the 1890 London trip demonstrates such flexibility.³⁰

Social events involving the staff and students at the Birmingham School of Art included the annual School of Art conversaziones. Conversaziones and their role in urban, middle-class social culture has received little scholarly attention from social and cultural historians.³¹ However, the historiography of science, technology and medicine gives attention to their role in the dissemination of scientific knowledge within the social structures of middle- and upper-class society.³² The Birmingham School of Art conversaziones were large events, held over two nights in the Town Hall. Attendees included the art students, school of art staff, art manufacturers and civic leaders of the town. The success of the first one in 1879 resulted in it becoming an annual event until at least 1883. The five conversaziones held between 1879 and 1883 were large-scale productions extensively reported on in the local newspapers. They included the exhibition of art works by the school of art students, refreshments and dancing. They also provided an opportunity for the exhibition of art

³⁰ Digby, 'Victorian Values'.

³¹ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*; Jane Wood, 'A Culture of Improvement: Knowledge, Aesthetic Consciousness and the Conversazione', *Nineteenth Century Studies*, 20, 2006, 79-97.

³² John Burnett, 'The Conversazione at the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, 1875', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 4, 1997, 145-8; Victoria Moger, 'A Conversazione at the Ironmongers' Hall', Johanna Bird, Hugh Chapman and John Clark (eds), *Collectanea Londiniensia: Studies in London Archaeology and History Presented to Ralph Merrifield*, London, 1978, 453-62; Samuel J. Alberti, 'Conversaziones and the Experience of Science in Victorian England', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 8:2, January 2003, 208-230.

objects produced by art manufacturers of Birmingham and beyond.³³ The conversazione included the re-creation of whole rooms to show furniture and textiles in situ. Demonstrations were given of the making processes of art products such as stained glass, stone-carving, engraving and chromo-lithography. The 1883 conversazione included a steam-powered Axminster carpet loom set up in the Town Hall for the occasion.³⁴ Also in 1883, Mrs Buckley of Wheeley Road, Edgbaston exhibited examples of needlework by Turkish women refugees.³⁵ Mrs Buckley and other local women had supplied the Turkish needlewomen with materials and then sold the needleworks to raise much needed funds for the refugees. The occasion of the conversazione provided an opportunity for philanthropy via the exhibition and sale of objects by women, to aid women.³⁶ These events involved an intermingling of art, industry and socialising and were a significant manifestation of Birmingham's extended and communal art world environment.

The RBSA held conversazione events each year as an extension of their annual art exhibitions. From the very first Society of Arts exhibition held at The Panorama, New Street in 1826 there was a conversazione to mark the opening.³⁷ They were a prime example of the critical intersection of art and socialising in Birmingham's art milieu. The participants from the middle- and upper-classes included RBSA members, associates, subscribers and the exhibiting artists, including art students, as well as friends and other invited guests. The

³³ This included companies such as Chamberlain, King and Jones, William Morris & Co., Liberty & Co., Royal Tapestry Works, to name a few.

³⁴ *Birmingham Mail*, 12 Feb 1881, 3; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 19 Feb 1881, 7.

³⁵ It is understood that they were refugees from the Russo-Turkish war 'obliged to leave their homes and colonise on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus', (*Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 Feb 1883, 4).

³⁶ Philanthropy and art are discussed further in the second section of this chapter.

³⁷ Thomas T. Harman and Walter Showell, *Showell's Dictionary of Birmingham: A History Guide Arranged Alphabetically*, Project Gutenberg Online, 2004.

occasions were an opportunity for Birmingham's wider art community to gather for conversation, refreshments and music surrounded by the exhibition artworks. They provided an opportunity for artists via socialising, to draw the attention of potential patrons to their exhibited artworks available for sale.³⁸ The reminiscences of the artist, jeweller and art teacher, Edward Harper (1854–1941) illustrates the importance of socialising to the RBSA community by describing the dinner parties, social gatherings, visiting and exchanges of letters amongst the Birmingham artists.³⁹ Women's membership of the RBSA was restricted but their involvement was not entirely circumscribed.⁴⁰ They too exhibited their artworks and attended the conversazione social events.⁴¹ Kate Hill has argued that the presence of women at such civic social events formed an important part of nineteenth-century ambitions towards a liberal civic culture in many English towns and cities. Hill has stated that 'the presence of women was the whole point of such events, which distinguished a new, open, civic culture'.⁴² Women's participation in RBSA activities formed a significant element in the definition and identity of the organisation and it would have been a very different institution if women were entirely excluded from all its activities.

The conversaciones were held at the RBSA premises, often during the Autumn exhibition. The events gave artists an opportunity to network and promote their art works, many hanging on the walls as part of the current exhibition, to attract buyers. The only record

³⁸ Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*; Hamilton, *A Strange Business*.

³⁹ Hill & Midgley, *The History of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*.

⁴⁰ See Appendix 7 for further information on when women could become Associate Members of the RBSA.

⁴¹ See Chapter Three for an examination of their participation in RBSA exhibitions.

⁴² Kate Hill, *Women and Museums, 1850-1914. Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge*, Manchester, 2016.

available for these events is from the newspapers that gives very little detail on the gendered behaviours of those attending. However, a rare visual illustration of an RBSA *conversazione* is available. A photograph of the artist Mary Vernon Morgan (1846–1927) at the 1912 RBSA fancy dress ball (fig. 43) held at the Grand Hotel.⁴³ The image shows her in full costume alongside her husband and artist Charles Morgan (1843–1913), her brother-in-law and artist Walter J. Morgan (1848–1920), several other RBSA members and W. J. Wainwright, then President of the RBSA. The photograph visually demonstrates her position not only as an exhibiting artist and Associate Member of the RBSA but also as an active social participant in the RBSA social occasions. Hill and Midgley's history of the RBSA mentions Mary Vernon Morgan; 'as a hostess she had considerable charm, and was always a prominent figure at any social gathering of the Society'.⁴⁴ Their comment, despite its patronising tone, demonstrates that Vernon Morgan's presence was public, desired and valued and it challenges the portrayal of women artists as modest, invisible and wanting to avoid public attention.⁴⁵ However, Hill and Midgley's emphasis on Vernon Morgan's social contribution was at the expense of mentioning her artist status.

In 1875, Mary Vernon Morgan and her family were involved in the Perry Barr Institute's annual Christmas party, 'arranged under the guidance of Mrs and Miss Vernon [...] the sides of the hall were covered with a splendid collection of modern oil paintings'.⁴⁶ The article goes on to list many of the art works and artists and who loaned them for the hall. Such

⁴³ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 6 Dec 1912, 6.

⁴⁴ Hill & Midgley, *The History of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, 62.

⁴⁵ Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, 69.

⁴⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 Jan 1875, 6.

mentions were valuable publicity for these artists as well as a boost to the perceived wealth-status of those loaning the works, thinly veiled by their generosity in loaning the works. The event was linked to a proposed art gallery; 'promises of contributions [paintings] have already been received from Miss Mary Vernon'.⁴⁷ Involvement in community social events provided Vernon Morgan with an opportunity to exhibit and draw attention to her art and artistic identity. Also, by publicly volunteering her work to the proposed gallery, Vernon Morgan, as a woman, was not concerned about the potential negative impact to her reputation and virtue that she was risking by encouraging public attention. Vernon Morgan's visible participation in Birmingham's wider world of social events challenged perceptions of women needing to be demure and unassuming. A social event that combined music and dancing to celebrate Christmas enabled a woman artist to participate in the promotion of her art in a way that was socially acceptable for her gender. Women artists had to make the most of opportunities that were considered appropriate and suitable to gain exposure of their art practice and their art works, and social events provided such opportunities. Many such events involved charitable support and especially those for the benefit of their local communities. Miranda Garrett has connected the art profession of interior decoration to the notion that good taste in the decoration of the home helped shape character. The material objects in the home were affiliated to the improvement of the taste and morals of the dwellers.⁴⁸ Garrett has highlighted the leveraging of belief in social reform to women's professional interior decoration businesses. Rhoda and Agnes Garrett's beliefs in social reform manifested themselves in

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Garrett, *Professional Women Interior Decorators*, 69-70.

their business strategy via efforts to keep their prices low. This was intended to enable those with less financial means to benefit from the morally beneficial value of a beautiful home. This phenomenon of combining the desire for social reform with professional art occupations can be aligned to the charitable works of women artists such as Mary Vernon Morgan. It is possible to suggest that Vernon Morgan leveraged the acceptable 'social borderland' of philanthropic work to encourage an acceptable public reputation. For example, in October 1903, Mary Vernon Morgan's name, along with many others, was published in local newspapers in support of the Midland Association for the Promotion of Kindness to Animals campaign. The campaign challenged the University of Birmingham's application for a licence to vivisect living animals. Publicity such as this, associated with campaigns to stop cruelty and promote kindness, made it clear that Vernon Morgan was concerned with social reform. This would make it more acceptable for her to be active in the public realm and furthermore, could positively impact on her reputation as an artist, helping to attract attention and sales of her paintings. The next section of this chapter explores the connection between women's philanthropy and Birmingham's art world.

Women art students and artists used a variety of socialising and networking strategies to enhance their art practices and careers. Their socialising as part of a group expanded their participation in activities and mobility beyond the local environment. Birmingham women artists' involvement in social activities as described in this chapter section contributed to the overall art world environment in Birmingham and the wider liberal, civic culture of the town.

5.2 Women, Art and Philanthropy

Philanthropy provided an opportunity for women to participate in public life in ways that would otherwise be impermissible. Anne Digby's concept of a 'social borderland', discussed earlier, is also relevant to women's public philanthropic activities.⁴⁹ Women's lives were restricted by laws and customs including the discouragement of women of the middle and upper classes from paid occupations. They were expected to prioritise their family and home, it was their *raison d'être*, propped up by conceptions of innate feminine attributes of caring, nurturing and moral intuition. However, as Frank Prochaska has observed, middle- and upper-class women typically lived in a household wealthy enough to support domestic servants and often had an abundance of free time.⁵⁰ This gave rise to expectations that they should engage in suitable activities to combat idleness and indolence. Prochaska demonstrates that such women were able to leverage perceptions of their 'natural' feminine traits to justify activities outside the home but within the boundaries of social propriety and decorum. Philanthropic activities, often labelled as 'woman's mission', were considered appropriate because they were well suited to women's 'special traits' and abilities.⁵¹ Paid employment for middle- and upper-class women was considered unfeminine and ran the risk of de-classing them: 'a lady may do almost anything from motives of charity or zeal, ... but so soon as a woman begins to receive money, however great her need, ... the heroine is transformed into a tradeswoman'.⁵² The unpaid status of philanthropic undertakings enabled them to be positioned secondary to

⁴⁹ Digby, 'Victorian Values', 195-215.

⁵⁰ Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*.

⁵¹ Sarah Lewis, *Woman's Mission*, London, 1839.

⁵² Sarah Ellis, *Education of the Heart: Woman's Best Work*, London, 1869 (quoted in Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 6).

women's first and primary calling, the home and family. This positioning suggests women's charitable activities were insignificant. However, as Simon Morgan and Frank Prochaska have demonstrated, women's involvement in 'female' philanthropic activities played a more significant role in civic life than has been previously understood.⁵³ The areas of public life that were considered appropriate centred on civic virtue and morals, especially via religious organisations. This was justified by notions that these women were the moral guardians of their own families and could disseminate those values to the poor. Also, as Davidoff and Hall have noted, women's philanthropy was different to men's and was often informal and undocumented - 'the scale of women's philanthropic enterprise is impossible to quantify since official representation clearly does not reflect their informal activities'.⁵⁴ Tom Stammers has also identified that women's cultural collecting and philanthropy was enacted in different ways to men's and therefore requires a different approach to find them in places that are not typically examined. For example, the research for this chapter has closely examined BMAG accession records to trace the role of women donors.⁵⁵

Some of the scholarship on nineteenth-century women and philanthropy is focused on their involvement in caring for the poor and disadvantaged in their communities. Some middle-class women undertook community activities that aligned with the contemporaneous beliefs in women's 'natural' traits, making a connection between their responsibilities for the well-being of their families and the moral improvement of society.

⁵³ Simon Morgan, 'A sort of land debatable': female influence, civic virtue and middle-class identity, c 1830-c 1860', *Women's History Review*, 13:2, Dec 2006, 183-209; Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*.

⁵⁴ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 432.

⁵⁵ Tom Stammers, 'Women Collectors and Cultural Philanthropy, c.1850-1920', *19:Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 31, 2020, doi.org/10.16995/ntn.3347.

However, as this chapter section will demonstrate, the extent of women's philanthropic endeavours was much greater and included contributions to public art collections and museums. Kathryn Gleadle has observed that 'whilst some women may have been content to confine their charity to a little home-visiting or joining one of the plethora of new charitable societies, others were determined to make an impact upon the country's institutional life'.⁵⁶ Gleadle has expanded the examination of women's philanthropic activity to include the multitude of ways in which women engaged and influenced community, political and current affairs. Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair's book demonstrates the breadth and complexity of middle-class women's public activities via detailed reconstructions of middle-class families in the West End of Glasgow. They document women's engagements in the public realms of social, cultural, philanthropic, economic and political happenings.⁵⁷ This chapter section develops from the existing body of work via a focus on women's philanthropic support of art institutions in Birmingham.

The topic of women's contributions to public art collections is an area of increasing academic interest.⁵⁸ Examinations of women's roles in the histories of art and museum collections and related institutions reveal their overlooked involvements in and challenge to male-centric perceptions, resulting in a recalibration and expansion of those histories.

⁵⁶ Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 67.

⁵⁷ Gordon & Nair, *Public Lives*.

⁵⁸ Susanna Avery-Quash and Christine Riding, 'Two Hundred Years of Women Benefactors at the National Gallery: an exercise in mapping uncharted territory', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 23, Dec 2020; Tom Stammers, 'Women Collectors in France', *Apollo*, Sept 2020, 44-49; Tom Stammers, 'Women Collectors and Cultural Philanthropy'; Kate Hill, *Women and Museums*; Kathleen McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930*, Chicago, 1991; Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940*, California, 2008; Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift*, Pittsburgh, 2009.

Chris Gosden and Frances Larson have proposed that museums are more than just object collections, buildings to house them in and curators to organise them.⁵⁹ This idea is applicable to art galleries and collections. Gosden and Larson's relational model of a museum advances the idea that they are made up of linked relationships between objects, institutions and people. The donor of an object is one element in the web of relationships that make up the history and understanding of that object. Amy Woodson-Boulton's book, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (2012) examines the role of art in the civic culture of nineteenth-century Britain.⁶⁰ Woodson-Boulton explains how art was used as a tool to inspire individual and civic reform as a reaction to industrialisation and urbanisation. Furthermore, she links the civic moral aspirations to the transmission of middle-class values and aspirations. Frances Borzello has examined the art-based didactic ambitions of the Victorian era and beyond in her book *Civilising Caliban. The Misuse of Art 1875 to 1980* (2014).⁶¹ In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Anglican vicar Samuel Barnett presented art exhibitions in Toynbee Hall in the deprived area of Whitechapel, London.⁶² They were supported by simply written, didactic catalogues and guided tours to reinforce the lessons. The popular and well-attended exhibitions displayed paintings and other art objects on loan from wealthy and supportive collectors. Barnett's mission was to improve and elevate the character and morals of poor people by exposing them to the higher values contained in the paintings. Barnett's efforts were part of the wider desire of the middle-classes to use art to improve society and especially the moral

⁵⁹ Chris Gosden and Frances Larson, *Knowing Things. Exploring the Collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum 1884-1945*, Oxford, 2007, 11.

⁶⁰ Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*.

⁶¹ Frances Borzello, *Civilising Caliban. The Misuse of Art 1875 to 1980*, London, 2014.

⁶² *Ibid.*

values of the working classes via the promotion of the values of the middle-classes. A similar desire manifested itself in Birmingham and, as this chapter argues, intersected with acts of art-based philanthropy by women. Kate Hill (2016) has analysed women's 'feminising' influence on museum collections.⁶³ She has argued that their donations, especially those of objects from the domestic setting, transformed museums to become sites of memory, nostalgia and sensation as well as the understood definition as places of knowledge and classification. The latter two were typically understood to be controlled by male gatekeepers. Therefore, women's contributions challenged the male-domination of knowledge and knowledge networks. This chapter section strengthens Hill's argument with its analysis of the donations made by women to BMAG's permanent public collection. This section also adds to the field with its consideration of the significance and interconnections of women's art philanthropy to other types of civic philanthropy and charity.

This thesis is focused on a timeframe from 1860 to 1920. However, for this chapter section it is necessary to extend this beyond 1920 to include objects bequeathed by women who were alive between 1860 and 1920 but died after 1920. Appendix 5, Table 1 is a sample list of 142 objects donated by women between 1860 and 2008 to BMAG. Some of the objects in the list are discussed individually later in this chapter. However, it is useful to consider the collective acts of donation the list represents. A single donation of one art object can, in isolation, seem insignificant. However, it is possible to show trends, participations and influences when that single act is put together in a collective of other such acts. Kate Hill's examination of women's contributions to museums raises the profile of their previously

⁶³ Kate Hill, *Women and Museums*

under-recognised activities, including by the women themselves. She has described them as ‘women who would not necessarily have thought of themselves as part of a museum, but who were nevertheless important for museum development’.⁶⁴ Her comment applies to many of the donations listed in Appendix 5, Table 1.

A pronounced subset in the list of pictures donated are those that were given by women who were related to the male artist or male subject of the pictures. Women’s opportunities for participating in the assembling of public collections were limited. Hill has suggested, ‘there was a sense that the public donation of objects to a public museum was something that women should avoid if possible’.⁶⁵ However, bequeathing objects in honour of their male relatives was an acceptable form of participation. Social conventions encouraged women to be selfless, caring and responsible for the moral guardianship of their families, and donating an object as a memorial to a male relative was an acceptable act as part of her familial duties.

Elizabeth Aitken’s bequest of two paintings to BMAG in 1890 is an example of this. She donated a portrait of her husband, William Costen Aitken (1817–1876) by Frank George Jackson (1831–1905) (fig. 44) and a watercolour picture by William Costen Aitken of the garret room at Heathfield Hall (fig. 45). The portrait preserves his likeness, and the watercolour is a permanent symbol of his interests and contributions to Birmingham.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Kate Hill, *Women and Museums*, 47.

⁶⁵ Kate Hill, *Women and Museums*, 52.

⁶⁶ William Costen Aitken, was the chief industrial designer for the art metalworks company R. & W. Winfield, Cambridge Street, Birmingham. He was an active member of Birmingham’s civic society, a proponent of the ‘Civic Gospel’, a trustee of the Public Picture Gallery Fund, involved in the Society of Arts

Elizabeth Aitken also made a bequest of £200 to the Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI) for academic prizes in the names of her husband and brother, both of whom were connected to the BMI.⁶⁷ She made these donations as legacies of her husband and brother, drawing attention to them and silencing her own involvement. However, regardless of where the attention was directed, her action was a contribution to the town's public art collection. Whether intentionally or not, Elizabeth Aitken extended her proscribed domestic role and responsibilities into the public space. The personal family relationships connected to the now publicly owned objects has become a vital part of the provenance of those objects.⁶⁸

However, not all personal art works donated to the museum were about commemorating or preserving the legacy of male relatives. They were a record of an artist's wider relationships. In 1949 a painting titled *Simplon – Mrs Barnard and her Daughter Dorothy* by John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) was donated by Dorothy Barnard, one of the painting's subjects. The painting is of Alice Faraday Barnard (1847–1952) and her daughter Dorothy Barnard (1878–1949) in the Simplon Pass in Switzerland (fig. 46). The Barnard family were friends of the artist John Singer Sargent and Dorothy Barnard is depicted in several of his paintings, including one of his most famous, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (1885–6) in the Tate

and School of Design, an organiser of the 1858 Aston Hall Exhibition of Fine Arts and Art Manufactures and the 1849 Industrial Design Exhibition, Birmingham, considered to be the forerunner of the 1851 Great Exhibition, London of which he was also involved in the organisation of. He also advised the 1849 Select Committee on Schools of Design and advocated for a permanent collection of industrial and applied design objects in Birmingham. (Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art*)

⁶⁷ Her brother was Robert Wright. Her husband and brother were 'good friends of the Institute' and the BMI Council decided the prizes should be for students of the advanced German and Spanish classes. William Costen Aitken was a founding member of the BMI. (*Birmingham Daily Post*, 4 Jan 1892, 8)

⁶⁸ Kate Hill, *Women and Museums*, 59.

Britain collection.⁶⁹ The history of the Barnard family and John Singer Sargent is intimately connected to the painting, which Dorothy Barnard bequeathed to BMAG. It is not known why she donated the painting to Birmingham but, regardless, it remains a significant object in Birmingham's public collection donated by a woman.⁷⁰

In her will, Barnard's specific instructions enabled her to exert precise control over the disposal of her assets. In the second schedule of her will she gave instructions for the bequest of twenty-three pictures to institutions such as BMAG, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the National Gallery of British Art (now Tate Britain), the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The donations included three paintings of her. The result is the preservation of images of her in public collections. However, this contrasts with her written instruction for there to be no memorial to herself, 'I desire to be cremated and my ashes scattered, and I do not wish any tombstone, tablet, urn or monument or memorial of any kind to be used in memory of me'.⁷¹ The dissonance of these two contrasting instructions suggests similar behaviour to that of Elizabeth Aitken, that of not wanting to draw attention directly to herself. The donation of paintings of her can be considered important because of the legacy of the male artist, John Singer Sargent. However, the interconnected factors of her act of philanthropy and her image in the paintings, preserve her in the relational histories of those objects, regardless of where the attention was directed. A painting's accession history forms part of the wider history of

⁶⁹ www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sargent-carnation-lily-lily-rose-n01615 [accessed 9th March 2021].

⁷⁰ BMAG archives and object files were inaccessible throughout this project. However, there is limited information online and published secondary sources.

⁷¹ Last Will and Testament of Dorothy Barnard, proved in the Principal Probate Registry on 3 May 1949, 4.

women's connection to art of the nineteenth century as not only as models and subjects of paintings but also as owners and participants in the preservation and legacy of those art objects and their relationships to them.

Anna Elizabeth Southall (1859–1947) gave four artworks by her husband Joseph Edward Southall (1861–1944) to BMAG, one donated in 1945 and three bequeathed after her death in October 1947. Her husband was a well-known artist from Birmingham associated with the Arts and Crafts movement.⁷² Anna Southall's donations also demonstrate an act of legacy preservation on behalf of her husband. However, Anna Southall was drawing attention to herself too as she was also an artist and often did the gilding work on Joseph's paintings. The painting *Ships from the Adriatic, Venice* (fig. 47) dated 1939 that Anna Southall donated in 1945, was gilded by her. Her donation of an object that they both worked on is a physical record of their working relationship. Anna and Joseph had known each other since childhood; they were first cousins and did not marry until 1903, when Anna was forty-four years old and beyond what they considered child-bearing age. Their very long relationship together can be traced in paintings donated to public collections. A portrait of Anna aged twenty-eight years old, (fig. 48) by Joseph is in the BMAG collection. The National Portrait Gallery collection holds a joint portrait of them (fig. 49), by Joseph, dated 1911 when they were in their fifties. Finally, there is another portrait of Anna (fig. 50) in the BMAG collection, by Joseph in 1917 when she was fifty-eight years old. These

⁷² Joseph Edward Southall was born in Nottingham, his father died when Southall was a baby which prompted his mother to move near her family in the Edgbaston area of Birmingham. He trained as an architect and was a prize-winning student at the Birmingham School of Art. He was involved in a revival of tempera painting in the 1890s (George Breeze, 'Southall, Joseph Edward', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 3 Oct 2013, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64535).

three portraits are a permanent, public record of the personal, private relationship between the artists, recorded over time.

Another painting by Joseph Southall that was gifted to BMAG by women is titled *New Lamps for Old* (fig. 51) painted in 1901. It was presented to BMAG by the sisters Jeanne and Angela Heaton in 1952. It is not known what connection, if any, the Heaton sisters had to Joseph Southall, but the painting is evidence of a public, permanent record of Joseph and Anna Southall's friendship network. George Breeze has listed the people who modelled for the painting,

The figures from left to right are: the artist, Arthur Gaskin, (The Magician), Charles March Gere, Mrs F. Wood, (Aladdin's wife), William Littleboy, Alderman White, Joseph Sturge, Anna Elizabeth Baker, John E. Baker (Scheherazade), and Alderman Baker. Apart from the first three who were artists, the other named persons were prominent Quakers in Birmingham. All were close friends or relatives of Southall.⁷³

It is interesting to note that the three named characters from the Aladdin story were not modelled on known people. Southall has populated the story with his friends and relatives, as themselves, in amongst the fictional characters of the story. The confluence of art, fiction and actual people that the picture represents echoes the convergence of transience and permanence and the issues of private and public raised by the act of donation. Southall's painting, donated by two sisters, is a significant object in BMAG's collection because of what it records about the relationships and community amongst Birmingham artists and friends at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁴

⁷³ George Breeze, *Joseph Southall 1861-1944 Artist-Craftsman*, exhibition catalogue, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1980, 37.

⁷⁴ Artist communities and relationships are also examined in chapter two of this thesis.

Other significant examples of women donating art objects that reveal evidence of wider familial and friendship relationships can be seen in the accession histories of objects by Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898). BMAG holds the world’s largest collection of Burne-Jones’ artworks with over 500 objects. At least seven women donated over sixty objects by him with a further two portraits of him by other artists. Edward Burne-Jones was born in Birmingham and kept a connection to the city via education, work and friendships.⁷⁵

Lady Georgina Burne-Jones (1840–1920), the wife of Edward Burne-Jones, bequeathed a portrait of him by George Frederick Watts (1817–1904) to BMAG in 1920 (fig. 52). The portrait’s subject, creator and donor form a network of people profoundly connected to the object. Georgina and Edward’s daughter, Margaret Mackail donated four artworks by Edward to BMAG. Her daughter Angela Margaret Thirkell (Georgina and Edward’s granddaughter) donated five artworks. The three generations of women, members of the same family as the artist, collectively performed an assertion of their agency in determining the preserved legacy and record of their husband, father and grandfather. Their philanthropy also publicly preserves their private relationships to the artist and his artworks. Many of the objects they donated were created behind-the-scenes. They are sketches and studies, products of the artist’s working practice, not intended to be displayed as finished objects. The personal connection the donors had to these objects is reinforced by their close, familial relationships to the artist, which made them privy to the non-public

⁷⁵ Fiona MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination*, London, 2011.

activities of his art practice. Moving those objects from the private and domestic space to a public and visible environment was a significant act of connecting and entwining the private, domestic space with the public arena of the museum.

However, the relationships between Edward Burne-Jones' objects in BMAG and people who gave them to the collection extend beyond his personal family members. Appendix 5, Table 1 details seventy artworks by him or about him that were donated by women.⁷⁶ Katherine 'Katie' Lewis (1878–1961) bequeathed eight objects to BMAG in 1961, seven by Edward Burne-Jones and one a sketch of him by Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884). Her connection to Edward Burne-Jones was via a family friendship; Katherine Lewis' father was Sir George Henry Lewis (1833–1911), a solicitor and friend of Edward Burne-Jones.⁷⁷ Mary Seton Watts (1849–1938), an artist and family friend of the Burne-Jones' donated two pictures by him in 1924.⁷⁸ Anna Mary Chamberlain Harris (1837–1914) gave forty-four etched prints, designed by Edward Burne-Jones, to BMAG in 1931. They came to her via her first husband, the Birmingham architect John Henry Chamberlain (1831–1883) who had received them from the artist and designer William Morris (1834–1896). The latter was a friend and colleague of Burne-Jones. Anna Chamberlain Harris' connection to BMAG is further augmented by the work of her second husband, William Harris (1826–1911) and his appointment in 1870 to oversee the purchase of pictures and object for BMAG's permanent

⁷⁶ Note that Appendix 5, Table 1 is a sample list and not a complete record of all artworks donated to BMAG by women benefactors.

⁷⁷ Katherine Lewis donated an album of 100 letters, postcards with drawings that Edward Burne-Jones sent to her when she was a child. She donated the album to the British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG35718 [accessed 16th March 2021].

⁷⁸ Mary Seton Watts was married to George Frederic Watts, the artist of the portrait of Edward Burne-Jones donated to BMAG by Georgina Burne-Jones.

collection. Anna Chamberlain Harris' impact on the history of BMAG's collections was enabled by her marriages, which gave her an opportunity to exert influence on the collections. Finally, there is Mary Evangeline Middlemore's (1882–1959) donation of two Edward Burne-Jones textile designs to BMAG in 1947. Evangeline Middlemore was the daughter of Sir John Throgmorton Middlemore (1844–1924), a Birmingham politician and collector of Pre-Raphaelite art.⁷⁹

Often, women donated objects that came to them as secondary owners, frequently via close family or friendship ties.⁸⁰ Their motivations for donating artworks can never be fully understood but their choice to place the objects in a public collection, as opposed to bequeathing them on to private ownership, is unequivocal. Women philanthropists asserted their right as owners of the objects to place them, with their correspondent histories, in a public art collection, and thereby placed themselves in a permanently recorded connection to those objects, histories and institutions via public documentation on museum labels and today on websites such as artuk.org.

Despite these donations by women being on a small scale, the same concerns described at the beginning of this chapter section, may have plagued them; those of not wanting to draw attention to themselves because they were women, and that philanthropy should be conducted in a manner of disinterested benevolence. Their motivations for giving to BMAG

⁷⁹ Sir John Throgmorton Middlemore donated nine paintings to BMAG including works by Pre-Raphaelite artists William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), George F. Watts (1817-1904) and five by Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898).

⁸⁰ Hill, *Women and Museums*, 52.

were no doubt varied and wide-ranging yet impossible to know for certain. However, the important argument made here is that their act of giving is indelibly recorded in connection to the objects, albeit as a side-note about the object's provenance. These smaller acts of philanthropy by women played a part in changing and developing understandings of what women could do and what they could influence. Prochaska has described how women's involvement in philanthropic work encouraged and enabled them to gain skills in activities, such as public speaking and project organisation, that they would otherwise not have had the opportunity to develop.⁸¹ Such activities enabled women to shape their individual identities and posthumous reputations in the public realm.

Amongst the women who donated artworks to BMAG there are examples of those that also participated in other types of philanthropy. These examples demonstrate the wider field of philanthropy in which Birmingham women participated in. As discussed at the beginning of this section, charitable occupations were deemed acceptable for middle-class women. It is impossible to know the precise motivations of these philanthropists for certain but some comprehension of their motives can be gleaned by taking a wider survey of what activities they participated in.

Anna Chamberlain Harris (1837–1914)

Anna Chamberlain Harris, mentioned above in connection to her donation of artworks by Edward Burne-Jones, was active in many other forms of philanthropy in Birmingham. Her art benevolence appears to be closely connected to other philanthropic activities and what

⁸¹ Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 2.

connects all her philanthropic activities appears to be a desire to improve the quality of life for the poor and disadvantaged. Such civic and moral improvements were thought to be possible via exposure to art, books and open spaces.

Between 1865 and 1900 Anna Chamberlain Harris was a key figure in many of Birmingham's philanthropic causes and organisation. Her endeavours spanned a thirty-six-year period and include at least nineteen known charitable events and organisations in Birmingham and beyond. The breadth of her participation ranged from the giving of money to charitable causes to long-term commitments via membership to philanthropic organisations. For example, in 1865 she donated money to the Birmingham Children's Hospital fund and in 1900 she contributed ten shillings to Colonel Baden-Powell's 'Argus' Shilling Fund.⁸² Beyond the giving of money or objects she also supported charitable organisations via activities such as running fund-raising stalls, attending meetings, sometimes in an official capacity such as council member or Honorary Secretary.⁸³

The variety of organisations she was involved in include those directly concerned with helping those in need and less fortunate, including animals, such as the Homeopathic Hospital and Dispensary, the Vale Street Ragged and Industrial Schools, Kindness to Animals Scheme, Anti-Vivisection Society, Bordesley Ward Relief Committee (to aid with the impact of a Scarlet Fever outbreak), the Girls' Night Shelter (see more on this below in

⁸² *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 June 1865, 7; The 'Argus' Shilling Fund raised money to support the women and children that suffered as a result of the battle at Mafeking, South Africa during the second Boer War (*Sports Argus*, 19 May 1900, 6).

⁸³ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 30 Nov 1869, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 28 Jan 1870, 3; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 28 March 1876, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 Nov 1882, 7; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 Nov 1886, 4.

connection with Frances Hudson Everitt). What they all have in common is aiming to aid and improve local communities. Other examples of improving the community via cultural initiatives include the Birmingham Musical Association and the Birmingham Kyrle Society.

She participated in other organisations and events that were more political in nature such as the Birmingham's Women's Suffrage meetings and the National Society for Women's Suffrage Conference in 1877, being a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Birmingham Liberal Association and assisting eligible women voters in Birmingham's municipal elections. Kathryn Gleadle has noted how the experience and confidence women gained from philanthropic endeavours connected with their involvement in local politics and government in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.⁸⁴ Chamberlain Harris' philanthropic activities embody these interconnections of charitable support and local politics. Both of her marriages were to men who were extensively involved in Birmingham's civic life. However, her charitable activities were often reported in the local newspapers separately from either of her husbands' meaning that her public identity stood on its own. Anna Chamberlain Harris' philanthropy covered a wide range of activities including supporting disadvantaged girls and donations to Birmingham's public art collection. Her altruism was undoubtedly motivated by a desire to encourage moral and physical improvements for the citizens of Birmingham.

⁸⁴ Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 157-160.

Frances Hudson Everitt (1835–1889)

Frances Hudson Everitt is another example of a non-artist woman who had an impact on Birmingham's art culture and its wider civic life. Frances Everitt was connected to Birmingham's art world via her marriage to Allen Edward Everitt (1792–1882), an artist, member and Honorary Secretary of the RBSA. The occasion of their marriage in 1880 prompted the gift of the Everitt Cabinet (fig. 53) from members of the Society of Artists. Frances Everitt bequeathed it to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in 1892. The cabinet is a significant object in Birmingham's nineteenth-century art world. It was designed by Birmingham architect John H. Chamberlain, manufactured by Birmingham builders John Barnsley and Son adorned with fourteen painted panels by fourteen Birmingham artists, all members of the Royal Birmingham Society of Arts, including one by a women artist, Florence Westwood Whitfield (fig. 54). It also includes portraits of Frances (fig. 55) and Allen Everitt (fig. 56). Many of the scenes depicted on the Everitt cabinet are those of an 'idyllic nature' such as unspoilt meadows, cottages and churches (fig. 53). They are examples of the type of art that Amy Woodson-Boulton argues had an intended social role in promoting moral reforms by aligning natural beauty with virtue.⁸⁵ Frances Everitt's donation is evidence of a non-artist women contributing to the preservation of this episode in Birmingham's art history as well as the legacy preservation of the artists involved. The object survives today, in the BMAG collection because of her philanthropic act.

Frances Hudson Everitt contributed to Birmingham's civic history directly herself as the founder of the Girls' Night Shelter on Bath Row, Birmingham in 1888. It was a place for

⁸⁵ Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*.

young girls, 'without home or friends'⁸⁶, often prostitutes, and offered them shelter for a few nights and an opportunity to improve their circumstances, often helping them to find employment in domestic service. Frances Everitt's work demonstrates the link between women and civic philanthropy.⁸⁷ Her voluntary involvement in supporting destitute young women, a caring role, fits within a suitable frame of what was deemed suitable for women. Paula Bartley's examination of women and the 'civic gospel' is geographically specific to Birmingham and the contribution of women philanthropists via informal charitable works aimed at eliminating prostitution in the city.⁸⁸ Frances Everitt, like Anna Chamberlain Harris, was involved in a variety of charitable activities in Birmingham. Her benevolent endeavours across diverse areas, including contributions to public art collections, were linked by the ambition to reform moral and social conditions of the local community.

Louisa Anne Ryland (1814–1889)

Louisa Anne Ryland became a millionaire on the death of her father, inheriting the family fortune made by her grandfather, John Ryland, from his wire-drawing factory and land investments. Louisa Ryland was a major benefactor to Birmingham in a variety of ways such as large financial gifts to Birmingham hospitals and land for public parks. Her specific contributions to Birmingham's art world include support for the running costs of the School of Art, the setting up of student scholarships and financing the building on Margaret Street. Her philanthropic support had an impact beyond just the financial. Her £10,000

⁸⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 Dec 1889, 3.

⁸⁷ Paula Bartley, 'Moral Regeneration: Women and the Civic Gospel in Birmingham, 1870-1914', *Midland History*, 25:1, 2000, 143-161.

⁸⁸ Bartley, 'Moral Regeneration'.

endowment to support the running costs of the School of Art, in 1876, before the school was municipalised, enabled a higher salary to be offered for the recruitment of a 'better' headmaster.⁸⁹ Recruiting a more experienced leader for the school boosted the curriculum and the quality of the teaching. After the school was municipalised and the running costs became the responsibility of Birmingham's Council, the remaining funds from the endowment were used for student scholarships. These scholarships enabled students who would otherwise be excluded, to develop skills and abilities to be used in Birmingham's manufacturing workshops. She also provided funds for a students' garden for the School of Art and its neighbour, the Midland Institute.

A significant act of philanthropy by Ryland was her donation of a further £10,000 for the School of Art's purpose-built premises on Margaret Street in 1884.⁹⁰ The School of Art was in a precarious position with no permanent home and restrictions on what could be taught because of the lack of studio workshop space. Her contribution was made with the condition that the School be municipalised, and this had a significant impact on the position of the School to the town, its art culture and art manufacturing. As discussed in chapter one, the main impetus for the School of Art was the desire to improve the design quality and ornamentation of manufactured objects that were a major part of the town's economy.

⁸⁹ Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art*

⁹⁰ Approximately equivalent to over £660,000 in 2017, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter [accessed 22nd Feb 2021].

The new premises with purpose-built workshops and studios enabled the headmaster, Edward Taylor, to advance his 'Executed Design' training practice. This was training that enabled the students to actually create the objects they had designed in their art lessons, thereby developing and strengthening their art skills, The importance of art training to the local economy was expressed in a local news article - 'our varied industries depend so largely and so intimately upon the Art instruction of our manufacturers and workpeople, that the conduct of an efficient School of Art has become an indispensable portion of the town work'.⁹¹ The quality of teaching at the School of Art had a direct impact on the quality of products produced by Birmingham's art industries. Therefore, Louisa Ryland's financial contribution to the School of Art's Margaret Street building was of major importance to Birmingham's industries and economy. Louisa Ryland's gift also impacted the governance of and responsibility for the School because she included a condition of municipalisation.⁹² Letters in the Birmingham Library archive between Louisa Ryland and the then mayor, Richard Chamberlain (1840–1899) show that he encouraged her to make this a condition of her gift.⁹³

Louisa Ryland's significant contribution and impact on the Birmingham School of Art is frequently reduced or omitted from written histories, encouraged by her initial desire for anonymity.⁹⁴ Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth has described how, 'charitable philanthropy enabled Victorian women to move beyond the domestic sphere of the home and acquire

⁹¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 July 1883, 4.

⁹² Draft Letter to the Mayor, Nov 1881 (Birmingham Library Archives Ref. MS 39/101/8).

⁹³ Letter from Richard Chamberlain, Mayor of Birmingham, to Louisa Ryland, 23 Oct 1881 (Birmingham Library Archives Ref. MS 39/101/3-4).

⁹⁴ Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art*, 158.

their own individual identity in the public realm'.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, not all women philanthropists sought to develop a public identity and Louisa Ryland was initially insistent on anonymity, 'I cannot say that I wish my name to be known, for I still think that this would be only a personal matter and that if good is done it is enough for one to have the privilege of doing it'.⁹⁶ Her desire for anonymity conformed to Victorian notions of gendered behaviours in that a woman should not draw attention to herself. It may also have been concerned with wanting to avoid negative perceptions of her philanthropy. James Moore has observed that successful philanthropy needed to be perceived as a detached and objective act, motivated solely for public good and not for personal or partisan gain.⁹⁷ Ryland may have felt that public recognition of her giving could expose her to potential negative and adverse speculation as to her motives. The phrase 'enough for one to have the privilege of doing it' suggests a desire to demonstrate that the only benefit to her was the privilege and nothing else.

Moore has examined the importance of announcements and the spectacle of public ceremonies to recognise the selfless benevolence of philanthropists.⁹⁸ Birmingham Borough Council commemorated Louisa Ryland's gift with a ceremonial illuminated copy

⁹⁵ Caroline McCaffrey-Howard, 'Lady Dorothy Nevill as Art Collector', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, no. 31, 2020, doi.org/10.16995/ntn.3344.

⁹⁶ Letter from Louisa Ryland to Richard Chamberlain, 1881, (Birmingham Library Archives Ref. MS 39/101/7).

⁹⁷ James Moore, *High Culture and Tall Chimneys: Art Institutions and Urban Society in Lancashire, 1780-1914*, Manchester, 2018, 169.

⁹⁸ Moore gives the example of the opening of the Walker Gallery, Liverpool in 1877, financed by philanthropist Andrew Barclay Walker, marked by a grand procession through the city involving city officials, trade unions, voluntary societies and religious groups "in a show of civic unity". However, Walker's philanthropy was not without controversy because of his commercial interests in beer brewing and alcohol. (Moore, *High Culture and Tall Chimneys*, 176).

of their resolution of thanks for her donation (see fig. 57 – fig. 61). The object was created as an outlet for their desire for ceremony to formally recognise her donation whilst also respecting her desire for anonymity. However, she eventually acquiesced and allowed her name to be included on a commemorative memorial stone, providing a permanent public declaration of her contribution to the Birmingham School of Art (fig. 62),

Although I should have liked to remain an anonymous donor I have as you are aware complied with the request that my name should be upon the memorial stone. I felt that I could not refrain from the pleasure of having my name connected with that of others who have contributed to the erection of a building which I trust will be use and ornament to this town.⁹⁹

Louisa Ryland had to navigate between the conflicting positions of involvement in large-scale financial activity and the societal view that such activity was inappropriate for women with fears of their behaviour being 'unwomanly' and 'defeminizing'.¹⁰⁰ Louisa Ryland was a religious person, her parents were Unitarian but she was raised as Anglican, and she gave a vast amount of money to the repair, improvement and building of churches.¹⁰¹ She was also concerned about the religious education of children and in her correspondence with the Mayor about her School of Art building donation, she connected it with a request for religious education in the Board Schools to be increased.¹⁰² The role and influence of religion on the charitable works of middle- and upper-class women has been demonstrated by Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair's book on women and public lives in Glasgow, 'nineteenth-century Christianity's exaltation of women as the moral and spiritual superiors

⁹⁹ Letter from Louisa Ryland to Thomas Martineau, 11th July 1884 (Birmingham Library Archives Ref. MS 39/108).

¹⁰⁰ Dorice Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England*, Charlottesville, Virginia, 2002, 2; 'A Fear for the Future', *Fraser's Magazine*, Feb 1859, 243-248.

¹⁰¹ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 104.

¹⁰² Letter from Louisa Ryland to Richard Chamberlain, 1881, (Birmingham Library Archives Ref. MS 39/101/7)

of men could be appropriated and reconceived to give women licence to enter the public sphere and to create a public identity which could encompass productive work'.¹⁰³

Louisa Ryland's motivations for supporting good causes in Birmingham can never truly be known. It could be summarised that her overall concern was with the well-being of Birmingham's population; their spiritual, bodily and intellectual health. Her interest in helping to elevate the morals and virtue of the people of the town via art culture was no doubt connected to the fact that she also practiced art herself. She did not publicly exhibit her artworks during her lifetime. Perhaps this was motivated by the same desire for not wanting to draw attention to herself that motivated her initial desire for anonymity in her philanthropy. Her paintings were exhibited at the RBSA Spring exhibition in 1889, a few months after her death, showing the exhibition visitors a side to her that very few would have known. McCaffrey-Howarth has observed about the art collector Lady Dorothy Nevill, 'her legacy as a woman collector and benefactor has faded from cultural consciousness and institutional memory'.¹⁰⁴ A similar concern could be applied to Louisa Ryland, a significant participant in Birmingham's art world.

Anna Chamberlain Harris, Frances Hudson Everitt and Louisa Anne Ryland engaged in philanthropic activities connected to the moral uplift of society, the civilising mission. Their own social identities and positions as upper and middle class encouraged a sense of responsibility towards the improvement of moral standards of the lower classes. The

¹⁰³ Gordon & Nair, *Public Lives*, 179.

¹⁰⁴ McCaffrey-Howard, 'Lady Dorothy Nevill'.

phenomenon of Birmingham's 'Civic Gospel' municipal philosophy informed the social environment these women inhabited.¹⁰⁵ The belief in the power of art to encourage moral improvement was widespread and motivated many cultural and philanthropic activities.¹⁰⁶

Women's contribution to Birmingham's art world beyond artmaking was multifaceted, ranging from participation in social events, to single acts of object donation and the giving of vast sums of money. Their contributions were often intrinsically linked to social and moral benevolence, the caring for the less fortunate and desire to improve the morals of the lower classes via culture. Their involvement and influence in art-based socialising and philanthropy have not previously been fully recognised or examined. Their contributions were a vital part of Birmingham's art and civic cultures and knowledge of them is essential for understanding Birmingham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and in understanding the city's art collections today.

¹⁰⁵ Reekes & Roberts, *George Dawson and his Circle*.

¹⁰⁶ Borzello, *Civilising Caliban*; Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast. English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914*, London, 1995; Martin Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy. Charity and Society in Nineteenth-Century Bristol*, London, 1999.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this thesis is that women played a greater part and had a more significant influence on the many elements that made up Birmingham's art world culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century than has previously been understood. Birmingham's art world was comprised of a multitude of key institutions and activities. The most prominent organisations were the Birmingham School of Art, the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Significant and regular art events in the town, such as the annual school of art students' exhibition and the two yearly RBSA exhibitions, were important elements in the town's art environment. Furthermore, these were supplemented by art-based social events such as *conversazioni*. Birmingham was a significant art location within the national art world, attracting artists from across the country to exhibit their art works there. These included the famous artists, such as Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833–1898), Lady Elizabeth Thompson Butler (1846–1933), John Everett Millais (1829–1896), and John William Waterhouse (1849–1917), to name a few. Many of the renowned artists who exhibited in Birmingham were Academicians of the Royal Academy of Arts, considered to be the most eminent art organisation in the country.

Artists from outside Birmingham considered the effort of sending their paintings for exhibition in the town worthwhile. Often, a key motivation for exhibiting was the possibility of making a sale. The art market and related commerce was an important element in Birmingham's art world. The business activities of art dealers, auction houses, large art manufacturing firms, smaller workshops and art supply firms were also a vital part of the town's wider art world. Additionally, Birmingham's art scene was shaped by the

demographic of the local population and especially the middle-classes, many of whom were Nonconformists. Their doctrine of municipal duty and civic ambitions, called the 'Civic Gospel', included a conviction in the capacity of art to educate and improve the morals and practical skills of the working artisan class. They also believed the experience of art, typically by viewing paintings at exhibitions, would elevate and improve the moral virtue of the local population. Furthermore, Birmingham's art culture was not an isolated phenomenon. Birmingham artists made, displayed and sold their artworks in many locations outside the town. The evidence of this thesis highlights the art activities of women artists and how Birmingham intersected with broader, national and international art world happenings.

The main research question this thesis asked was, what was the contribution and impact of women to Birmingham's art world between 1860 to 1920? This sixty-year period was the focus because it was a time of significant, progressive challenges and changes for women. These included access to education and employment and changes in the law and marriage. The question has been addressed by examining the art activities of more than fifty women in Birmingham as case studies. The large number of case study examples is a particular innovation of this project. Barbara Pezzini has aptly described these as telescopic and microscopic views.¹ The macro data on women and men artists from exhibition catalogues, address information and sales lists were compared to show overall trends across the period. A micro perspective via case study examples of individual women augmented the macro data to provide a more nuanced understanding of their activities.

¹ Pezzini, *Making a Market for Art*, 34.

The extensive quantity of both types of evidence has comprehensively demonstrated the vast breadth and depth of women's involvement in the local, national and international art worlds of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The six key art areas of training, making, displaying, selling (and related commerce), socialising and philanthropy were the focus and formed the chapter structure of this project. This study concludes that across these key areas, women's participation and impact was greater than has previously been assumed. A wider scope of 'art' was used for this project as opposed to a rigid or narrow focus on either fine art, applied art or design. A less expansive view would limit a fuller understandings of women's multifaceted participation in art.

Scholarship in the field of women artists in the Victorian era has developed from a rediscovery and restorative approach in the 1970s and 1980s to analyses of social contexts and economic circumstances from the 1990s onwards. These studies not only shed light on the social history of art making for women but develop our understandings of routes to professionalisation, reputation building and identity formation. The strategies deployed by women to develop an art career were mediated by gendered societal expectations that limited what a women could and should do. For women of the middle and upper classes, which are the demographic of focus in this thesis, the threat to their reputations and social positioning had to be navigated. The perils were greatest within the public realm and public spaces, so they utilised tactics that reduced the risk. Attending public events and undertaking international travel with family members and in groups was one such acceptable strategy. Furthermore, restrictive notions of the types of art considered suitable for women, such as floral still life, were challenged by producing working that

demonstrated advanced skills, intellectual engagement and creative innovation. Additionally, this thesis has demonstrated that women pushed the boundaries of expectations by working in media such as enamelling that required physical strength and challenging working conditions with kilns and heavy tools, which were unexpected for women,

Studies of Birmingham's art world happenings in the same era have examined the School of Art, the contribution of art and design to the town's civic culture and the community of mostly male artists, described as the 'Birmingham School'. There is a lack of sustained attention to the role of women artists in Birmingham and that is the gap this thesis has addressed. However, two recent doctoral theses have examined the contribution of women graduates of the Birmingham School of Art to the Arts and Crafts movement. Sally Hoban connected their art training to paid employment. Claire FitzGerald analysed art objects and their making to issues such as technique, collaboration, regionalism and gender. This thesis is situated between these areas of scholarship and contributes to the knowledge of Birmingham's art world and the wider phenomenon of British women artists.

The women whose histories were the case studies of this project were overwhelmingly from the middle-classes. Their father's occupations, which often determined social class, ranged from a publican, a brass foundry owner, a Justice of the Peace and a medical surgeon. Several of the women artists were from artist families or married to artists. However, just as many remained unmarried. Mary Vernon Morgan's father, William Vernon, was an artist as were her sisters Florence, Ellen and Norah. Mary married the artist

Charles Morgan, and the couple were close to his brother, the artist Walter Morgan. All seven artists from the extended Vernon Morgan family were actively involved in Birmingham's art world. Some of the women discussed in this project spent their entire lives in Birmingham whilst others travelled frequently and for extended periods of time around Britain, Europe and North America. One of them, Mary Offlow Scattergood, sadly passed away at the age of 37, only three days after arriving in San Francisco, California. The majority of the women artists discussed were students at the Birmingham School of Art. Others were taught art skills via private tuition or from artist family members. The artists John Steeple is credited for teaching his daughter, Georgina, from a very young age.

The main case study examples for this project were born in or spent their young, formative years in Birmingham and began their art careers in the town. However, the trajectory of their art professions varied greatly, yet they all made an impactful contribution, individually and collectively, to Birmingham's art world. Their different life experiences included the making, displaying and selling of their art works as well as art-based networking and socialising. For those that mostly practised in Birmingham, there were many who participated in philanthropic activities to improve the living and social conditions of their fellow citizens, along with other, non-artist women. The value of studying these artists' histories lies in broadening and deepening our knowledge of the British art world during the latter half of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries.

Chapter one examined the impact of women art students at Birmingham's School of Art. The school had a somewhat progressive environment for women. This enabled them to

gain skills that they later used to develop art practices and careers and, at the same time, the women students shaped the school. The growing demand for women's art education across the period led to curriculum and timetable changes. Furthermore, the demand for places for women was leveraged by the school's management committee to support the financial viability of the school. Additionally, women art students' successes at local and national art school competitions provided a positive boost to the school's national reputation and standing against other schools.

Chapter two goes on to scrutinize objects made by Birmingham women artists to demonstrate the vast range of styles and media they worked in. It has argued that artworks made by women were a vital part of Birmingham's art culture and connected with the town's civic and economic ambitions. Their art making involved a multiplicity of intellectual engagements such as interpretations of scenes from literature, a popular art trend at that time, and presentations of well-known subjects, for example the Greek goddess Circe. Furthermore, this chapter highlighted the frequent art collaboration practices of women artists. It argues that these facilitated networking and a community ethos amongst Birmingham artists, based on shared art interests, technical art skills and geographical proximity. The chapter also gave evidence of Birmingham women artists' travel, nationally and internationally, typically with members of their families. This demonstrates the wider geographical connections Birmingham women artists made in the pursuit of their art careers.

Chapters three and four are closely connected with their considerations of art exhibitions and the art market, respectively. Chapter three scrutinised data from exhibition catalogues and established the level of Birmingham women artists' participation. Furthermore, the data were examined to show the level of participation of women from beyond Birmingham, proving the popularity and value of Birmingham as a key, exhibition location outside London. Birmingham was a key location with enough exhibition activity to hold two large, well-attended art exhibitions every year, which was unusual for a location outside London. It is argued that Birmingham was a location where women artists felt they could reasonably compete for sales with men artists. The chapter established that women's exhibiting contributed to Birmingham's wider reputation as a nationally important art location. The differences in art critics' responses to women's work compared to men's is also highlighted to demonstrate the gendered challenges women artists faced in building professional reputations. The case study examples in Chapter three give greater depth and nuance to understanding how women artists participated in art exhibition culture. They show the variety of tactics used to establish professionalisation and build careers.

Chapter four continued on from exhibitions and examined the wider art market and commerce activities of women artists. In doing so it has provided new material on Birmingham's art dealers and auctions. The chapter demonstrated that women artists interacted with the art market in an assortment of ways, many of which were necessarily different to men artists. The mostly middle-class women of interest to this thesis, negotiated professional identities and reputations within the boundaries of social conventions that constrained their proximity to paid work and financial transactions. Data

from Birmingham art sales were compared with other British locations such as Manchester and London to show that Birmingham was a relatively worthwhile location for women to sell their artworks. This was supported by evidence of the use of women artists' names as headlines in art auction advertisements. This was further supported by evidence of women artists from beyond Birmingham, including some with a notable degree of fame, successfully selling paintings via Birmingham exhibitions. The chapter also considered the expanded world of art commerce and business with evidence of women artists' financial and commercial activities. Evidence of them selling copyrights, registering Assay Office hallmarks, undertaking commissioned work, establishing their own businesses to sell their art works and those that supplied materials to artists is given to show the breadth of their undertakings. The case studies examined in this chapter established the depth and breadth of selling tactics used locally, nationally and internationally. Examples of such tactics included partnering with family and friends to overcome gendered societal constraints and blending sales opportunities with social occasions and the domestic environment. The findings of this chapter provide an important contribution to the field of art market studies as well as an expansion of the scope of related activities, through a focus on a location and artists who have not previously had sustained scrutiny.

The fifth and final chapter of this thesis examined the interconnected topics of women's art world sociability and philanthropy. Women, including many who were not artists, were involved in Birmingham's art culture in a wide variety of ways beyond the typical art activities of training, making, exhibiting and selling. The first section of the chapter argued that socialising as art students and at community events enabled women to foster

professional networks, develop artistic identities and forge reputations. It demonstrated that socialising in groups enabled women artists to participate in public events whilst safely navigating social restrictions. Section two of this chapter uncovered art-related philanthropy by Birmingham women. Public art collections in the nineteenth century had an important role in aspirations for civic, social and moral reform. In Birmingham this was termed the 'Civic Gospel'. This chapter section established that women benefactors were responsible for important contributions to Birmingham's public art collection. Furthermore, it connected those donations and other art-related philanthropy, such as significant financial contributions to the Birmingham School of Art, to wider acts of civic altruism by those women. This demonstrated the extent and range of women's influence on Birmingham's interconnected art and civic cultures.

The six key areas that form the chapters of this project draw attention to the wide variety of art activities of women in Birmingham. These areas of enquiry contribute to the fields of art history, art market studies, the social history of art, women's history and Birmingham's history. The focus on art world participants who have previously been unknown and whose careers are outside the typical narratives of professional art careers, encourages current understandings to expand to accommodate their experiences. Furthermore, the activities of women in Birmingham's art world were impacted by the wider changes happening for women in this period. The changes in education, employment, law and marriage enabled more opportunities for their art careers. For example, their access to the same art classes as men, such as life drawing classes, improved over the period. The findings of this project contribute to the broader histories of women, especially the impact of their activities in the

areas of education and professional work. It is hoped that this project will enable further research in the field of women's creative and professional work. The approach of using macro and micro data could be used across a greater time span or different geographical location to build a greater understanding.

At the conclusion of this project, it is useful to reflect on how this project could be done differently if repeated with the benefit of hindsight. It would be useful to develop greater comparisons with other British regional locations. The question of how unique Birmingham was as a location for women artists could then be further assessed with a greater understanding of the art culture circumstances in other locations. Manchester and Glasgow, for example, had comparable art cultures in the latter half of the nineteenth century and a greater depth of analysis and comparison with Birmingham in the areas of art education, exhibitions and the art market could prove fruitful. This would enable a better understanding of the similarities and differences of each location and a greater understanding of the wider, national art world. Additionally, this project could have benefited from greater access to archives, which were limited due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. It is also useful, at the conclusion of this thesis, to consider ideas that went beyond the scope of this project, for potential future research. It became clear during the research stage that women's involvement in philanthropy in Birmingham, outside the art world, would be a rich vein to explore. The phenomenon was far reaching, and a deeper knowledge of women's role would broaden understandings of how Birmingham's 'Civic Gospel' was enacted. Women's exhibition activities across the country and especially in smaller towns that had art schools and exhibition societies, for example Northampton and

Leicester, could be researched further and connected to the histories uncovered in Birmingham and other larger towns and cities. This would provide a greater and more developed understanding of women artists professional activities.

The findings of this thesis comprehensively demonstrate that women played a greater role in many and varied aspects of Birmingham's art world culture, and beyond, than has previously been understood. Knowledge and analysis of their histories provide us with a greater understanding of how the art world was experienced by participants that are often overlooked.

APPENDIX 1 – Art Education

Table 1 – Student Numbers

School Year	Female Students No. (percentage)	Male Students No. (percentage)	Total	Source
1843–44	10 (12%)	74 (88%)	84	Bird, 1992, p.179
1843–44 (30th May 1844)	60 (25%)	183 (75%)	243	Birmingham School Minute Books, 1844
1844–45	79 (26%)	228 (74%)	307	Birmingham School Minute Books, Annual General Meeting, 1845
1845–46	79 (21%)	304 (79%)	383	Birmingham School Minute Books, Annual General Meeting, 28 th May 1846
1846–47	117 (28%)	306 (72%)	423	Birmingham School Minute Books, Annual General Meeting, 26 th May 1847
1847–48	141 (31%)	307 (69%)	448	Birmingham School Minute Books, Annual General Meeting, 31 st May 1848
1849–50	149 (29%)	365 (71%)	514	Birmingham Journal, 22 nd June 1850, p.4
1851–52	134 (26%)	386 (74%)	520	Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 5 th July 1852, p.1
1852–53	148 (26%)	417 (74%)	565	Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 19 th Sept 1853, p.1
1853–54	138 (25%)	412 (75%)	550	Birmingham Journal, 26 th May 1855, p.9

Table 2 – Class Timetables

1843 – when the school first opened

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
10am to 1pm		Men (3hrs)		Men (3hrs)		Men (3hrs)
2pm to 4pm					Women (2hrs)	
7.30pm to 9.30pm		Men (2hrs)		Men (2hrs)		Men (2hrs)

1844

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
10am to 1pm		Men (3hrs)		Men (3hrs)		Men (3hrs)
2pm to 4pm					Women (2hrs)	
7.30pm to 9.30pm		Men (2hrs)		Men (2hrs)	Women (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)

1846

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
10am to 1pm		Men (3hrs)		Men (3hrs)		Men (3hrs)
2pm to 4pm					Women (2hrs)	
7.30pm to 9.30pm	7pm to 9pm	Men (2hrs)		Men (2hrs)	Women (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)

1847

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
2pm to 4pm		Men (2hrs)	Women (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Women (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)
7.30pm to 9.30pm		Men 'A' (2hrs)	Men 'B' (2hrs)	Advanced Class (2hrs)	Men 'A' (2hrs)	Men 'B' (2hrs)

1851

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
2pm to 4pm		Women (2hrs)	King Edward's Pupils (2hrs)	Women (2hrs)	King Edward's Pupils (2hrs)	Men Advanced Class (2hrs)
7.30pm to 9.30pm		Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)

1853

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
11am to 1pm		Women (2hrs) 'Ladies Class' Advanced students can start at 10am and finish at 3pm.		Women (2hrs) 'Ladies Class' Advanced students can start at 10am and finish at 3pm.		
4.30pm to 6.30pm		Women (2hrs) 'Female Class' Free Scholars elected from this class can attend both Female Classes	King Edward's Pupils (2hrs)	Women (2hrs) 'Female Class' Free Scholars elected from this class can attend both Female Classes	King Edward's Pupils (2hrs)	Men Advanced Class (2hrs)
7.30pm to 9.30pm		Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)

1857

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
11am to 1pm		First Women's Class (2hrs)		First Women's Class (2hrs)		
2pm to 4pm			Men (2hrs)		Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)
4.30pm to 6.30pm		Second Women's Class (2hrs)		Second Women's Class (2hrs)		
7.30pm to 9.30pm		Men & Mechanical Drawing Class (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)	Men (2hrs)

1873–74

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
11am to 1pm		Women (2hrs)		Women (2hrs)		
2.30pm to 4.30pm			Grammar School (2hrs)		Grammar School (2hrs)	
4.30pm to 6.30pm		Women (2hrs)		Women (2hrs)		
6pm to 8pm			Men Elementary (2hrs)		Men Elementary (2hrs)	
7pm to 9pm			Mechanical Elementary (2hrs)		Mechanical Elementary (2hrs)	
7.30pm to 9.30pm		Artisan Designing Class (2hrs)		Artisan Designing Class (2hrs)		Artisan Designing Class (2hrs)
7.30pm to 9.30pm			Modelling Class (2hrs)	Modelling Class (2hrs)	Modelling Class (2hrs)	

Table 3 – Birmingham Women Art Students & National Competition of Art Schools Awards – Sample List

Year	Medal	Name	Art work
1854 ¹	Bronze	Mary Ann Preston	Ornament painted in monochrome
1855 ²	Bronze x 2	Mary Ann Preston	
	Bronze	Ada Moore	
	Bronze	Marianne Sanders	
	Bronze	Matilda Smith	
	Bronze	Maria Heath	
	Bronze	C. Jane Potts	
1857 ³	National Medal	Jane Francis	Flowers from examples
1881	Silver	Julia Mountford	monochrome in watercolours of head from the antique
	Bronze	Florence Plant	Group in oil colours
	Bronze	Emily Seymour	Studies in drapery
1882 ⁴	Bronze	Julia Mountford	Monochrome in watercolour of ornament from the cast
	Bronze	Kate Hall	Group in oil colours
	Bronze	Laura Phillip	View of a staircase in oil colours
	Bronze	Ellen Welch	Monochrome in oil of ornament from the cast
1884 ⁵	Silver	Mabel Sanders	Chalk drawing of head from life
	Silver	Mary Sibree	Group in oil
	Bronze	Isabel H. Baker	Oil painting of drapery
	Bronze	Kate E. Bunce	Oil painting of drapery
	Bronze	Mary Sibree	Monochrome in oil of figure from the antique
	Bronze	Rose Alice Starkey	Broup in monochrome
	Bronze	Lizzie Taylor	Group in oil colours

¹ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 10 July 1854, 1.

² *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 4 Feb 1856, 1.

³ *Birmingham Journal*, 14 Oct 1857, 4.

⁴ *Report of the Examiners on the National Competition*, 1882.

⁵ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 July 1884, 5.

1886 ⁶	Bronze	M. Jannette Bayliss	View of the interior of a school of art – the Science and Art Dept. offered £4 to purchase this work.
	Bronze	Mary H. Rollason	Group in oil colours
	Bronze	Rose Alice Starkey	Chalk drawing of figure from the nude
1890 ⁷	Silver	Agnes Manby	
	Silver	Winifred Smith	
	Bronze	Gertrude Bradley	
	Bronze	Louisa K. Brown	
	Bronze x 3	Georgie E. France	
	Bronze	Alicia Smith	
1893 ⁸	Silver	Miss F. M. Rudland	Book illustrations
	Silver	Winifred Smith	Book illustrations
	Bronze	Miss M. I. Newill	
	Bronze	Miss E. A. Cowell	
1899 ⁹	Silver	Alice Allday	Model of figure from the temple of 'Wingless Victory'
	Silver	Nellie Brightwell	Design for a frieze for a nursery wallpaper
	Silver	Edith Cowell	Modelled design for a font
	Silver	Gertrude Haswell	Modelled design for a frieze
	Silver	Clara Hill	Modelled design for spoons
	Silver	Ada Holland-Smith	Design for a needlework panel
	Silver	Dorothea Ivens	Modelled designs for spoons
	Silver	Gwynedd Palin	Modelled designs for spoons
1901 ¹⁰	Gold	Geraldine Morris	Designs for stained glass windows (only gold for Birmingham that year). Also awarded the Princess of Wales Scholarship of £25.

⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 Feb 1887, 4.

⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 26 July 1890, 5.

⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 July 1893, 5.

⁹ *The Artist: An Illustrated Monthly Record of Arts, Crafts and Industries*, Oct 1899, 37-54.

¹⁰ *The Artist: An Illustrated Monthly Record for Arts, Crafts and Industries*, Nov 1901, 65-83.

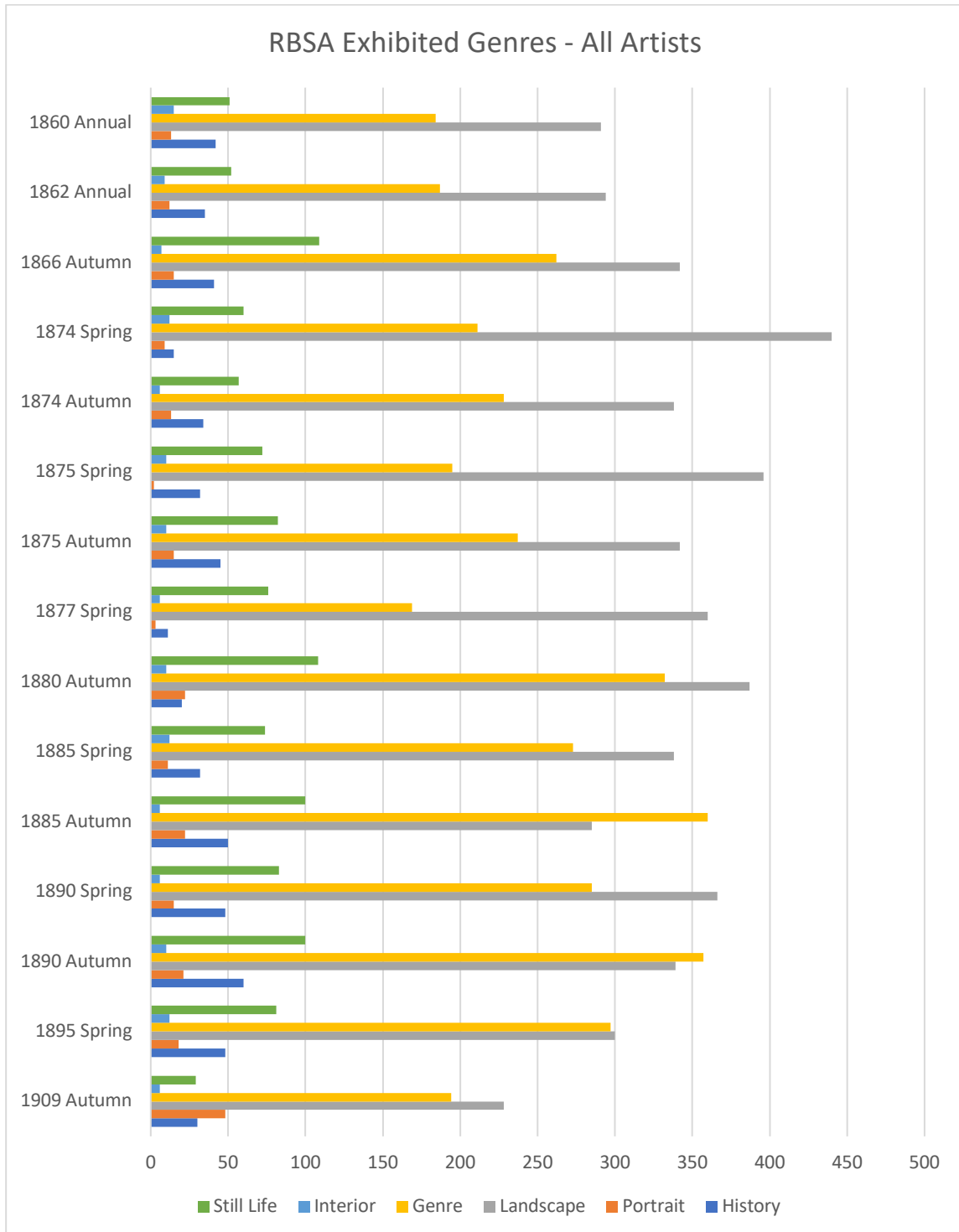
	Silver	Minnie Bolton	Design for a cut-work table centre
	Silver	Lily Dale	Design for a silver belt ornament
	Silver	Annie Fellows	Design for an embroidered fire screen
	Silver	Annie Fellows	Designs for d'oyleys and waist-band
	Silver	Edith Goodman	Design for a copper clasp
	Silver	Grace Rankilor	Designs for a belt in silver, bronze and enamel
1902 ¹¹	Gold	Fanny Bunn	Design for an enamelled panel (only gold award for Birmingham that year)
	Silver	Hilda Baker	Gesso decorated box
	Silver	Minnie Bolton	Design for a table centre
	Silver	Florence Camm	Design for a stained glass window
	Silver	Kate Eadie	Design for a craved wood casket
	Silver	Kate Eadie	Design for an incised and stained wood screen
	Silver	Geraldine Morris	Design for a mosaic frieze
	Silver	Geraldine Morris	Design for book illustrations
	Silver	Annie Griffin	Studies of historic styles of ornament
	Bronze	*eight women – need to add info* (on archive.org)	
1903	Gold	Edith Linnell	Design for silver brooch, buttons, cloak clasps, hat and lace pins (only gold award for Birmingham that year)
	Silver	Fanny Bunn	Designs for enamelled panel and box-lid
	Silver	Florence Camm	Designs for stained glass windows
	Silver	Kate Eadie	Design for a leather prayer book case
	Silver	Kate Eadie	Design for a piano-front coloured gesso inlaid

¹¹ National Competition 1902 List of Students Rewarded with the Report of the Examiners, 1902-04, 4 & 42.

	Silver	Gertrude Hart	Design for enamelled panels
	Silver	Ida Kay	Designs for stained glass windows
	Silver	Jessie Lacon	Design for a stained wood piano front
	Silver	Geraldine Morris	Designs for a piano front and an over-mantel
	Silver	Lillian Raine	Model of figures from the cast
	Bronze	*thirteen women – need to add info* (on archive.org)	
1904	Gold	Fanny Bunn	Design for an enamelled panel with specimen in material (executed design) – (only gold award for Birmingham that year)
	Silver	Agnes Pool	Design for enamelled panel with specimen in material (executed design)
	Silver	Frances Sanderson	Designs for stained glass windows with specimen in material (executed design)
	Bronze	*ten women – need to add info* (on archive.org)	
1910	Gold	Alice Camwell	

APPENDIX 2 – Art Objects

Graph 1 – RBSA Exhibitions – Numbers of Paintings Exhibited by Genre for All Artists



Graph 2 – RBSA Exhibitions – Numbers of Paintings Exhibited by Genre for Women Artists

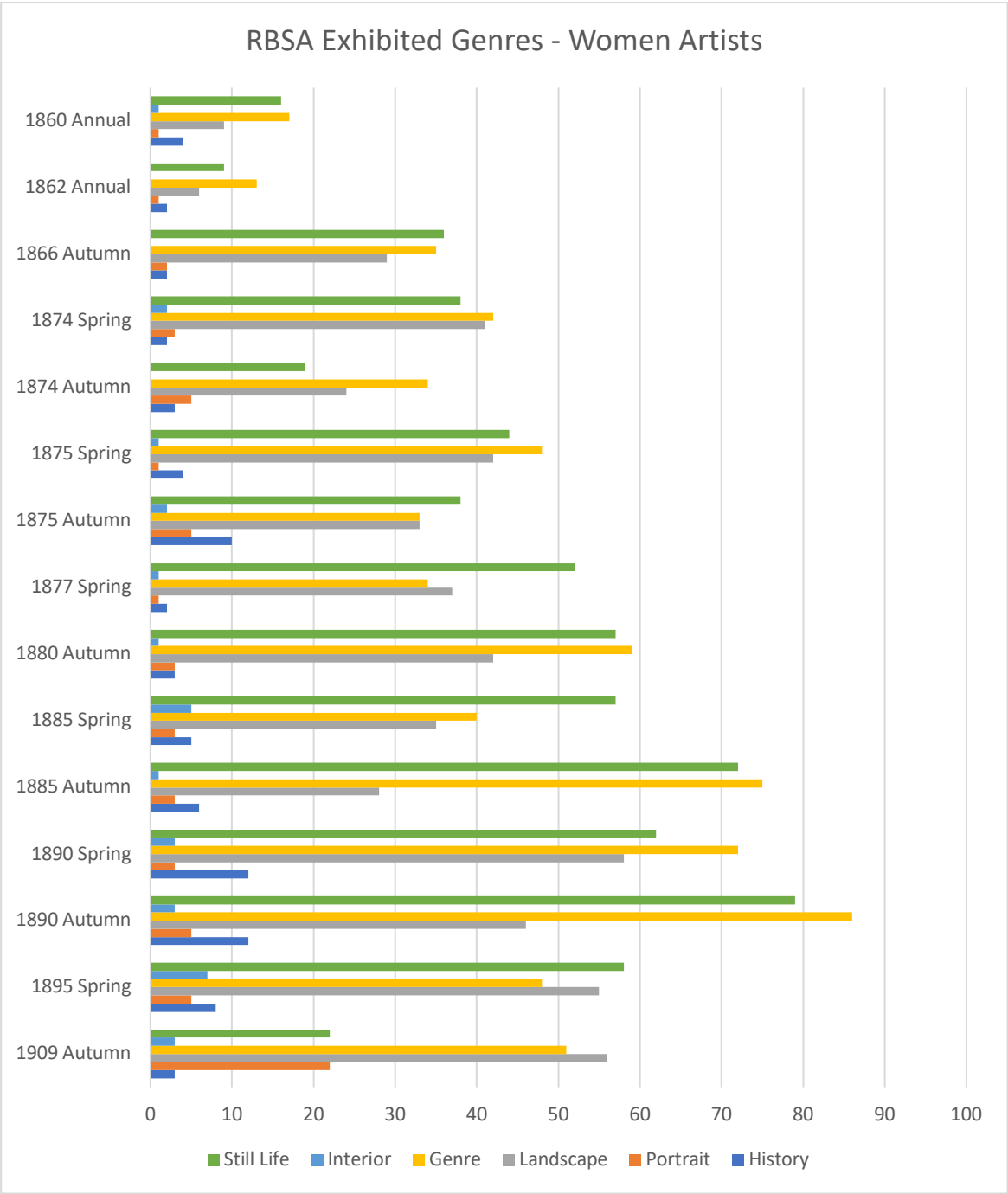


Table 1 – Sample List of Geographic Locations in Landscape Paintings Exhibited by Women Artists at RBSA Exhibitions

Exhibition	Locations Painted by Women Artists
1860 Annual	Essex, Devon, Canterbury, France, Germany
1862 Annual	Essex, Lake District, Austria
1866 Autumn	Oxfordshire, Yorkshire, Wales, Ireland, Austria
1874 Spring	Snowdon, Wales, Liverpool, Whitby, France, Italy, Switzerland, Algiers
1874 Autumn	Wales, Scotland, Isle of Arran, France, Spain, Switzerland
1875 Spring	Hastings, Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, Isle of Wight, France, Switzerland, Italy
1875 Autumn	Tunbridge Wells, Wales, Italy
1877 Spring	Nottinghamshire, Hastings, Wales, Cornwall, Scotland, Germany, Spain
1880 Autumn	Wales, Penzance, Edinburgh, Jersey, Arran, Italy
1885 Spring	Cornwall, Scotland, France, Germany, Italy
1885 Autumn	Devon, Cornwall, Yorkshire, Wales, Scotland, Belgium, France, Italy
1890 Spring	Wales, Scotland, Isle of Wight, France, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Greece
1890 Autumn	Devon, Kent, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Netherlands, France, Italy
1895 Spring	Plymouth, Bath, Stirling, Dolgelly, Isle of Man, Venice, Florence, Norway
1909 Autumn	Devon, Yorkshire, Wales, Scotland, Channel Islands, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Italy

Table 2 – Landscape Paintings by Annie and Minnie Townley of Whitby and Yorkshire

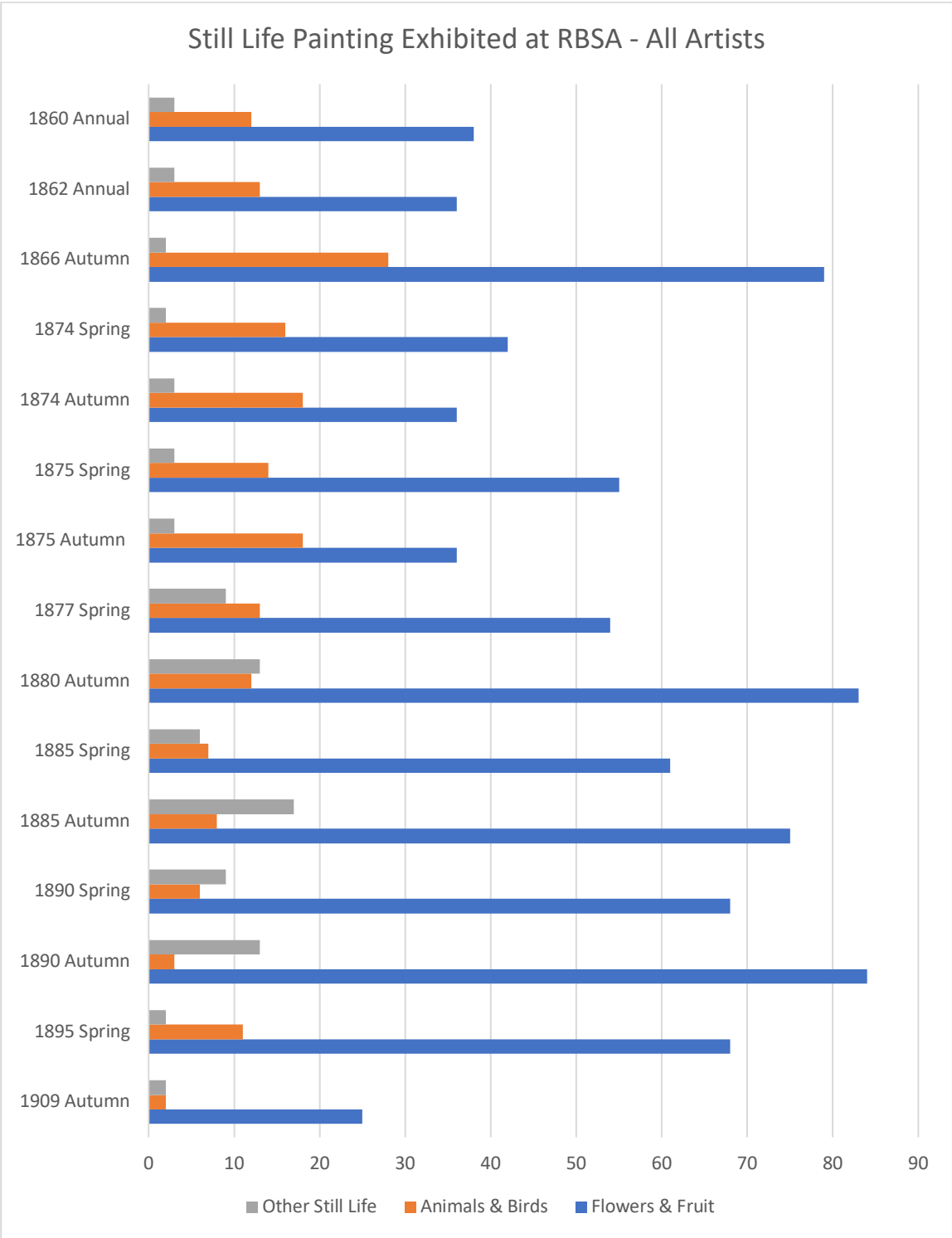
RBSA Exhibition	Cat. No. & Title	Artist
1874 Spring	(278) <i>Whitby Abbey</i>	Minnie Townley
1874 Spring	(418) <i>Cock Mill</i>	Annie Townley
1874 Spring	(681) <i>Sketch at St. Leonard's</i>	Minnie Townley
1875 Spring	(439) <i>On the Moors, Near Whitby</i>	Minnie Townley
1875 Spring	(702) <i>Sketch of St. Hilda's Abbey, Whitby</i>	Minnie Townley
1875 Spring	(169) <i>Sketch of a Yorkshire Beck</i>	Annie Townley
1875 Autumn	(251) <i>A Yorkshire Beck</i>	Minnie Townley
1875 Autumn	(642) <i>On the Moors, Goathland</i>	Minnie Townley
1879 Autumn	(730) <i>A Yorkshire Beck</i>	Annie Townley
1880 Autumn	(707) <i>Whitby</i>	Annie Townley
1881 Spring	(326) <i>On the Moors, Goathland, near Whitby</i>	Minnie Townley
1882 Spring	(37) <i>The Quay, Whitby</i>	Annie Townley
1882 Spring	(169) <i>Cobles, Whitby</i>	Annie Townley
1882 Autumn	(660) <i>In Whitby Harbour</i>	Annie Townley

Table 3 - Landscape Paintings by Annie and Minnie Townley of European Locations.

RBSA Exhibition	Cat. No. & Title	Countries in Title	Artist
1878 Spring	(437) <i>Isola Bella, Lago Maggiore</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1878 Spring	(564) <i>Looking up Lake Como</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1878 Spring	(648) <i>The Fisherman's Island, Lago Maggiore</i>	Italy	Annie Townley
1880 Autumn	(448) <i>Church of San Georgio, Venice</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1882 Spring	(911) <i>Isola Piscatori: Lago Maggiore</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1883 Spring	(842) <i>Corner of a Stall in the Market Place, Dinan, Brittany</i>	France	Minnie Townley
1883 Spring	(47) <i>Evening: Honfleur</i>	France	Annie Townley
1883 Spring	(71) <i>Rain Clearing Off, Honfleur Harbour</i>	France	Annie Townley
1883 Spring	(609) <i>Sketch of an Old Normandy Farm</i>	France	Annie Townley
1883 Autumn	(202) <i>Honfleur Flower Market</i>	France	Minnie Townley
1883 Autumn	(213) <i>Hollyhocks in a Garden: Trouville</i>	France	Minnie Townley
1885 Spring	(279) <i>The Belfry, Bruges</i>	Belgium	Annie Townley
1885 Spring	(732) <i>Porte D'Ostend, Bruges</i>	Belgium	Annie Townley
1885 Autumn	(458) <i>On the Scheldr, Antwerp</i>	Belgium	Minnie Townley
1887 Autumn	(719) <i>Near Gersaw, Lake of Lucerne</i>	Switzerland	Annie Townley
1888 Spring	(9) <i>On the Lake of Thun</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1888 Spring	(41) <i>The Castle of Chillon</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1888 Spring	(796) <i>Spring in the Lake of Lucerne</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1888 Spring	(489) <i>Letting off Steam, Antwerp</i>	Belgium	Annie Townley

1888 Spring	(508) <i>A Wintry Corner, on the Lake of Lucerne</i>	Switzerland	Annie Townley
1888 Autumn	(343) <i>Rain Clearing Off: Lake of Lucerne</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1889 Spring	(108) <i>A Windy Day off Scheveningen</i>	Netherlands	Minnie Townley
1889 Spring	(630) <i>Castle of Chillon</i>	Switzerland	Annie Townley
1890 Spring	(5) <i>Looking Toward Spiez, Lake of Thun</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1890 Spring	(622) <i>The Path to the Shrine, South Tyrol</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1890 Autumn	(59) <i>Kindli-Mord, Lake of Lucerne</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1890 Autumn	(259) <i>San Giorgio, Venice</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1891 Autumn	(561) <i>Lemons in Our Italian Garden</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1891 Autumn	(563) <i>Oranges in Our Italian Garden</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1892 Autumn	(159) <i>A Mountain Path, Cortina</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1892 Autumn	(266) <i>A Summer's Day: Lake of Thun</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1893 Autumn	(11) <i>A Mountain Path, Lake of Lucerne</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1893 Autumn	(44) <i>On the Lagoon, Venice</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1894 Spring	(483) <i>Morning: Looking Towards Baveno, Lago Maggiore</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1897 Spring	(570) <i>The Dent Du Midi: Seen from Glion</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1898 Spring	(339) <i>A Bye-way in Venice</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1898 Spring	(568) <i>On the Lagoon: Venice</i>	Italy	Minnie Townley
1899 Spring	(300) <i>Autumn at Montreux, Lake of Geneva</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1899 Spring	(302) <i>At the Foot of the Jungfrau, Lauterbrunnen Valley</i>	Switzerland	Minnie Townley
1902 Spring	(11) <i>On the Sheideek, Switzerland</i>	Switzerland	Annie Townley

Graph 3 – Still Life Categories Exhibited at the RBSA, All Artists



Graph 4 – Still Life Paintings Exhibited at the RBSA by Gender

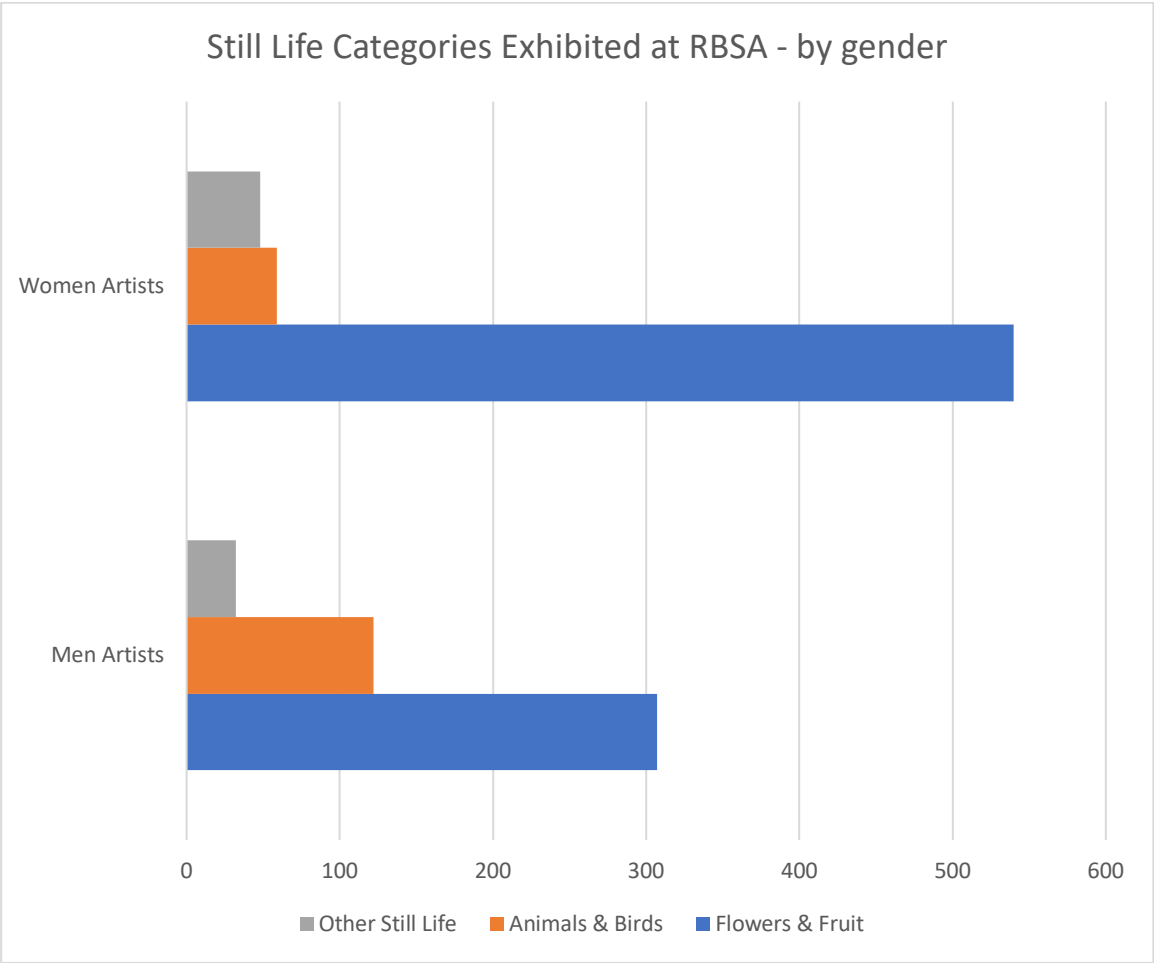


Table 4 – Examples of Annie Steen’s exhibited collaborations

Exhibition	Objects
1902 RBSA Spring & Autumn Exhibitions	Nineteen items of jewellery with Margaret J. Awdry.
1906 ACES Exhibition	Gold cross and silver, gold and ruby brooch designed by Annie Steen, executed by Thomas Collins/Gollins [sic].
1910 ACES Exhibition	Five items of jewellery – jewelled buttons, brooches and pendant – designed by Annie Steen, executed by Thomas Harvey.
1912 ACES Exhibition	Four items of jewellery – necklaces, pendant and buttons – designed by Annie Steen, executed by Thomas Harvey.
1916 ACES Exhibition	Three jewelled necklaces, designed by Annie Steen, executed by Thomas Harvey.

Table 5 – Examples of Margaret Awdry’s exhibited collaborations

Exhibition	Objects
1910 ACES Exhibition	Seven items of jewellery, each in collaboration with a different artist. William Morris (1 x executed with, 2 x assisted by), W. Randall (2 x assisted by, 1 x executed by) and Miss Mabel E. Bendall (1 x executed by). ¹
1912 ACES Exhibition	Two items of jewellery, one with W. T. Blackband ² (executed with) and the other with B. M. Pritt (enamelling).
1916 ACES Exhibition	Two items of jewellery with James Morris (1 x assisted, 1 x executed) and another object with W. T. Blackband (1 x assisted).

¹ As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this William Morris had no relation to the famous designer of Kelmscott Press and Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.

² I believe this is William Thomas Blackband (1885-1949) who became the Headmaster of the Birmingham School of Jewellery in 1924.

Table 6 – Examples of collaborative artworks exhibited by Birmingham artists at ACES exhibitions

Exhibition	Objects
1896 ACES Exhibition	<p>Embroidered door curtain designed by Bernard Sleigh and executed by Eunice Bloxcidge and Mary Ivens, exhibited at the 1896 ACES exhibition under the banner of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art.</p> <p>Embroidered panels for a reredos, designed and exhibited by Mary J. Newill and executed by her and Helena M. R. Newill, Mary E. Newill and Ethel C. Newill, all associated with the Birmingham Municipal School of Art.</p> <p>Luncheon cloth designed by Georgina Gaskin, executed and exhibited by Kate Perks.</p>
1903 ACES Exhibition	<p><i>Gareth and Lioness</i> needlework decoration for overmantel by Mary J. Newill, assisted by the sisters Violet and Evelyn Holden.</p>
1906 ACES Exhibition	<p>Child's frock designed and exhibited by Mary J. Newill, executed by Mrs J. W. Moore.</p>
1910 ACES Exhibition	<p>Alter cloth in green brocade executed by Mary J. Newill and A. W. Simpson.</p> <p><i>St. Chad</i> stained glass panel exhibited by Thomas W. Camm, painted by Florence Camm and leaded by Charles Cuin.</p> <p><i>St. Nicholas Raising the Three Children</i> stained glass, exhibited by Florence Camm, leaded by Charles Cuin.</p> <p>Geraldine Morris and Winifred Palmer exhibited nine pendants together.</p>
1912 ACES Exhibition	<p>Jewelled gold necklace, gold ring and gold brooch exhibited by Kathleen Cavenagh and executed by Thomas Cuthbertson.³</p> <p>Florence Stern and Gertrude Conolly exhibited a silver candlestick, executed by Florence Stern.</p>

³ Thomas Cuthbertson (1892-1976) succeeded William Blackband as Headmaster of the Vittoria Street School of Jewellery in 1946.

1916 ACES Exhibition	<p>Lamp of cullet (waste glass) exhibited by Florence Camm and Walter Camm.</p> <p>Banner for the Birmingham Church Congress exhibited and executed by Mary Newill assisted by Irena B. Simpson and Ethel C. Newill.</p> <p><i>The Return of Peace</i> tempera painting on canvas exhibited by Joseph E. Southall, assisted by Anna Elizabeth Southall.</p>
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Table 7 – Examples of collaborative artworks exhibited by Birmingham artists at the 1913 Ghent International Exhibition, Arts and Crafts section.

Catalogue Number	Objects
1110	Set of six silver filigree pattern buttons. Exhibited and designed by Miss Annie Steen. Executed by Thomas Harvey.
1149	Silver and gold necklace set with pearls. Exhibited and designed by Miss Mabel E. Bendall. Executed by James Morris.
1228	Silver necklace set with jade, tourmalines and rubies. Exhibited and designed by Miss Margaret J. Awdry. Executed by Miss Margaret J. Awdry and W. Randall.
1232	Gold ring set with almandine. Exhibited and designed by Miss Annie Steen. Executed by Thomas Harvey.
1236	Gold ring set with ruby and pearls. Exhibited and designed by Miss Kathleen Cavenagh. Executed by Thomas Cuthbertson.
1250	Gold brooch set with moonstones, sapphires and pearls. Exhibited and designed by Miss Kathleen Cavenagh. Executed by Thomas Cuthbertson.
1258	Silver and gold necklace, set with black opals, amethysts and lapis lazuli. Exhibited and designed by Miss Annie Steen. Executed by Thomas Harvey.
1265	Gold brooch set with lapis lazuli. Exhibited and designed by Miss Annie Steen. Executed by Thomas Harvey.
1266	Silver necklace set with amethysts, tourmalines, topazes and chrysolites. Exhibited and designed by Miss Margaret J. Awdry. Executed by Miss Margaret J. Awdry and W. T. Blackband.

Table 8 – Sample list of Paintings Exhibited by Women Artists that Quote or Reference Literary Sources

RBSA Exhibition	Artist	Painting Title & Catalogue No.	Literature Quoted From
1865 Annual	Mrs Rossiter	(431) <i>"Looking on the happy autumn fields, And thinking of the days that are no more." – Tennyson</i>	<i>The Princess</i> , poem by Alfred Tennyson
1865 Annual	Miss F. Aston	(645) <i>"At Pentecost – which brings Spring – clothed like a bride, When nesting birds unfold their wings, And bishop's-caps have golden rings, Musing upon many things, I fought the woodlands wide."</i>	<i>Prelude</i> , poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
1867 Autumn	Miss A. Carter	(625) <i>Lay of the Last Minstrel. "He raised the silver up on high, And while the big drop filled his eye, Prayed God to bless the Duchess long, And all who cheered a son of song." Lay of the Last Minstrel</i>	<i>Lay of the Last Minstrel</i> , poem by Sir Walter Scott
1868 Spring	Miss O. P. Gilbert	(30) <i>"Thy word is a lantern unto my feet"</i>	<i>The Word is a Lantern</i> , song by Henry Purcell
1868 Spring	Florence Aston	(80) <i>"Pale Primroses that die unmarried, ere they can behold bright Phoebus in his strength."</i>	<i>The Winter's Tale</i> , play by Shakespeare
1874 Spring	Fanny C. Jolly	(443) <i>"And each flower and herb on earth's dark breast, Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest."</i>	<i>The Sensitive Plant</i> , poem by Percy Shelley
1874 Autumn	Julia B. Folkard	(299) <i>"Oh, so white; oh, so fair; oh, so soft is she!"</i>	<i>So White, So Soft, So Sweet</i> , poem by Ben Jonson
1874 Autumn	Georgina Minshull	(406) <i>"Nous allons chanter à la ronde, Si vous voulez; Que je l'adore, et qu'elle est blonde, Comme les blés."</i>	<i>Chason de Fortunio</i> , short opera by Alfred de Musset
1875 Spring	Pauline Walker	(286) <i>"Who Killed Cock Robin?"</i>	<i>Cock Robin</i> , nursery rhyme
1875 Autumn	Harriet Skidmore	(181) <i>"She was young, wise, fair, In these, to nature, she's immediate heir."</i>	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> , play by Shakespeare
1875 Autumn	Grace Seabrook	(536) <i>"O fair Dove! O fond Dove!" – Jean Ingelow</i>	<i>O Fair Dove! O Fond Dove!</i> , poem by Jean Ingelow
1877 Spring	Georgina de L'Aubinière	(76) <i>"The light is fading down the sky, The shadows grow and multiply."</i>	<i>Going to Sleep</i> , poem by unknown
1877 Spring	Kate E. Bunce	(622) <i>"And on her lover's arm she leant, And round her waist she felt it fold, And far across the hills they went, In that new world which is the old. Across the hills and far away, Beyond their utmost purple rim, And deep into the dying day, The happy princess followed him." – Tennyson's "Dream."</i>	<i>The Day-Dream</i> , poem by Alfred Tennyson
1880 Autumn	E. M. Osborn	(59) <i>A Christmas Greeting "Nay good goose, bite not." – Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , play by Shakespeare

1880 Autumn	Louise Wagner	(105) <i>"Autumn's Bright Inheritance of Golden Fruits"</i>	<i>Autumn</i> , poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
1880 Autumn	Ellen Conolly	(117) <i>Rebecca and Ivanhoe in Front-de-Boeuf's Castle</i> <i>"He sleeps", she said, "Alas! Is it a crime that I should</i> <i>look upon him, when it may be for the last time?" –</i> <i>Vide Ivanhoe, by Sir Walter Scott</i>	<i>Ivanhoe</i> , novel by Sir Walter Scott
1880 Autumn	Mary Vernon Morgan	(196) <i>Water Lilies: The Sleepy Pool above the Dam</i>	<i>The Miller's</i> <i>Daughter</i> , poem by Alfred Tennyson
1880 Autumn	Mary Vernon Morgan	(443) <i>Spring "The sweet season that bud and bloom</i> <i>forth brings."</i>	<i>The Soote Season</i> , poem by Henry Howard
1880 Autumn	Louise Jopling	(466) <i>The Village Maid "Who sets her pitcher</i> <i>underneath the well, Thinking of him who used to fill it</i> <i>for her, Hears and not hears, and lets it overflow." –</i> <i>Jenny Lea</i>	<i>Enoch Arden</i> , poem by Alfred Tennyson
1880 Autumn	Edith M. Ashford	(526) <i>Consider the lilies, how they grow, they toil not</i> <i>neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even</i> <i>Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of</i> <i>these."</i>	<i>Luke 12:27, the</i> <i>Bible</i>
1880 Autumn	Ellen Vernon	(554) <i>"I plucked pink blossoms from mine Apple Tree"</i>	<i>An Apple</i> <i>Gathering</i> , poem by Christina Rossetti
1880 Autumn	Edith Martineau	(584) <i>Wonders of the Spring "To one who has been</i> <i>long in city pent."</i>	<i>To One Who Has</i> <i>Been Long in City</i> <i>Pent</i> , poem by John Keats
1880 Autumn	Mary Seymour	(596) <i>St. Michael's and Holy Trinity Spires, Coventry,</i> <i>from Stoke "The spires that glow so bright, In front of</i> <i>yonder setting sun."</i>	<i>All Saint's Day</i> , poem by John Keble
1880 Autumn	Helena J. Maguire	(654) <i>Leaving Home "It may be for years, and it may</i> <i>be for ever."</i>	<i>Kathleen</i> <i>Mavoureen</i> , Irish ballad
1880 Autumn	Alice Havers	(834) <i>"The Moon is up, and yet it is not night"</i>	<i>Childe Harold's</i> <i>Pilgrimage</i> , poem by Lord Byron
1885 Spring	Agnes R. Nicholl	(278) <i>"She is a maid of artless grace, Gentle in form</i> <i>and fair of face."</i>	<i>My Love</i> , song by Samuel Coleridge- Taylor
1885 Spring	Annie B. Townley	(279) <i>The Belfry, Bruges "In the Market Place of</i> <i>Bruges, Stands the belfry old and brown, Thrice</i> <i>consumed and thrice rebuildd, Still it watches o'er the</i> <i>town."</i>	<i>The Belfry of</i> <i>Bruges</i> , poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
1885 Spring	Mary Alice Evans	(356) <i>"When chill November's surly blast, Made fields</i> <i>and forests bare."</i>	<i>Man was Made to</i> <i>Mourn</i> , poem by Robert Burns
1885 Autumn	Etheline Dell	(260) <i>Hero "That tale is old, but love anew, May nerve</i> <i>young hearts to prove as true."</i>	<i>The Bride of</i> <i>Abydos: A Turkish</i> <i>Tale</i> , poem by Lord Byron

1885 Autumn	Edith Helen Rubery	(342) <i>"For Ever and For Ever"</i>	<i>For Ever and For Ever</i> , song by Francesco Paolo Tosti
1885 Autumn	Sophie Marr	(350) <i>"The Curfew Tolls the Knell of Parting Day"</i>	<i>Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard</i> , poem by Thomas Gray
1885 Autumn	Maude Goodman	(416) <i>"Baby Would a Wooing Go"</i>	<i>Baby Would a Wooing Go</i> , nursery rhyme
1885 Autumn	Myra L. Bunce	(619) <i>"Still sweet with blossoms in the year's fresh prime." – Bryant</i>	<i>The Order of Nature</i> , poem by William Bryant
1893 Autumn	Edith Chirm	(6) <i>"But I would woo the dainty rose, The queen of every one." – Tom Hood</i>	<i>Flowers</i> , a poem by Thomas Hood
1893 Autumn	Blanche Jenkins	(360) <i>"Sweet as English Air can Make Her" (Tennyson)</i>	<i>The Princess</i> , poem by Alfred Tennyson
1893 Autumn	Julia B. Folkard	(586) <i>"What female heart can gold despise, What cat's averse to fish?" – Gray</i>	<i>Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes</i> , poem by Thomas Gray
1893 Autumn	Mrs C. Rossiter	(649) <i>Lucy Gray "The storm came on before its time: She wandered up and down."</i>	<i>Lucy Gray</i> , poem by William Wordsworth
1893 Autumn	Angela Rhodes	(731) <i>"There is a sweetness in autumnal days."</i>	<i>The Ode of Age</i> , poem by Sir Lewis Morris
1893 Autumn	Grace H. Hastie	(832) <i>Here's pansies, that's for thoughts."</i>	<i>Hamlet</i> , play by Shakespeare
1900 Autumn	Fally Bates	(132) <i>"Under the Blossom that Hangs on the Bough"</i>	<i>The Tempest</i> , play by Shakespeare
1900 Autumn	Blanche Jenkins	(326) <i>"Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"</i>	<i>Hark! The Herald Angels Sing</i> , Christmas carol
1900 Autumn	Sophie Marr	(402) <i>"Roses Washed with Dew"</i>	<i>L'Allegro</i> , poem by John Milton
1900 Autumn	Jessica Hayllar	(425) <i>"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."</i>	<i>Matthew 26:41</i> , <i>the Bible</i>
1900 Autumn	Constance G. Copeman	(684) <i>"Loving Black-browed Night"</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , play by Shakespeare
1900 Autumn	Blanche T. Devereux	(753) <i>"Sun Steeped at Noon"</i>	<i>Song of the Lotus- Eaters</i> , poem by Alfred Tennyson
1900 Autumn	Beatrice A. M. Brown	(807) <i>"Cupid lay down his brand and fell asleep"</i>	<i>Sonnet 153</i> , by Shakespeare

APPENDIX 3 – Art Exhibitions

Graph 1 – Women Artists and Artworks at RBSA Autumn Exhibitions

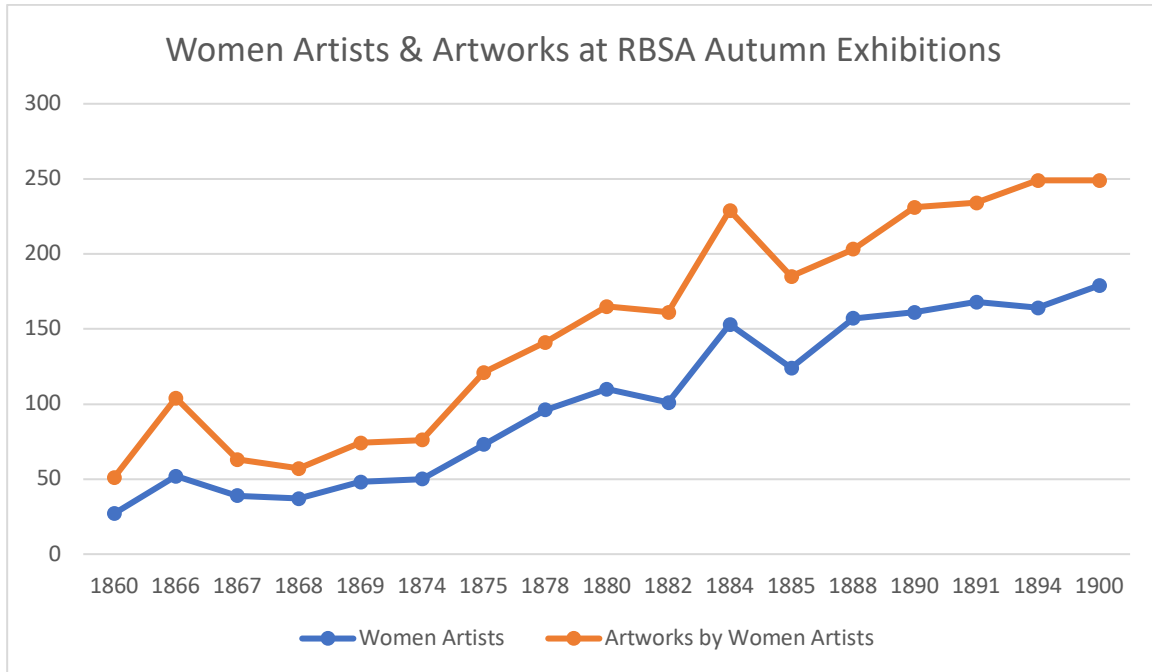


Table 1 – Overall Numbers and Percentages of RBSA Exhibiting Artists by Gender

RBSA Exhibition	Number of Women Artists	Percentage of Women Artists	Number of Men Artists	Percentage of Men Artists	Total Number of Artists
1860 Annual	27	8.5%	291	91.5%	318
1861 Annual	24	7.1%	313	92.9%	337
1862 Annual	20	5.7%	331	94.3%	351
1863 Annual	36	10.9%	293	89.1%	329
1864 Annual	37	10.7%	310	89.3%	347
1865 Annual	44	12%	322	88%	366
1866 Spring	39	15.8%	208	84.2%	247
1866 Autumn	52	13.4%	337	86.6%	389
1867 Spring	28	11.4%	217	88.6%	245
1867 Autumn	39	11%	315	89%	354
1868 Spring	36	12.4%	255	87.6%	291
1868 Autumn	37	11%	299	89%	336
1869 Spring	41	14.6%	240	85.4%	281
1869 Autumn	48	13.7%	302	86.3%	350

1870 Spring	51	18%	233	82%	284
1870 Autumn	42	12.1%	304	87.9%	346
1871 Spring	41	14.2%	248	85.8%	289
1871 Autumn	41	11.9%	304	88.1%	345
1872 Spring	51	18%	233	83%	284
1872 Autumn	44	12.2%	316	87.8%	360
1874 Spring	71	21.1%	266	78.9%	337
1874 Autumn	50	13.4%	323	86.6%	373
1875 Spring	73	20.7%	280	79.3%	353
1875 Autumn	73	17.2%	352	82.8%	425
1877 Spring	74	20.1%	295	79.9%	369
1878 Autumn	96	19%	410	81%	506
1880 Autumn	110	19.5%	455	80.5%	565
1882 Autumn	101	20.4%	393	79.6%	494
1884 Spring	109	23.5%	354	76.5%	463
1884 Autumn	153	26.6%	423	73.4%	576
1885 Spring	99	23.6%	320	76.4%	419
1885 Autumn	124	22.6%	424	77.4%	548
1888 Spring	139	31.8%	298	68.2%	437
1888 Autumn	157	27.9%	405	72.1%	562
1890 Spring	147	31.8%	315	68.2%	462
1890 Autumn	161	27.8%	418	72.2%	579
1891 Spring	164	35%	305	65%	469
1891 Autumn	168	29.7%	397	70.3%	565
1894 Spring	136	34.1%	263	65.9%	399
1894 Autumn	164	32.3%	345	67.7%	509
1900 Spring	170	43%	225	57%	395
1900 Autumn	179	35.4%	327	64.6%	327
1909 Autumn	118	33.5%	234	66.5%	352
1910 Autumn	129	35.1%	239	64.9%	368
1920 Autumn	33	42.9%	44	57.1%	77

Table 2 – Women Artists Exhibiting at Seven Exhibition Galleries, selection of years between 1860 and 1900.

Years	Royal Academy, London ¹	British Institution, London ²	Society of British Artists, London ³	Portland Gallery, London ⁴	Grosvenor Gallery, London ⁵	Dudley Gallery, London ⁶	RBSA, Birmingham ⁷
1860	6.4%	5.2%	12.2%	7.9%			8.5%
1861				7.1%			7.1%
1862							5.7%
1863							10.9%
1864							10.7%
1865	7.9%		10.9%			11.6%	12.0%
1866						12.3%	14.3%
1867		6.2%				11.7%	11.2%
1868						11.2%	11.6%
1869						16.0%	14.1%
1870	7.6%		10.7%			15.7%	14.8%
1871						18.4%	12.9%
1872						15.9%	14.8%
1873						18.7%	
1874						16.2%	17.0%
1875			12.7%			13.3%	18.8%
1876						14.2%	
1877					12.5%	16.3%	20.1%
1878					9.9%	17.1%	19.0%
1879					11.9%	17.7%	
1880	10.1%		13.0%		20.3%	17.6%	19.5%
1881					20.9%	17.1%	
1882					17.8%	27.0%	20.4%
1883					20.8%	22.8%	
1884					19.9%	26.8%	25.2%
1885	15.1%				20.3%	25.7%	23.0%
1886					20.0%	30.2%	
1887					17.6%	16.2%	
1888					14.2%	21.0%	29.6%
1889						32.8%	
1890	16.8%		19.5%		18.4%	40.1%	29.6%
1891						33.4%	32.1%

¹ Charlotte Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France and England*, New York, 1984, 109.

² Ibid. 200.

³ Ibid. 201.

⁴ Ibid. 202.

⁵ Ibid. 203.

⁶ Ibid. 204.

⁷ Royal Birmingham Society of Artists exhibition catalogues for corresponding years.

1893						31.8%	
1894							33.0%
1895	20.6%		21.9%			30.5%	
1896						27.7%	
1900	20.1%		19.4%			38.6%	38.7%
Average	13.1%	5.7%	15.0%	7.5%	17.0%	21.5%	18.3%
	Royal Academy, London	British Institution, London	Society of British Artists, London	Portland Gallery, London	Grosvenor Gallery, London	Dudley Gallery, London	RBSA, Birmingham

Graph 2 – Women Artists at RBSA Exhibitions by Percentage

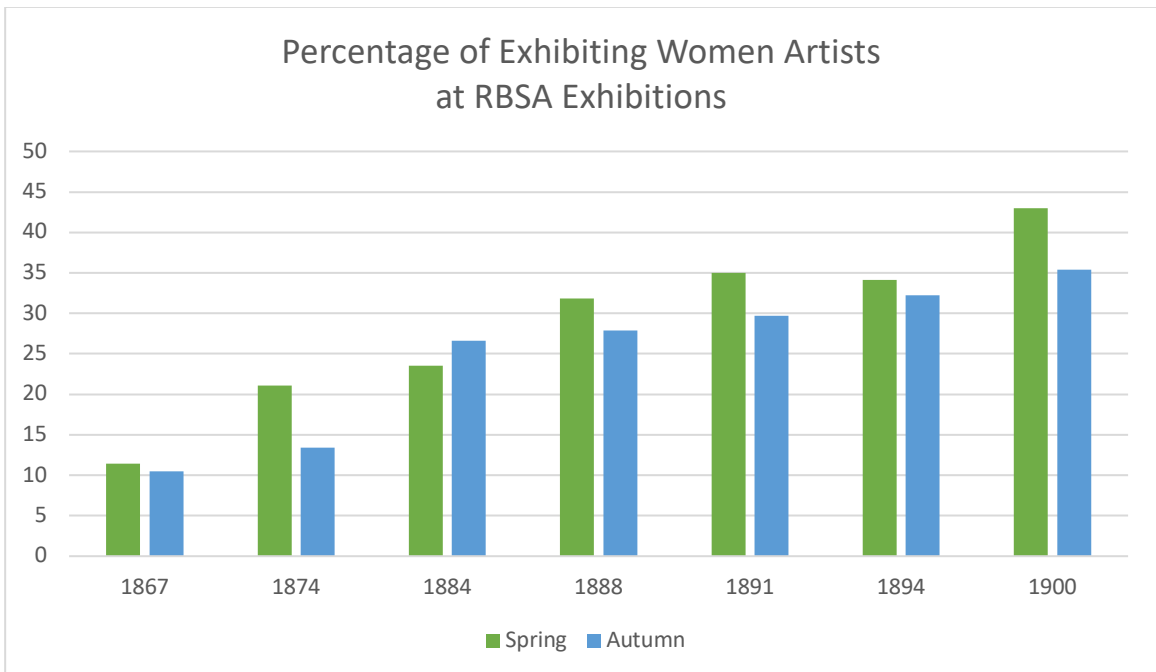


Table 3 – Women Artists at a Sample of RBSA Arts & Crafts Exhibitions by Percentage

Exhibition	Women Artists	Artworks Exhibited by Women Artists
1909 RBSA Arts & Crafts	52.5%	75.6%
1910 RBSA Arts & Crafts	53.6%	50.6%
1914 RBSA Arts & Crafts	59.4%	51.3%
1917 RBSA Arts & Crafts	71.4%	67.9%

Graph 3 – Women Artists Exhibiting and Mentions in Review Articles by Percentages

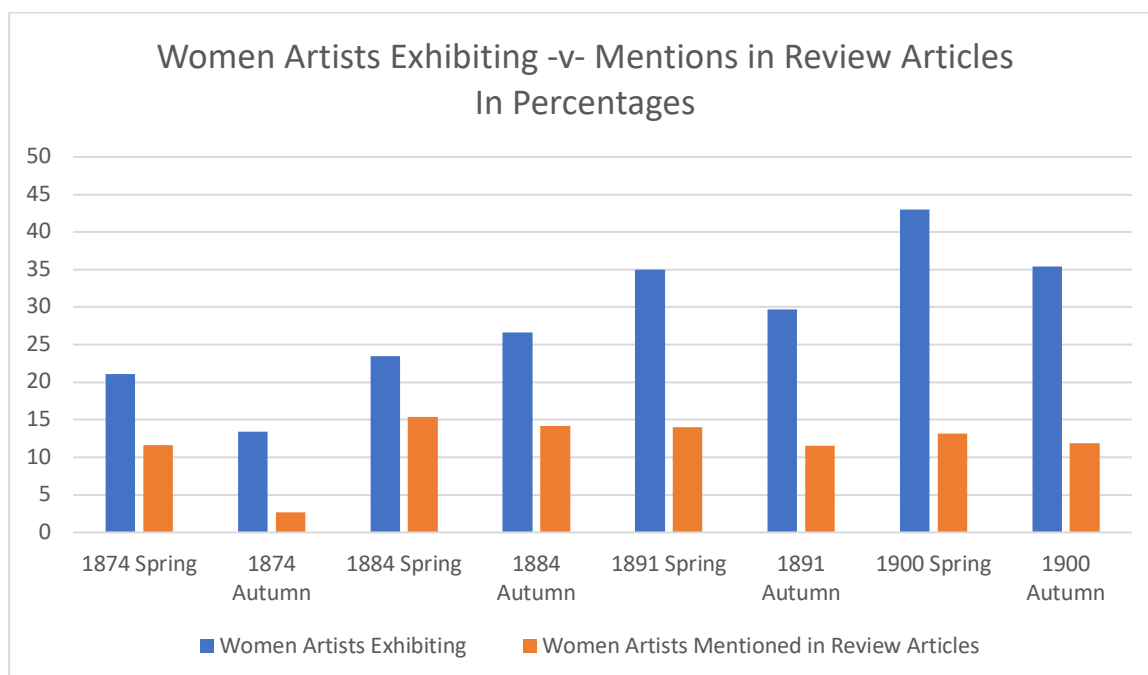


Table 4 – Sample of words used to describe the work of women and men artists

Exhibition being reviewed	Words used for women artists	Words used for men artists
1874 RBSA Spring ⁸	Well handled. Grace of drawing. Sober harmony of colouring. Merits of fancy and colouring. Vivid and faithful pencil. Vividly coloured. Warm colour and tasteful grouping.	Original power. Mastery of form. Freedom, vigour, and breadth of his manipulation. Free and dexterous brush. Superior delicacy and brilliancy. Manipulation. Broad and vigorous. Truth and freedom.
1884 RBSA Spring ⁹	Delicate feeling for colour. Natural and pleasing. Very daintily rendered. Delicately wrought. Peculiar delicacy. Very delicate and dainty.	Breadth and strength. Well conceived. Vitality of the figure. Remarkably powerful work. Vigorously painted. Firm and masterly way. Consummate mastery. Masculine and vigorous in its treatment. Fertility of invention.
1891 RBSA Spring ¹⁰	Graceful Wrought with conscientious care. Sincerity and refined sentiment. Refined harmony of colour. Some good colour. Ostentatious artificiality. The colour of the piece is very harmonious.	Distinctive and original. Triumphant victory. Tremendous power. How strong it is! Compelling mastery. Very powerful.

⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 28 March 1874, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 April 1874, 6;

⁹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 9 April 1884, 5; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 14 April 1884, 7

¹⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 31 March 1891, 4; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 10 April 1891, 4; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 April 1891, 4.

Graph 4 - Locations of Women Artists Exhibiting at RBSA Exhibitions

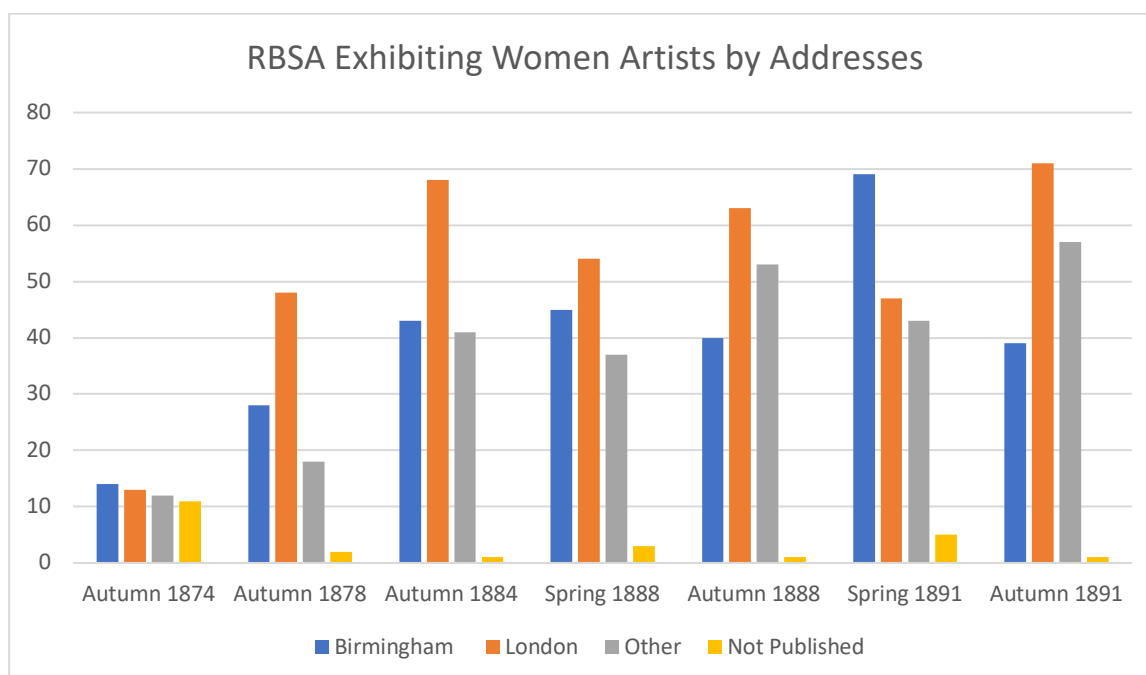


Table 5 – Paintings Exhibited by Emily Osborn and Louise Jopling at the RA and RBSA Exhibitions with Prices

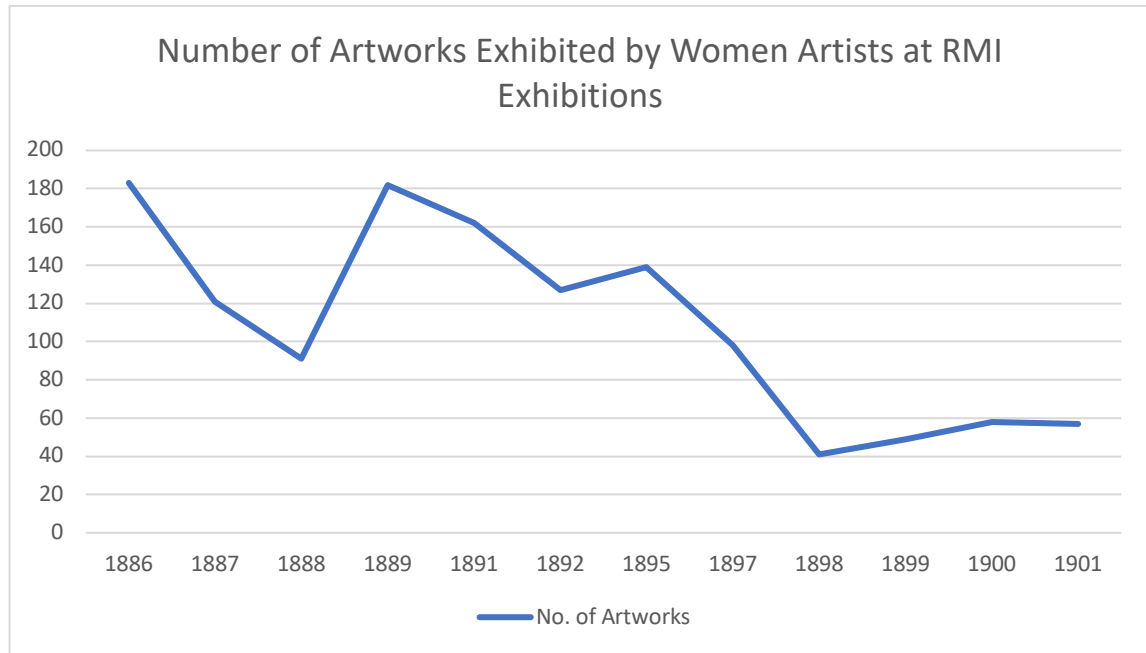
Emily Osborn's Paintings	RA exhib. date & cat. no.	RA Price	RBSA exhib. date & cat. no.	RBSA Price
<i>The Village Pet</i>	1857	Not available	1860 Annual	£15.15
<i>Temptation</i>	1858	Not available	1858 Annual	£36.15
<i>A Sketch in Clovelly Park</i>	1859	Not available	1860 Annual	£15.15
<i>Tough and Tender</i>	1859	Not available	1860 Annual	£105
<i>The Escape of Lord Nithsdale</i>	1861	£525 then £500 then £367.10.0 then £350 'copyright reserved'	1862 Annual	£300
<i>Sunday Morning, Betzingen, Wurtemberg</i>	1863	£157.10 scribbled out, 120 gns. (£126)	1863 Annual	£126

<i>Slow and Sure</i>	1863	£47.5 scribbled out, 35 guins (£36.15.0)	1864 Annual	£31.10
<i>Carriage and Pair</i>	1863	£150 scribbled out, 120 guins (£126)	1864 Annual	£105
<i>For the Last Time</i>	1864	Not available	1864 Annual	£200
<i>Christmas Time</i>	1865	£250	1866 Autumn	£150
<i>Lost</i>	1870	£200	1870 Autumn	No price listed
<i>Isolde</i>	1871	£40	1871 Autumn	No price listed
<i>Hero Worship in the 18th Century</i>	1873	250 guins (£262.10)	1873 Autumn	£350
<i>A Golden Day Dream</i>	1877	£100	1878 Autumn	£120
<i>A Christmas Greeting</i>	1880	£200	1880 Autumn	£200
<i>Reflections</i>	1880	£150	1879 Autumn	£180

Louise Jopling's Paintings	RA exhib. date & cat. no.	RA Price	RBSA exhib. date & cat. no.	RBSA Price
<i>The Village Maid</i>	1878	£157.10	1880 Autumn	£105
<i>Salome</i>	1885	£262.10	1888 Autumn	£157.10
<i>A Polish Princess</i>	1888	Not available	1890 Spring	£157.10
<i>Dear Lady Disdain</i>	1891	£157.10	1891 Autumn	£157.10
<i>Mrs Beerbohm Tree as 'Ophelia'</i>	1892	£350	1896 Autumn	£157
<i>Margaret</i>	1896	£36.15	1903 Spring	£150.8
<i>At the Gaiety</i>	1898	£105	1899 Spring	£52.10

APPENDIX 4 – Art Market

Graph 1 – Women Artists & the Royal Manchester Institution Exhibitions



Graph 2 – Percentage of Paintings Sold Against Total Exhibited, by Gender

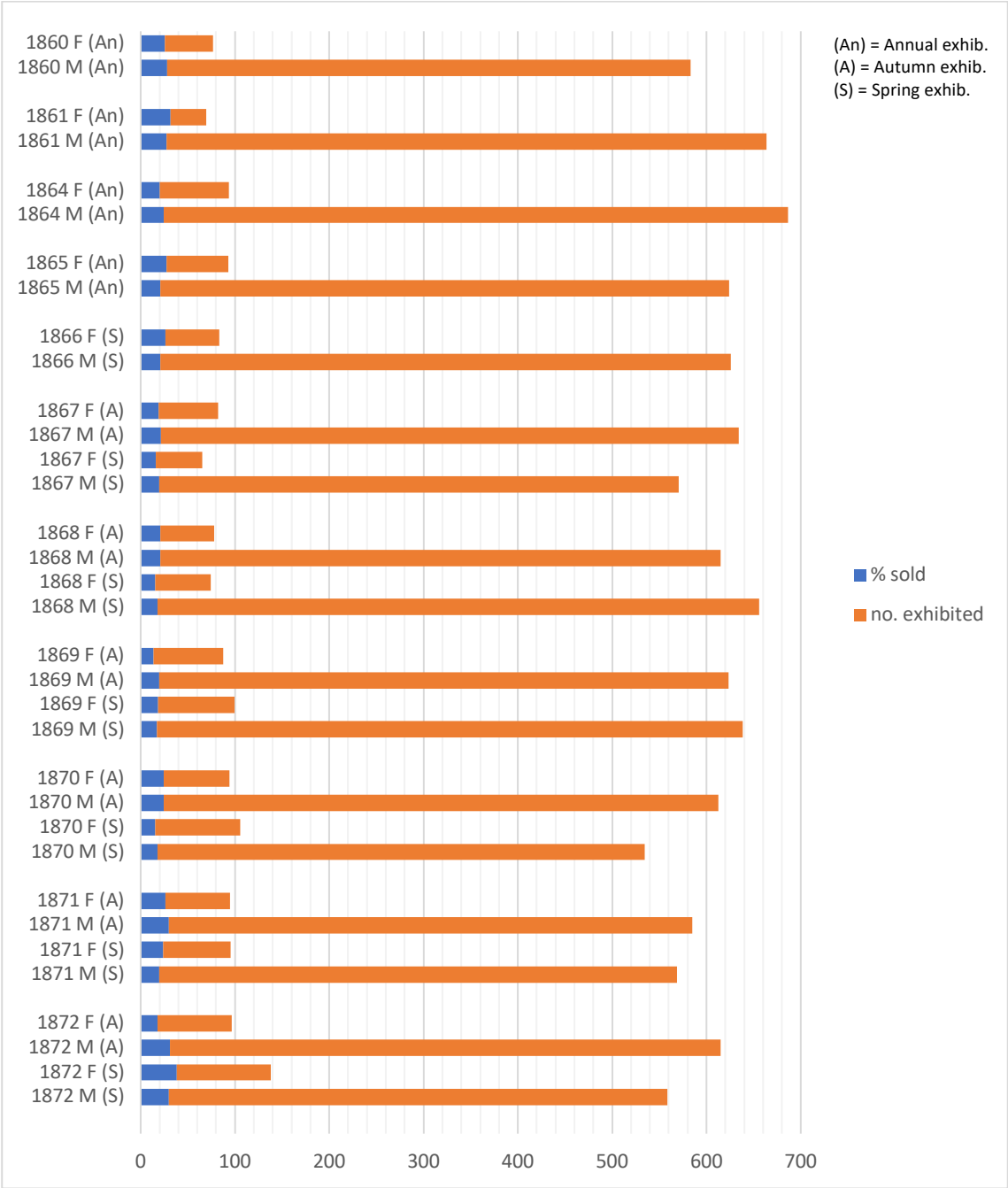


Table 1 – Locations of Women Artists Exhibiting in Birmingham and Manchester between 1886 and 1901

Royal Birmingham Society of Artists Autumn Exhibitions

Autumn Exhibition Year	Local to Birmingham	Beyond Birmingham (inc. London in brackets)	Total
1886	28	110 (71)	138
1887	44	135 (86)	179
1888	40	116 (63)	157
1889	28	128 (71)	156
1891	39	128 (71)	168
1892	49	141 (72)	190
1895	56	94 (44)	150
1897	60	108 (44)	168
1898	46	123 (51)	169
1899	47	116 (41)	163
1900	54	127 (49)	181
1901	28	77 (29)	105

Manchester Royal Institution Autumn Exhibitions

Autumn Exhibition Year	Local to Manchester	Beyond Manchester (inc. London in brackets)	Total
1886	33	100 (58)	133
1887	21	66 (46)	87
1888	9	48 (35)	57
1889	32	94 (62)	126
1891	29	97 (53)	126
1892	24	66 (38)	90
1895	24	77 (47)	101
1897	22	60 (39)	82
1898	13	23 (13)	36
1899	11	31 (19)	42
1900	14	36 (22)	50
1901	16	33 (15)	49

Table 2 – Sophie Gengembre Anderson’s Paintings Sold at RBSA Exhibitions between 1860 and 1872

Exhibition	Painting	Price Sold
RBSA 1867 Autumn	(385) <i>The Initials</i>	£42
RBSA 1868 Autumn	(246) <i>A Roumanian Girl</i> [sic]	£47
RBSA 1869 Autumn	(212) <i>The Bonfire</i>	£130
1872 Autumn Exhibition	(?) <i>Fresh from the Bay</i>	£63
	(?) <i>A Neapolitan Fisher Boy</i>	£63
	(?) <i>The Story</i>	£210

Table 3 – Sample List of Art Auctions Involving Art Works by Women Artists

Date	Women Artist(s)	Seller/Collector	Auction Location	Type of Auction
16 April 1867	Miss Osborne Mrs Robinson	George Briscoe, Litchfield	Birmingham	Estate sale
21–23 May 1870	Rosa Bonheur Henrietta Ward Anne Nasmyth Mrs Terry Mdm. L. E. De Guimard	Edwin Bullock, Handsworth	London	Estate Sale (1 st sale)
19 April – 4 May 1872	Rosa Bonheur Mrs Margetts	Joseph Gillott, Birmingham	London	Estate sale (1 st sale)
28 May 1872	Kate Oakley	?	Birmingham	Auction
30 April 1874	Sophie Anderson	Henry Eagles, Moseley	Birmingham	Private collection sale
29 Jan 1875	Georgina Steeple	?	Birmingham	Auction
11 May 1875	Miss Vernon G. Steeple	‘a resident of Moseley’	Birmingham	Private collection sale
9 Nov 1875	Miss Coleman Miss Sandys Miss H. C. Coleman	Abraham Andrews, Perry Barr	Birmingham	Estate sale

8 Feb 1876	Sophie Anderson	Henry Parry, Moseley	Birmingham	Private collection sale
22 Feb 1876	Miss Vernon Miss Steeple	?	Birmingham	Auction
28 June 1876	Mdm. Lemaire Miss Mutrie	Dr Corden Thompson	Sheffield	Estate sale
9 Nov 1876	Sophie Anderson	T. Francis, London	Birmingham	Private collection sale
24 Nov 1876	Mary Vernon Morgan	'to repay advances'	Birmingham	Private collection sale
30 Nov 1876	Sophie Anderson	James & John Spittle, West Bromwich and others	Birmingham	Estate sale
4 April 1877	Mrs Oliver	'local collector'	Leamington	Estate sale
10 April 1877	Miss Vernon	Soho Road, Handsworth	Birmingham	Private collection sale
13 Sept 1877	Mary Vernon Morgan Mrs Oliver Ellen Vernon Miss Bracken Norah Vernon Florence Vernon	J. Barrows	Birmingham	Private collection sale
1 Feb 1878	Mary Vernon	?	Birmingham	Auction
7 Feb 1878	Sophie Anderson		Birmingham	Private collection sale
5 March 1878	Sophie Anderson A. Claxton	W. J. Wheddon	Birmingham	Dealer's stock
12 March 1878	Sophie Anderson	Thomas F. Walker, Edgbaston	Birmingham	Private collection sale
29–30 April 1878	A. Bouvier	Charles Williams, Moseley	Moseley	Liquidation sale
7 May 1878	Mary Vernon Morgan	Thomas Walford, Birmingham	Birmingham	Private collection sale

7 Nov 1878	Sophie Anderson	Herbert Reeves, Wandsworth	Birmingham	Private collection sale
3 Dec 1878	Sophie Anderson A. Claxton		Birmingham	Private collection sale
19 Dec 1878	Sophie Anderson	Thomas Bell, Ealing	Birmingham	Private collection sale
23 Sept 1880	Sophie Anderson	Charles Claypoole	Birmingham	Private collection sale
2 Nov 1880	Sophie Anderson	Herbert Mason, Handsworth	Birmingham	Private collection sale
25 Nov 1880	Sophie Anderson Bonheur Miss Nasmyth	W. Field, Dulwich and others	Birmingham	Private collection sale
30 Nov 1880	Sophie Anderson	Clarence House, Handsworth	Birmingham	Private collection sale
7–8 Dec 1880	Mary Vernon Morgan	John Elwell, Castle Bromwich	Castle Bromwich	Liquidation sale
9 July 1881	Mrs Anderson Mrs Robinson	William Sharp, Handsworth	London	Estate sale
31 May 1883	Mary Vernon Morgan	Mr Hopwood	Birmingham	Dealer's stock
15 Jan 1885	Fanny Sutherland	Kyott, Edgbaston	Birmingham	Private collection sale
11–12 June 1885	Mary Vernon Morgan	?	Sheffield	Auction
25 March 1886	Miss E. Osborn Sophie Anderson	John Mason, Leamington	Birmingham	Private collection sale
20 May 1887	Miss Vernon	Edward Dinwoody Wilmot	Birmingham	Estate sale
17 & 19 Dec 1887	Mary Vernon Morgan	?	Walsall	Auction
1 May 1888	Miss Grove	John Westwood, Birmingham	Birmingham	Estate sale

8 May 1888	Ellen Vernon	William Henry Vernon, Birmingham	Birmingham	Private collecton sale
30–31 May 1888	Mary Vernon Morgan	Mr Hopwood	Birmingham	Dealer's stock
2 May 1889	Florence Vernon	A. J. Wood, Edgbaston	Birmingham	Liquidation sale
28–20 Aug 1889	Mary Vernon Morgan	?	Walsall	Auction
Sept 1889	Mary Vernon Morgan	?	Birmingham	Auction
7 Oct 1889	Mary Vernon Morgan	?	Birmingham	Auction
17 Oct 1889	Mary Vernon Morgan	?	Birmingham	Auction
22 Oct 1889	Kate Gray	W. H. Cox	Birmingham	Auction
19 Nov 1889	Sophie Anderson	'from the mansion of a nobleman in Kent'	Birmingham	Private collection sale
21 Nov 1889	Mary Vernon Morgan	?	Birmingham	Auction
26 Nov 1889	Mary Vernon Morgan	?	Birmingham	Auction
22 April 1890	Mary Vernon Morgan Florence Vernon Ellen Vernon	William Henry Vernon, Birmingham	Birmingham	Private collection sale
2–12 June 1890	A. Claxton Sophie Anderson	George Kynock, M.P., Handsworth	Birmingham	Estate sale
10 April 1891	Florence Westwood Whitfield	William Marston Warden, Edgbaston	Birmingham	Estate sale
22–23 Sept 1891	Angelica Kauffman	Mrs Woolley, King's Heath	Birmingham	Private collection sale
Nov 1891	Georgina Steeple De L'Aubinière	Georgina Steeple De L'Aubinière	Birmingham	Artists sale
14 Nov 1892	Florence Westwood Whitfield	W. W. Boulton, Stourbridge	Stourbridge	Estate sale

12 Feb 1895	Mary Vernon Morgan	James Walkley, King's Heath	Birmingham	Private collection sale
March 1902	Georgina Steeple De L'Aubinière	H. Steward	Tunbridge Wells	Private collection sale
21–22 March 1907	Florence Westwood Whitfield	W. W. Boulton, Stourbridge	Stourbridge	Estate sale
17–19 Oct 1916	Sophie Anderson	Joseph Barrows, J. P., Edgbaston	Edgbaston	Estate sale
7 June 1916	Florence Westwood Whitfield	William Stephen Potter, Edgbaston	Edgbaston	Estate sale
June 1939	Mary Vernon Morgan Florence Westwood Whitfield	Charles Rainsford, Edgbaston	Edgbaston	Estate sale

Table 4 – Sample List of Paintings by Birmingham Women Artists Sold at Royal Academy Exhibitions Between 1860 and 1920

RA Exhibition Year	Artist Name	Painting Title	Amount
1876	Minnie Townley	(143) <i>Fir-trees, Malvern Wells</i>	£7.7s
1879	Georgina Steeple De L'Aubinière	(796) <i>Between the Daylight and Dark</i>	£84.0s
1883	Elizabeth Taylor	(482) <i>An Old Corner</i>	£15.0s
1884	Mary Vernon Morgan	(925) <i>On the Edge of a Cornish Cliff</i>	£20.0s
1885	Mary Vernon Morgan	(534) <i>Marguerites and Thistle-Down</i>	£21.0s
1890	Mary Vernon Morgan	(964) <i>Apple Blossom</i>	£20.0s
1893	Myra Bunce	(1113) <i>St. Columb Porth, Newquay, Cornwall</i>	£15.15s
1900	Mabel Garman	(1473) <i>Study of an Arab's Head</i>	£8.8s
1905	Florence Westwood Whitfield	(366) <i>Bridesmaid Roses</i>	£15.15s
1914	Edith Brock	(981) <i>A Waif of the City</i>	£4.0s

APPENDIX 5 – Sociability & Philanthropy

Table 1 – Sample List of Art Works Donated to BMAG by Women Between 1860 and 2008

Year Donated	Artwork Title	Artist	Donor
1867	<i>Joseph Sturge</i> (oil painting)	Jerry Barratt (1824–1906)	Mrs Sturge
1874	<i>Revered Hugh Hutton</i> (oil painting)	Douglas Yeoman Blakiston (1810–1870)	Mrs Hutton
1882	<i>The Battle of Hyderabad, March 1843</i> (oil painting)	George Jones (1786–1869)	Mrs Jones
1882	<i>The Conflict at the Guns, Balaclava</i> (oil painting)	George Jones (1786–1869)	Mrs Jones
1884	<i>John Henry Chamberlain</i> (oil painting)	William Thomas Roden (1817–1892)	Mrs Chamberlain
1885	<i>Heaven Opened</i> (watercolour)	George Jones (1786–1869)	Mrs Jones
1887	<i>Pigs</i> (oil painting)	George Morland (1763–1804)	Mrs Luckcock
1890	<i>The Garret Heathfield Hall</i> (watercolour)	William Costen Aitken (1817–1876)	Elizabeth Aitken
1890	<i>William Costen Aitken</i> (oil painting)	Frank George Jackson (1831–1905)	Elizabeth Aitken
1890	<i>The Valleys Stand Thick with Corn</i> (oil painting)	Richard Redgrave (1804–1888)	Mrs Redgrave
1892	<i>Christmas Roses</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Florence Westwood Whitfield (1855–1926)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Wigmore Church near Ledlow</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Samuel Henry Baker (1824–1909)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Sea Waves</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Charles Thomas Burt (1823–1902)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>An English Cottage</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	William Henry Hall (1812–1880)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>At Tangier</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Frederick Henry Howard Harris (1826–1901)	Frances Hudson Everitt

1892	<i>The Broken Bough</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Frederick Henry Henshaw (1807–1891)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Andermatt, Switzerland</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Hopkins H. H. Horsley (1807–1890)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Two Figures in a Boat</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Charles James Lewis (1830–1892)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Boat</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Henry Turner Munns (1832–1898)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Allen E. Everitt</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Jonathan Pratt (1835–1911)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Mrs Allen E. Everitt</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Jonathan Pratt (1835–1911)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>River Scene</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Charles Walter Radclyffe (1817–1903)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Lincoln Cathedral, the Cloisters</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Edward Richard Taylor (1838–1912)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>Meadow Scene</i> (oil panel in Everitt Cabinet)	Edwin Taylor (d.1888)	Frances Hudson Everitt
1892	<i>The Children's Story Book</i> (oil painting)	Sophie Gengembre Anderson (1823–1903)	Mrs Turton
1900	<i>Portrait of John Lee Junior</i> (oil painting)	Unknown	Ellen Francis Lee (sitter's granddaughter)
1900	<i>Lady Mason, Wife of Sir Josiah Mason</i> (oil painting)	Jonathan Pratt (1835–1911)	Julia Smith
1901	<i>Yellow Rose</i> (oil painting)	Florence Westwood Whitfield (1855–1926)	Mrs G. F. White
1901	<i>Head of a Fisher Boy</i> (oil painting)	Edwin Harris (1855–1906)	Mrs G. F. White
1901	<i>River Scene, 1887</i> (watercolour)	James Valentin Jelley (1856–1950)	Mrs G. F. White
1901	<i>Still Life of Newspaper, Pipe, Decanter and Jar</i> (oil painting)	Claude Pratt (1860–1935)	Mrs G. F. White
1901	<i>A Breton Cottage Interior</i> (oil painting)	Jonathan Pratt (1835–1911)	Mrs G. F. White
1901	<i>Newlyn Harbour</i> (oil painting)	Charles H. Whitworth (active 1873–1913)	Mrs G. F. White

1902	<i>The Duke of Cambridge Leaving the Town Hall, Birmingham</i> (oil painting)	Samuel Lines (1778–1863)	Mrs Maxwell
1902	<i>The Opening of Calthorpe Park, Birmingham</i> (oil painting)	Samuel Lines (1778–1863)	Mrs Maxwell
1902	<i>Details of the Palazzo da Mosto, Venice</i> (watercolour)	John Ruskin (1819–1900)	Mrs Severn
1905	<i>Southwold, 1873</i> (etching print)	John Postle Heseltine and Auguste Delatre	Elizabeth Ruth Escombe Edwards
1905	<i>The Pool, London</i> (oil painting)	Edwin Edwards (1823–1879)	Elizabeth Ruth Escombe Edwards
1905	<i>The Thames at Westminster</i> (oil painting)	Edwin Edwards (1823–1879)	Elizabeth Ruth Escombe Edwards
1906	<i>Suffolk Water Meadows</i> (oil painting)	Bertram Priestman (1868–1951)	Catherine M. Allbright
1906	<i>Psyche Rescued by Naiads</i> (oil painting)	Jean Baptiste Marie Pierre (1713–1789)	Mrs Jennens
1907	<i>May Morning on Magdalen College Tower, Oxford, Ancient Annual Ceremony</i> (oil painting)	William Holman Hunt (1827–1910)	Dame Geraldine S. Cadbury and Mr Barrow Cadbury
1907	<i>Early Morning, 1878</i> (etching print)	James A. McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)	Miss E. P. McGee
1909	<i>Head of a Woman, 1886</i> (drawing)	Simeon Solomon (1840–1905)	Mrs Martin
1909	<i>My Second Sermon</i> (oil painting)	John Everett Millais (1829–1896)	Clara Grace Hutton Nettlefold
1909	<i>Waiting</i> (oil painting)	John Everett Millais (1829–1896)	Clara Grace Hutton Nettlefold
1912	<i>Stoneleigh Park</i> (oil painting)	Thomas Baker (1809–1869)	Kate Elizabeth Bunce & Myra Louise Bunce
1912	<i>Love Leading the Pilgrim</i> (tapestry)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Christina Feeney
1912	<i>Francis Eginton</i> (oil painting)	James Millar (1735–1805)	Mrs Haynes
1912	<i>Alderman G. J. Johnson</i> (oil painting)	Stanhope Alexander Forbes (1857–1947)	Mrs Johnson
1912	<i>The Wyndcliffe River, River Wye</i> (oil painting)	David Cox (1783–1859)	Mrs Rickards
1912	<i>A Recollection of Venice</i> (oil painting)	James Holland (1799–1870)	Mrs Rickards

1913	44 x <i>Cupid and Psyche</i> (etching prints)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Harris
1913	10 x <i>Love is Enough</i> (etching prints)	William Morris (1834–1896)	Mrs Harris
1913	<i>Springtime in Spain, near Gordella</i> (oil painting)	John William Inchbold (1830–1888)	Miss Hipkins
1913	<i>Alcazar, Segovia, Spain</i> (watercolour)	David Roberts (1796–1864)	Mrs Peyton
1914	<i>The Grand Canal, Venice</i> (watercolour)	James Holland (1799–1870)	Mrs Beale
1914	<i>February, Fill Dyke</i> (oil painting)	Benjamin Williams Leader (1831–1923)	Mrs Wilson
1915	<i>Gypsies with an Ass Race</i> (oil painting)	Julius Caesar Ibbetson (1759–1817)	Mrs W. H. Ryland
1915	<i>Old Watermill, North Wales</i> (oil painting)	William Roberts (1788–1867)	Mrs W. H. Ryland
1916	<i>The Bells of Saint Mark's, Venice</i> (oil painting)	Edward John Poynter (1836–1919)	Mrs Baldwin
1918	<i>Gorge and River in Ireland</i> (oil painting)	Thomas Baker (1809–1869)	Kate Elizabeth Bunce & Myra Louise Bunce
1918	<i>Sir John Falstaff Reviewing his Ragged Regiment</i> (oil painting)	John Gilbert (1817–1897)	Mrs Alice Evelyn Johnson Nettlefold
1919	<i>Hampstead Heath, the Bird Trap</i> (oil painting)	William James Muller (1812–1845)	Mrs Rickards
1919	<i>The Island of Burano, Venetian Lagoon</i> (oil painting)	James Barker Pynes (1800–1870)	Mrs Rickards
1919	<i>Waggon and Horses in Handsworth</i> (watercolour)	J. Laurence Hart (1830–1907)	Miss J. L. Hart
1920	<i>Sir Edward Burne-Jones</i> (oil painting)	George Frederick Watts (1817–1904)	Lady Georgina Burne-Jones
1922	<i>Snowdon and Caernarvon from Llanddwyn Island</i> (oil painting)	Frederick William Hayes (1848–1918)	Mrs Hayes
1922	<i>Study of 'Fame Overthrowing Fortune' (Troy Triptych)</i> (oil painting)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Mackall (artist's daughter)
1922	<i>Study of 'Oblivion Conquering Fame' (Troy Triptych)</i> (oil painting)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Mackall (artist's daughter)

1922	<i>Study of 'Love Subduing Oblivion' (Troy Triptych)</i> (oil painting)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Mackall (artist's daughter)
1922	<i>Troy Triptych</i> (oil painting)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Mackall (artist's daughter)
1924	<i>An Idyll</i> (watercolour)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Mary Seton Watts
1924	<i>The Song of Solomon - "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?"</i> (drawing)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Mary Seton Watts
1927	<i>Cattle in a Stream, 1841</i> (oil painting)	Thomas Sidney Cooper (1803–1902)	Miss Jessie Folet Osler
1928	<i>The Keepsake</i> (oil painting)	Kate Elizabeth Bunce (1861–1940)	Kate Elizabeth Bunce
1928	<i>Mrs Henry Gaskin (the artist's mother)</i> (oil painting)	Arthur Joseph Gaskin (1862–1928)	Mrs Georgina Gaskin
1928	<i>Interior with Figures, 1643</i> (oil painting)	Pieter Jacobsz Duyfhuysen (1608–1677)	Miss Rosalind Preece
1930	<i>Grey Mist at Sea</i> (watercolour)	James A. McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)	Mrs Giles
1931	<i>Fountain in a Garden, Cairate, Lombardy, 1875–1877</i> (oil painting)	Louisa Starr Canziani (1845–1909)	Miss Estella Canziani (artist's daughter)
1932	<i>A Foot Bridge, North Wales</i> (watercolour)	Richard Sebastian Bond (1808–1886)	Mrs M. Bray
1933	<i>Huy, Belgium</i> (oil painting)	James Webb (1825–1895)	Mrs B. J. Brierley
1935	<i>Musidora Bathing</i> (oil painting)	Arthur Hughes (1832–1915)	Emily Hughes (artist's daughter)
1935	<i>The Young Poet</i>	Arthur Hughes (1832–1915)	Emily Hughes (artist's daughter)
1936	<i>Three Blouses</i> (oil painting)	Elsie Hugh Rowe (1890–1983)	Mrs Wilson Browne
1936	<i>Tennal Old Hall, 1879</i> (oil painting)	Sidney Currie (1876–1930)	Mrs Agnes Pearman
1939	<i>Goblet, 1860</i> (glass)	Philip Webb (1831–1915)	May Morris
1939	<i>Jar and cover, ca. 1861</i> (glass)	Philip Webb (1831–1915)	May Morris
1939	<i>Claret glass, ca. 1861</i> (glass)	Philip Webb (1831–1915)	May Morris

1939	<i>Velvet Fabric Tulip Head Design</i> (textile)	Unknown	May Morris
1939	<i>Cushion Cover Silk Velvet</i> (textile)	Unknown	May Morris
1940	<i>Atlantic Rollers</i> (oil painting)	Beatrice Bright (1861–1940)	Mrs R. Berthouse
1940	<i>Trevoze Head, Cornwall</i> (oil painting)	Beatrice Bright (1861–1940)	Mrs R. Berthouse
1941	<i>Sketch of the Terrace in Garden of Powis Castle, 1845</i> (watercolour)	David Cox (1783–1859)	Mrs Cay
1941	<i>Mrs John Clerk Maxwell (née Frances Cay) and her Son James, 1833</i> (oil painting)	William Dyce (1806–1864)	Mrs Cay
1943	57 x button collection	Unknown	Miss H. I. Ruddle
1944	<i>Embroidered Panel, 1630</i> (textile)	Unknown	Miss G. M. Davis
1945	<i>Ships from the Adriatic, Venice, 1939</i> (watercolour)	Joseph Edward Southall (1861–1944)	Mrs A. E. Southall
1946	<i>Three Swordhilts</i> (oil painting)	John Everett Millais (1829–1896)	Miss Frere
1947	<i>Quest for the Holy Grail Tapestries – Panel 5 – The Ship, 1900</i> (textile)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), William Morris (1834–1896), John Henry Dearle (1859–1932)	Miss Evangeline Middlemore
1947	<i>Quest for the Holy Grail Tapestries – Verdure with Deer and Shields, 1900</i> (textile)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), William Morris (1834–1896), John Henry Dearle (1859–1932)	Miss Evangeline Middlemore
1947	<i>The Apple Harvest, Valley of the Rhine, Ragaz, 1885</i> (watercolour)	William Holman Hunt (1827–1910)	Miss Evangeline Middlemore
1948	<i>Ariadne in Naxos, 1925</i> (tempera painting)	Joseph Edward Southall (1861–1944)	Mrs A. E. Southall
1948	<i>Beauty Receiving the White Rose from her Father</i> (oil painting)	Joseph Edward Southall (1861–1944)	Mrs A. E. Southall

1948	<i>Design for Fresco 'Corporation Street, Birmingham'</i> (watercolour)	Joseph Edward Southall (1861–1944)	Mrs A. E. Southall
1949	<i>Simplon – Mrs Barnard and her Daughter Dorothy, 1905–1915</i> (watercolour)	John Singer Sargent (1856–1925)	Dorothy Barnard
1949	<i>Quest for the Holy Grail. Study for the Attainment</i> (watercolour)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Gertrude Burney
1949	<i>Eight Peacocks Vase, ca. 1885</i> (ceramic)	William De Morgan (1839–1917)	Miss B. D'Oyly Carte
1951	<i>The Last Chapter, 1860–1863</i> (oil painting)	Robert Braithwaite Martineau (1826–1869)	Miss Helen Martineau
1952	<i>New Lamps for Old</i> (tempera painting)	Joseph Edward Southall (1861–1944)	Jeanne and Angela Heaton
1952	4 x Sketchbook with various studies	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Angela Thirkell (artist's granddaughter)
1953	<i>La Rue Notre Dame and the Quai Duquesne</i> (oil painting)	Walter Richard Sickert (1860–1942)	Mrs Kenrick
1954	2 x Landscape study (watercolour)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Mrs Angela Thirkell (artist's granddaughter)
1955	<i>A Book of Six Views in Italy after Jacob Moore</i>	Richard Cooper (1740–1814)	Miss Eyre
1956	<i>Roses dans un Vere a Pied</i> (oil painting)	Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904)	Miss Ruth Nettlefold
1958	<i>Girl with Plaits Sewing, Josephine Pasternak</i> (drawing)	Leonid Osipovich Pasternak (1862–1945)	Mrs E. Pasternak-Slater and Mrs F. Pasternak
1959	<i>Conversation Piece</i> (drawing)	Abraham Solomon (1825–1862)	Mrs Ionides
1960	<i>View of Hamstead Mill, Handsworth</i> (oil painting)	John Joseph Hughes (1820–1909)	Mrs Flavell
1960	<i>Haytime, Hamstead Mill, Handsworth</i> (oil painting)	John Joseph Hughes (1820–1909)	Mrs Flavell
1960	<i>Ponte Cannareggio, Venice</i> (watercolour)	Joseph Edward Southall (1861–1944)	Mrs Edith A. Jones

1961	<i>Leaping Carp and Wisteria</i> (etching print)	Toyohara Chikanobu (1838–1912)	Miss A. M. Archer
1961	<i>Sketch of Edward Burne-Jones in a Boat, Walton-on-Thames</i> (watercolour)	Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884)	Miss Katherine Elizabeth Lewis
1961	6 x <i>The Briar Rose Series Study</i> (watercolour)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Miss Katherine Elizabeth Lewis
1961	<i>Deer by a Fountain</i> (watercolour)	Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)	Miss Katherine Elizabeth Lewis
1961	<i>Bacchus</i> (oil painting)	Simeon Solomon (1840–1905)	Miss Katherine Elizabeth Lewis
1965	<i>Portrait of Lewis Bagot, Bishop of Bristol</i> (oil painting)	Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788)	Mrs Mabel Arden Haworth Booth
1965	<i>Farm in Wood Lane, Handsworth</i> (oil painting)	John Joseph Hughes (1820–1909)	Miss N. M. Wakelin
1968	<i>Silk Wedding Dress</i> (textile)	Liberty & Co,	Mrs Cadbury
1970	<i>Loch Awe at Sunset</i> (watercolour)	Myles Birket Foster (1825–1899)	Mrs Crosskey
1973	<i>Tulip and Rose woven fabric</i> (textile)	William Morris (1834–1896)	Mrs K. James
1973	<i>Strawberry Thief fabric</i> (textile)	William Morris (1834–1896)	Miss K. E. Harris
1980	<i>Harvest Fields in Waterham, Kent</i> (watercolour)	Helen Allingham (1848–1926)	Dorothy Cadbury
1981	<i>Necklace with Pendant</i> (jewellery)	Georgina Evelyn Cave Gaskin (1866–1934)	Mrs Anne Hull Grundy
1981	<i>Ariadne Necklace</i> (jewellery)	Edward Spencer & John Bonner	Mrs Anne Hull Grundy
1981	<i>The Victor</i> (enamel)	Fanny Bunn (1871–1950)	Mrs Anne Hull Grundy
1981	<i>Waist Clasp</i> (jewellery)	Birmingham Guild of Handicraft	Mrs Anne Hull Grundy
1981	<i>Portrait of Offlow Scattergood</i> (enamel)	May Bunting (1875–1971)	Mrs Anne Hull Grundy
1981	<i>Wasit Clasp</i> (jewellery)	Oliver Baker	Mrs Anne Hull Grundy
1983	<i>The Christabel Necklace</i> (jewellery)	Sir George James Frampton (1860–1928)	Mrs Anne Hull Grundy

1991	<i>Scottish Mountain Landscape</i> (watercolour)	William Clarkson Stansfield (1793– 1867)	Miss Helen Guiterman
1992	<i>Portrait of a Child with a Toy Sheep</i> (oil painting)	Unknown	Miss Ivy Jones
2008	<i>Portrait of Sampson Lloyd II</i> (oil painting)	Unknown	Mrs Carol Howard

APPENDIX 6 – Selected Biographies of Case Study Artists

Georgina Martha Steeple de L’Aubinière (1848–1930)

Georgina was an international, landscape aquarellist who began her art career exhibiting at the RBSA. She participated in forty-five RBSA exhibitions, showing over ninety paintings. Her career took her from Birmingham to Europe and North America. Queen Victoria was a patron. She was born on 30th July 1848 in Balsall Heath, south of Birmingham’s centre, to parents John Steeple (1825–1887), also an artist, and Martha, née Manley (1823–1872).¹ She married the artist Constant de L’Aubinière in 1875 and they worked together on creating, promoting and selling their paintings.

Margaret Jane Awdry (1854–1939)

Margaret was a student at the Birmingham School of Art and then a teacher at the Birmingham School of Jewellers and Silversmiths. She was the eldest child of Walter and Mary and had seven siblings. The family moved to Edgbaston, Birmingham from the Isle of Man around 1880. She won several prizes and a scholarship whilst at the Birmingham School of Art and frequently exhibited at the RBSA throughout her career. She also exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, London, Baillie Gallery, London, the Grafton Galleries, London, the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool and at the Cambridge Arts and Crafts Society. Her career included collaborative making with other Birmingham artists. She died at the age of 84 in Clevedon, Somerset. She was the first cousin to Reverend Vera Awdry, father of Reverend Wilbert Vera Awdry, the author of the Thomas the Tank Engine books.

Mary Vernon Morgan (1846–1927)

Mary was an Associate of the RBSA and a prolific exhibitor. She participated in 113 RBSA exhibitions, showing over 280 paintings. She mostly painted still life with subjects of flowers, fruit and dead game birds but also landscape scenes later in her career. She was

¹ Balsall Heath amalgamated with Birmingham in 1891.

the first woman member of the Birmingham Art Circle group. Queen Victoria was a patron. Her parents were William Henry Vernon (1820–1909) and Mary, née Gill (1824–1901). Her father and her three sisters, Emily (1848–1939), Florence (1850–1905) and Ellen (1853–1920), were also artists as was her husband, Charles Morgan (1843–1913) and her brother-in-law, Walter Morgan (1848–1920).

Mary Ann Preston (1831–1885)

Mary Ann was an award-winning student and then teacher at the Birmingham School of Art and regular exhibitor at the RBSA, she participated in seventeen exhibitions, showing twenty-eight paintings. She specialised in still life painting, especially flowers and fruit. She retired from teaching at the Birmingham School of Art at the age of 53, the year before she died.

Annie Townley (1849–1935) and Minnie Townley (1851–1903)

The sisters Annie and Minnie were students at the Birmingham School of Art and regular exhibitors at the RBSA. Annie exhibited fifty paintings and Minnie exhibited eighty-one paintings at the RBSA during their lifetimes. Annie painted local landscapes and churches. Minnie also painted church scenes as well as still life. They were both born in Edgbaston, Birmingham to parents Edward Townley (1814–1876) and Ann, née Baker (1826–1898).

Florence Westwood Whitfield (1854–1926)

Florence was an award-winning student at the Birmingham School of Art, the first woman Honorary Member and then Associate of the RBSA. She participated in fifty-three RBSA exhibitions, exhibiting over 100 paintings. She painted still life, specialising in fruits and flowers, usually in oils.² Florence was the oldest of six children to parents were Benjamin Westwood (1825–?) and Florence, née Hunt (1828–?). Her father was a jewellery with a business that employed eighteen staff.³ The family lived in The Rookery, Soho Street in

² More detailed biographies of these artists are in Appendix 2.

³ 1871 England census – Benjamin Westwood employed six men, eight women and four boys.

Handsworth and employed a live-in domestic servant and nurse.⁴ At the age of six she was boarding at the Holy Head Place Ladies School in Handsworth.⁵ In 1879 Florence married George James Whitfield, an Auctioneer, Surveyor, Land, House and Estate Agent. George was sixteen years older than Florence. The Whitfield's had two daughters, Georgie, born in 1880 and Olive, born in 1885. The family were reasonably wealthy, living at 53 Charlotte Road in Edgbaston with a live-in domestic servant and a cook.⁶ Florence's occupation is recorded as an artist on the 1881 and 1891 censuses. George died on 29 July 1893 of pneumonia at the age of fifty-five. Florence's younger sister Nelly/Nellie Westwood was also an artist that attended the school of art and regularly exhibited at the RBSA. Florence died in 1926 at the age of seventy-one. She left effects of £109 3s 6d (approximately £4,480 today) to her two daughters. Two of her paintings are held by the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

⁴ 1871 England census – Eliza Matthews, aged 31, domestic servant and Elizabeth Lawley, aged 32, nurse.

⁵ 1861 England census via ancestry.co.uk

⁶ 1881 England census – Alice Hamblett, aged 21, housemaid and nurse; Sarah Swinbourne, aged 22, cook.

APPENDIX 7 – RBSA History & Women Members

Table 1 – Women Members and Associates of the RBSA, 1879–1952

Not an exhaustive list, merely early highlights

Year Voted In	Category of Membership	Artist
1879	Honorary Member	Florence Westwood Whitfield
1885	Associate	Florence Westwood Whitfield
1888	Associate	Kate Elizabeth Bunce
1893	Associate	Mary Vernon Morgan
1909	Associate	Margaret Gere
1917	Associate	Edith Payne
1929	Associate	Mary Gwenllian
1930	Associate	Mabel A. Spurrier
	Associate	Enid M. Vale
1933	Associate	Hilda Mary Harvey
	Associate	Edith M. Jelly
1935	Associate	Muriel Wheeler
1938	Associate	Catherine M. Foster
1940	Associate	Meredith Williams Hawes
1943	Associate	Jessie Mary Hoyland
1944	Associate	Margot Gilbert
	Associate	Hazel W. Harrison
	Associate	Dora Roberts Summerhays
1946	Associate	Marjorie Shakespeare
1952	Member	Tessa Clarke
	Associate	Doris Warden

Brief History of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RBSA)

The roots of the RBSA were in Samuel Lines' art academy founded in 1807 and the Birmingham Academy of Arts founded in 1814. The Birmingham Society of Artists, which later became the RBSA, the organisation still running today, was formed in 1821, 'whose objective was to establish a museum for works of art, provide facilities for students, hold public exhibitions and extend art education in the city of Birmingham.'¹ After a hiatus of several years, caused by disagreements between patrons preferring the exhibition of their personal collections of 'old masters' and artists wanting to showcase their works for sale, the next exhibition of contemporary art was not until 1827. Annual and biannual exhibitions have been continuously held ever since.² The annual exhibitions were held in the Autumn, usually opening in September and running for approximately four to five months. From 1851, the exhibitions were re-opened, for the working classes with tickets at a reduced rate of two pence.³ In 1866, the first Spring exhibition was held, predominantly for water-colours and architectural drawings, leaving the Autumn exhibitions mainly for oil paintings. This increased the opportunity for artists to display and sell their works, 'the later decades of the nineteenth century – the Society became much more representative of the art of Birmingham.'⁴ In 1868 the Society gained the patronage of Queen Victoria and became the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists.⁵

Florence Westwood Whitfield (1854–1926) was the first woman artist to be elected to the RBSA. She was elected as an Honorary Member in 1879, but not as a full member, with the associated responsibilities for the running of the society.⁶ Full members were elected and had responsibility for the running, governance and financial stability of the organisation. From 1881, the membership of the society was restructured and modelled on the Royal Academy, 'creating a body of associates from which the responsible members should in

¹ RBSA website, *History*, www.rbsa.org.uk/about-us/history [accessed 18th Sept 2019].

² Apart from 1940 and 1941.

³ Hill & Midgley 1930, p.30; Macleod, 1996, p.98.

⁴ Hill & Midgley 1930, p.50

⁵ Flynn 2015

⁶ The Englishwoman's Review 1879, p.169

future be chosen.⁷ The post-nominal initial 'M' for members appeared in the exhibition catalogues from 1889 onwards. The category of Associate, with post-nominal initial 'A' in the exhibition catalogues, was introduced in 1881, to encourage younger artists to become involved with the Society and create a pool of potential future members. From 1884, Florence Westwood Whitfield was no longer described as an Honorary Member but designated as an Associate instead. She was followed by Kate Bunce (1856–1927) in 1888 and Mary Vernon Morgan in 1892.⁸

⁷ Hill & Midgley 1930, p.50

⁸ Hill & Midgley 1930, p.50-51

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