

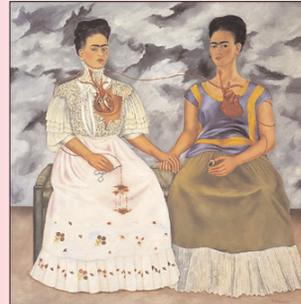
Taking a Look at Some Legendary Women

WHAT MATTERS most about the women gathered in this article is that their very nature was bold, courageous, and often controversial. Some of them challenged the status quo and some brought artwork into the world when the world was not ready for it. Perhaps what separates these artists from others is their determination and ability to transcend stereotypes of their gender.

Creativity is not always beautiful and not all of the artwork created by these artists is pleasing to the eye. Frida Kahlo is a good example of this. Drawing on her personal experiences, including a bus accident that left her with physical pain for the rest of her life, her troubled marriage and numerous operations, Kahlo's work is often characterized by stark and sometimes shocking portrayals of pain. What is most evident in all of her paintings is her ability to be completely real and authentic. In the last decades of the twentieth century, she has become a female icon, as she represents the ability to embrace all of life, the good and the bad.

The influence of Judy Chicago's artwork has impacted the art community through her groundbreaking installations, such as *The Dinner Party* and *The Holocaust Project*. In 1999, *Newsweek* magazine named Chicago's *The Dinner Party* as one of the ten most controversial works of art of the ages. Her intentions for this ambitious work were to teach women's history through art. She created a series of 100 dinner plates that honored several different women's achievements. Questions of its intended meaning arose from this installation and other meanings attached themselves to it, some beyond the control of the artist herself. Because of her ability to depict women's rise from oppression, many women throughout the world revere her.

One of the most well known female artists, Georgia O'Keefe, had to fight her own battles as well. O'Keefe seems to have been equipped early on with a sense of who she was and learned that she would be required to prove it. At age thirteen she was mortified when an art teacher corrected her drawing. Later on, at the Art Students League in New York, another instructor painted over her work to show her how the Impressionists did trees. She had never before heard how the Impressionists did trees, nor did she much care. At twenty-four she left all those opinions behind and went to live in Texas, where there were no trees to paint and no one to tell her how to paint.



Frida Kahlo: *The Two Fridas.*



George O'Keefe: *Poppies.*

Born in Rome in 1593, Artemisia Gentileschi was the most important painter of early modern Europe. Artemisia struggled against society's idea that artistic abilities were exclusively male. Although she was praised for her creative talents, she was also looked down upon. Artemisia was known for her extremely realistic paintings. In an era when female artists were limited to portrait painting and imitative poses, she was the first woman to paint major historical and religious scenarios. Renewed interest in Artemisia in recent years has recognized her as a talented seventeenth-century painter and one of the world's greatest female artists.

There have been many other female artists who have made significant accomplishments. Some of them you may even know personally. However, among the artists listed here are figures who have risen above hardship and pursued their passions and dreams. Their spirit overcame any obstacles that were placed in their way and helped to change stereotypes of the female artist.