

**Hungarian University of Fine Arts**  
**Doctor of Liberal Arts**

**Preservation of Sin**  
**in the Green Tomato.**

**The Analysis of the women artists art works, which reflected to the kitchen  
work from 1850 till nowadays**

Thesis

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As a woman artist, I create works of art in which I formulate my thesis in the most impeccable way according to my aim, will and taste. I endeavored to express it in my dissertation as I was looking for my own “female voice” that could reflect my artistic attitude. I am in an “in-between” situation, as Viktória Popovics determined my art (situated between figurative and abstract) and my social status (a white, middle-class woman living in Central and Eastern Europe who is aware of her situation and her a backward life standard compared to western Europe, nevertheless, lives a delightful and peaceful life compared to developing countries.) Due to this, I also had to find my language and terms.

Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history -by her own movement.” Hélène Cixous writes about female language and the method of female writing in her masterpiece of *The Laugh of the Medusa*.

It was obvious to me that in my dissertation I would analyze women artists’ artworks and their topics, however, the choice of the concrete (specific) theme (subject-matter) was a question to me. Perhaps, it was the most difficult decision I had to make, for I wanted to write about the overweight (fat) female body, or about the way women see art through the vagina. Eventually, I chose the portrayal (representation) of kitchen work appearing in women art. I do not intend to present all-comprehensive works; I rather focus on masterpieces through which I can express my thoughts and show kitchen work analyzed by myself. I aim to present women’s invisible work, in this case, I only think of household chores, more precisely, kitchen tasks. I study artworks of women artists and female artists exclusively.

In the introduction of my dissertation, I analyze the concepts of feminism and women art?, then, I describe my own “female voice”. In the first chapter I give a compositive analysis on invisible work and its depiction in fine art emphasizing the activities of mopping, washing, ironing, along with cooking, which provides the principle of my thesis.

I follow a linear presentation of women artists’ work, beginning with the analysis of Lilly Martin Spencer’s paintings from 1850s in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. Spencer’s artworks are the earliest demonstration of household chores in the kitchen consciously composed by a woman – they are not landscapes. The woman is standing in the kitchen slicing onions and crying or she is kneading some dough and stirring some food in a pan, so she is up and doing in the kitchen.

My first thesis: the artists consciously depict the woman working in the kitchen and that is the first time it appears in 1850. In the 1970s the critical definition of this type of picture continues ( 4<sup>th</sup> chapter). I describe the era to clarify the reasons why Spencer had been

forgotten, where she was placed and who her contemporaries were. Naturally, in the respect of women artists.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter I present the 50 years later existed Russian art, Zinaida Serebrjakova's masterpieces between 1914 and 1920. Her artworks responded to the Barbizon school with the way they demonstrate women and their hard-working everyday life. They depict peasants working in day-labor and cultivation, people doing manual labor and the preparation of ingredients for dishes. We can observe scenes of production, collecting crops or harvesting. This chapter focuses on the type of picture in which we glance at a bag or a basket with fruit or vegetables rolling out of it, in other word, the food around which our life is moving around. Yet, it is not about still-lives, but -as we pointed out in Lilly Martin Spencer's works- a still-life is embedded in a genre picture. We perceive time as a stopped moment, just like in a photograph, but it is about more. These scenes are taken from everyday life events through a female point of view. It is important to emphasize that we never see the kitchen itself, the space of the woman, while Spencer shows it, in Serebrjakov's art we only suspect the activity is completed in the kitchen. . The paintings are genre pictures, happenings interior, supposedly, around the kitchen table. As a closing of this chapter, I mention several Hungarian female painters, however, we have a limited knowledge of several of them, especially, of their real message, we can rely on the sight painted or the title only.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter I analyze the happenings, actions and performances of feminist artists of 1970s who depict women working in the kitchen and observe housework critically. These women artists who use their own bodies to demonstrate the kitchen, a household device, or a dish and they identify all these appliances with their body. They make spectators look under the built-up costume and touch or take an insight into the vulnerable and, many times, naked female body of the performers. From 1970s women artists transform their own bodies into material-display and in this way the body become a surface which is functioning as the canvas, so as a raw material. Later, the emphasis is put onto the vulnerability of the role and the situation, and the artists examine and question it as they identify themselves with the role of the housewife. Their critical attention is drawn to their role of gender and the behavior expected by the society. Women artists appear in the kitchen, behind the counter, - the place assigned to women, as they were on the stage. They grab the essence of the food-making process in a critical way. I would name Lilly Martin Spencer as the antecedent of these performances.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter I introduce Central and Eastern European artists' works, especially, Hungarian contemporaries coming out in 1990s, more precisely, I present their masterpieces

in connection with depicting kitchen work. I divided the chapter into segments determined by the artists and I study what sorts of artworks were created about food preservation, canning, kneading, breastmilk and the status of a good housewife. In the chapter I highlight the artworks of Ágnes Eszter Szabó and Luca Góbolyös.

As a conclusion, in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter I am going to present my Masterworks. Through my happenings I can take my art to those who have never had a chance to get involved in contemporary art before. As I see, this is an excellent way to transmit the knowledge of art through the subconscious along with the art and art-theory, therefore it opens the possibilities of pedagogy. I speak about our action Common Jam that I called into being together with Ágnes Eszter Szabó and which we organize as a ritual every year. The theories discussed in the previous chapters are interlocked in this action and the created dough, cakes and jam become a masterpiece. I also analyze the symbolic elements of apple pie and apple strudel, which raise interesting questions in a cultural view, and they are regularly used by women artists in their work. Finally, I remove the peel of the apple.