

The *Grande Odalisque* and Feminist Psychoanalysis:
Hegemonic and Subversive Re-Interpretation of an Image

By
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Odalisques

*You and I page through the art book
looking for odalisques. I am drawn to*

*Delacroix's mussed red brocade and sheet
and how the woman sprawls, transfixed on*

*a pin of indolence with arching breasts
and loose, rich thighs. No doubt the hookah*

*by her hand explains the flush mounting
her cheeks, the dark unfocused eyes.*

*She is too used, you say, too slave,
those shadowy voyeurs in the door too*

*like Susanna's elders. You prefer
Ingres's cool snail, curled on her blue divan.*

*Not I. Even now in our garden, day-
lilies' pink throats are closing in the dusk.*

Jennifer MacKenzie



Figure 1: Grande Odalisque, J.A.D Ingres

In her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, film theorist Laura Mulvey states, “It is said that analyzing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it” and “The alternative is the thrill that comes from leaving the past behind without simply rejecting it, transcending outworn or oppressive forms, and daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire” (Mulvey, 45). These statements are at the core of any critical relationship with images of the past and present that reside in Western culture; a critical relationship that has to be instigated by feminist visual studies scholars to help formulate revitalized images of femininity, where women are not denoted as passive receptacles of male desire and instead are given autonomous female spectatorship.

When Mulvey discusses “beauty” she refers to it as a category of male pleasure- a category that possesses tremendous power within the phallogentrism of Western visual culture. The transcendence of an image into the realm of male-defined ‘Beauty’ is privy to the enjoyment and fascination of an entire civilization. It is my belief that there are deeper complexities located within images defined as “beautiful” by the Western male gaze; complexities that only through analysis can be realized, or as Mulvey states their “destruction”.

One icon of female ‘Beauty’ that is heralded as an epitome of femininity is the nude odalisque, or informally the naked harem woman. My essay’s discussion revolves around the specific odalisque of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres’ *Grande Odalisque* [see Figure One] and seeks to explore how contemporary feminist psychoanalysis has been used to break down the traditionally male-defined spectatorship of Ingres’ *Grande*

Odalisque, instead creating an avenue for autonomous female spectatorship within this work of art. The use of psychoanalysis will also supplement a discussion of whether this analysis can similarly construct an autonomous female spectator in two contemporaneous reoccurrences of Ingres' *Grande Odalisque*: an advertisement and political activist poster.

Judith Mayne in her essay "Feminist Film Theory and Criticism" describes how modern film studies has begun to move away from formalistic methods of analysis and is becoming more interdisciplinary- using a mixture of semiotics, Marxism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Mayne, 85). This modern interdisciplinary approach to film studies can also be applicable to other visual mediums such as fine art. Viewing Ingres' *Grande Odalisque* in the context of modern Lacanian psychoanalysis offers feminist visual culture theorists the ability to activate new meanings and perceptual possibilities within these historical works of art. Wendy Leeks is one such contemporary fine art theorist who utilizes the methodology of Lacanian psychoanalysis to offer a new analysis of Ingres's odalisques. But before any contemporary critical psychoanalysis of Ingres's reclining odalisque can occur, it is my belief that the historical context surrounding the development of the Orientalist style and how it inspired Ingres's painting must foremost be examined.

Linda Nochlin quotes Edward Said's definition of Orientalism in her article "The Imaginary Orient" stating that images of the 'Orient' were constructed "as a mode for defining the presumed cultural inferiority of the Islamic Orient... part of the vast control mechanism of colonialism, designed to justify and perpetuate European dominance" (Nochlin, 34). From the same critical perspective, Orientalism when applied to the fine

arts can be defined as the aesthetic branch of European colonialism, i.e., a type of Western economic, militaristic, and social propaganda. The categorization of Orientalism as a type of political art is often clandestinely placed in the background of traditional art history, which often strives to instead highlight Orientalist works of art as autonomous from the motives that were motivating what was being represented on canvas. When she critiqued the 1982 “exhibition and catalogue *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880*”, Linda Nochlin positioned back into the foreground the discussion of Orientalism as a mechanism for colonialist agendas (Nochlin, 33). The organizer of the exhibition, Donald Rosenthal, wanted to steer the exhibition’s focus away from the politics of the Orientalist artworks and instead made it clear that “its aesthetic quality and historical interest” would be the main locus of discussion.

Nochlin vehemently rebuts Rosenthal’s remarks, stating “Rosenthal drops them [the issues concerning political domination and ideology] like hot potatoes” and “Yet surely most of the paintings in the exhibition- indeed the key notion of Orientalism itself- cannot be confronted without a critical analysis of the particular power structure in which these works came into being” (Nochlin, 34). In the case of Ingres’ *Grande Odalisque*, the particular power structure at work is French imperialism in Northern Africa, which Johanna de Groot describes broadly as the “Expanding French and English interest in the lands of the Ottoman Empire as terrains for trade, as well as established diplomatic concerns with the Ottoman state as enemy or ally in ‘Great Power’ politics” (de Groot, 67). The French colonialist eye that fixed on the lands beyond the European controlled Mediterranean precipitated a mass exodus by French soldiers, merchants, European artists, and curious Victorian bourgeois tourists into the Ottoman terrain.

One of the most famous and cited tourist accounts of bathers, or odalisques, originates within the letters of an eighteenth century English traveler Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. In her letters, Montagu describes her time spent in North Africa observing women in public bathhouses and comments upon the unabashed comfort with public nudity by the women of this culture. Montagu's account became exceedingly well-known in Europe and was viewed as an authentic and objective description of North African women. I believe that as a European tourist and member of a prude Victorian aristocracy under a colonialist regime, it can be put under scrutiny whether or not Lady Montagu's supposed objective spectatorship could have truly superseded the biases that French imperialist propaganda and moralistic hubris had thoroughly infused into the European psyche during this Orientalist time. Wendy Leeks also shares my skepticism when she states, "her position is voyeuristic, a position compounded by her status as foreigner, as Westerner and as diplomat's wife. She sees the women of the bath as other, as Oriental and exotic; she views them through the eyes of imperialism" (Leeks, 4). The bias hidden under the guise of objectivity in accounts such as Lady Montagu's letters helped to fuel the 'orientalization' of Northern Africa in the European ethos.

Johanna de Groot states that Montagu's letters helped to construct "a topos for fictions and dramas of romance and fear, a signifier of intrepid expert intelligence gathering by those 'in the know', and a resource for intellectual speculation and demonstrations of virtuosity in philosophical and analytical commentaries on society, history and culture" (de Groot, 69). In essence, the writings of Lady Montagu gave for artists, and other cultural manufacturers, the proper mental *mise en scene* in which to create Orientalist work of art without the aid of primary sources, i.e., a resource that

enabled artists to paint in the style of Orientalism without ever leaving the comfort of their European studios.

Inadvertently referring to the fact that Ingres never visited North Africa, Wendy Leeks begins her psychoanalysis of *Grande Odalisque* with context information regarding Ingres's inspiration for his odalisque. Historical records exist that prove Ingres was influenced by the writings of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, as Leeks describes, "There are literary sources for the painting, in particular three written accounts transcribed by Ingres into one of his notebooks: the anonymous... 'Les Bains du sérail de Mahomet' [Cahier IX, fol. 47, verso] and French translations of extracts from two letters by... Lady Mary Wortley Montagu [Cahier IX fols. 34 and 37 verso]" (Leeks, 4). Leeks also states that "There is abundant evidence that Ingres made extensive use of prints" and that artists such as "Hans Naef and Helene Toussaint [had] established prototypes for poses and accessories of many of the subsidiary figures of the bather [odalisque] pictures" (Leeks, 3). The prints and letters by Lady Montagu served as references upon which Ingres could base his romantic Orientalist vision. Both of these inspirations may have given Ingres the idea for the pose of his odalisque and the *mise en scene* of the final work of art, but the specific addition of a turbaned odalisque in *Grande Odalisque* came from another historical source.

Ingres' use of a turbaned odalisque has been tied "to the work of Raphael; to the portrait...*Fornarina*... and the religious image of the *Madonna delle Sedia* (Leeks, 4)" [see Figures 2 and 3]. Wendy Leeks bases her Lacanian psychoanalysis on her belief that Ingres subconsciously hybridized the virgin/whore icons of these two paintings by

Raphael in *Grande Odalisque*- as she states, “The turbaned figure [in Ingres’ odalisque] is both the sexual mistress/odalisque and the asexual Madonna/mother” (Leeks, 6).



Figure 2
Fornarina, Raphael



Figure 3
Madonna della Sedia, Raphael

The odalisque in *Grande Odalisque* achieves the status of the ‘whore’ archetype in Raphael’s *Fornarina* through the sensuousness use of translucent fabric, the figure’s inviting gaze, and her hand placement, which focuses the eye onto her breasts and genital region. The depiction of the odalisque’s smooth, languid nude body (like *Fornarina*) and her situation within an ‘exotic’ setting (the turban, rich fabrics, jewels, and featured fan) are enough of the proper romantic voyeurism that characterizes the desirous Orientalist and male gaze as defined earlier by Nochlin’s quote of Edward Said. The odalisque in *Grande Odalisque* also achieves the status of the Madonna/mother archetype through Raphael’s desexualized female figure in his *Madonna della Sedia*. The nude body of the odalisque in *Grande Odalisque* can at the same time be viewed as asexual because the figure’s back is primarily what is displayed for the spectator with only the secondary sex

characteristics, her shadowed breast, obscurely made visible. Leeks states, “the figure’s ‘persona’ as Madonna is crucial here” (Leeks, 6) because the obscurity of the female figure’s body, it is turned away from the spectator, creates the asexuality and prohibits the fulfillment of a conscious desire for the nude female figure.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis the fulfillment of desire can only be achieved through lack. In relation to the odalisque in *Grande Odalisque*, any desire for the female nude has to be precipitated by her status as Other; the status of Other is a Lacanian term defining the Other as lacking a penis. For Leeks in *Grande Odalisque*, the female nude specifically does not show her ‘lack’ because her genitals are hidden by the nature of her pose (her back is facing the spectator). This destabilizes the ability to desire her in Lacanian terms because her ‘lack’ is visually indiscernible. Theoretically if the female figure in *Grande Odalisque* has no visible marker of lack, then she cannot be desired. Wendy Leeks’ argument is that all these visual factors create a pre-Symbolic connection between the supposed spectator and the female figure. According to Jacques Lacan, the pre-Symbolic relationship between mother and male-child, the dyad, is described as a time of “unity” and “completeness” felt by the child before he realizes that the mother is different, his “Other” because she lacks a penis. Leeks describes this relationship in her essay stating, “In Lacanian terms, in the exclusive relationship of mother and child before the awareness of difference, the mother supplies the child’s lack and the child the mother’s. The mother and child as a unit thus constitute the lack-less or phallic mother, and it is the completing and completed unit that is represented by the turbaned bather [odalisque]” (Leeks, 6). Thus according to Leeks, the spectator does not view the

reclining female nude as the male voyeur seeking to objectify the odalisque as sexual object.

Instead, the spectator is “ungendered” because the pre-Symbolic relationship encompasses a time before the concept of gender difference is achieved, allowing the observer of the odalisque to be either male or female. This aspect is important because an autonomous female spectator can now be able to view the odalisque; as Leeks states, “Most images of the female nude disallow the possibility of a female spectator. They are ‘about’ male sexuality and the exercise of male sexual fantasy and as such construct their viewers as male, either biologically or, for women, ideologically through masquerade. In the [odalisque] paintings the female spectator is not forced to abandon herself and assume an uneasy masculine role in order to consume the images” (Leeks, 7). The unique application of psychoanalysis has succeeded to free the odalisque from the objectification of the male voyeur and creates a space for the female to gaze upon the female figure without being mediated by patriarchal definitions of spectatorship.

Leeks’ interpretation of nudity within *Grande Odalisque* is very different compared to other critiques of the female nude, which would rather concern more with the representation of women within the colonial context. Michael D. Harris offers one such critic that differs from Leeks’ analysis. In his book *Colored Pictures*, Harris believes that the odalisques painted by Ingres mainly gave power to the European male spectator, who “possesses the nude women through voyeurism and fantasy because the paintings present an intrusive scenario: only the male possessor of the harem...legitimately could have visual access to the woman” and “rehearsed or reiterated colonial and imperial adventure and its appropriation of land, resources, and people”

(Harris, 130). With both of these viewpoints splayed side by side, the contextual and theoretical approaches, I believe that Wendy Leeks' unique application of psychoanalysis to *Grande Odalisque* offers more spectatorial opportunities for females than solely a contextual analysis of the painting. The ambiguity found in *Grande Odalisque* through psychoanalysis allows for the viewer to deactivate the role of possessive sultan ready to use the female figure as a sexual object. In addition, the use of Lacanian psychoanalysis creates a space for autonomous female spectatorship that establishes viewing pleasure without the appropriation of the male gaze (Leeks, 7).

In the beginning of this essay, I used Laura Mulvey's words to emphasize the fact that images have to be analyzed – “destroyed” – in order to create alternate views of women in visual culture's past and present. Wendy Leeks' interpretation of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' *Grande Odalisque* is an example of this destruction. The fundamentally misogynistic psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan are used by Leeks to defy the omnipotent power of the male Subject as the standard mode of spectatorship for Western fine art. Instead, Leeks has turned the male gaze into the exception and not the rule, which then changes how these images can possibly be read in contemporary visual culture.

Ingres' *Grande Odalisque* is a remarkable work of art because it has truly become more than just a stagnant painting from Western art history; *Grande Odalisque* is undergoing a visual evolution within our contemporary visual landscape. The two new images of *Grande Odalisque* currently being distributed in mass media are found in an advertisement for the Keri brand of skin-lotion and a political billboard created by the artist coalition known as the Guerrilla Girls. In the following section, I will use Wendy

Leeks' psychoanalysis to gauge the sustainability of her female spectator's autonomy when applied to the reoccurring images of the painting *Grande Odalisque* in contemporary media.

In a current advertising campaign, the Keri brand utilizes the image of Ingres' *Grande Odalisque* for their new skin-care line Keri Renewal [see Figure 4].



Figure 4, Keri Renewal advertisement

The Keri lotion company is a nationally distributed brand of skin-care ointments and creams. In preparation for the discussion of the Keri advertisement featuring the iconic odalisque image, I visited the official Keri lotion's main website to gain a sense of what the philosophy of the brand itself and the goals of the company's skin-care lines were. To my surprise, the image of the odalisque was the main visual feature on every page of the website in the lower left corner [see Figure 5].

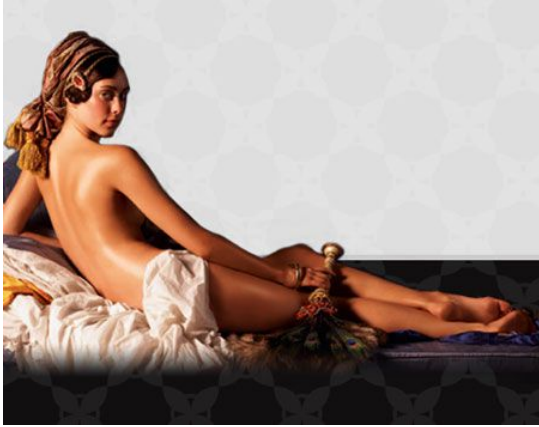


Figure 5, website image

The particular lotion line of my advertisement [Figure 4] is a new product called Keri Renewal. The official mission statement for the Renewal line states, “Keri® Renewal™ is a new product line from Keri Lotion, designed to renew a woman's skin to reveal her timeless beauty. Available in 4 new formulas, Keri Renewal has been clinically proven to restore the look and feel of your skin.”

The website also offers video clips of their current commercials. In one such web clip, the commercial commences in the hallway of a dark museum. The camera pans to a very large painting hanging on a wall. The image on this painting is obscured by shadow until suddenly, as the camera approaches, the back of a woman can be discerned. The pose of the female figure is reminiscent of the image from the advertisement; the figure's back is turned to the camera as she is languishing upon a chaise. The skin of this female figure is noticeably ashen and cracked, almost like the painting was well weathered and in disrepair. The camera slowly begins to zoom into a close-up of the figure's face. The figure miraculously disavows her inanimate status and turns to look at the camera. She smiles and the camera suddenly pans to her hands opening a Keri Renewal box. As she starts to apply the lotion to her skin, her ashen complexion is transformed into smooth, vibrant color. The remaining commercial is dominated by shots of her applying the lotion

to numerous body parts in extreme close-up such as her arms, thigh, and the crest of her reclining mid-section. At the end of the commercial, the figure is shown in wide-shot facing the camera before fading into the Keri slogan “Forever Beautiful”. The prominence of the odalisque figure in the design of the Keri website and the locality of the odalisque subject in their commercial, stresses how important this image must be for the Keri brand and how this image is related to the Keri company’s objective to create “timeless beauty” via the use of their skin care remedies.

Even though the advertisers utilize the *mise en scene* of the original painting, it is my belief that the Keri brand is not concerned with the consumer’s recognition of this image as a famous work of art. In the advertisement, the reclining female nude in the Keri advertisement and commercial is not the original work of art; instead it is a real female model posing only in the style of *Grande Odalisque*. The use of a real model spurs my belief that the goal of the odalisque image is to give consumers a ‘truthful’ picture of what they could be if they were to use the Keri Renewal lotion. In my opinion, this is proven by the fact that in the commercial the odalisque’s skin is instantly rejuvenated when she applies the Keri renewal serum. For the consumer, it is easier to believe the level of perfection of the woman in the advertisement can be achieved when the image of *Grande Odalisque* is turned into a physical reenactment. The real corporeality of the female figure allows for the audience to create a tangible physical relationship between the apparent real body of the image and the real body of the consumer. The recognition of this figure as a replica of Ingres’ *Grande Odalisque* is thus deemed less important than if the audience can successfully establish envy for the woman in the image.

The reasoning behind keeping the *mise en scene* of the original work of art is to tap into the symbolism of ‘perfection’ that *Grande Odalisque* represents. The female figure in *Grande Odalisque* is a classic body, a type of body iconography that is tied to images of ‘perfection’ because, as Janet Wolff in her essay “Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics” states, a classic body is governed by “commitment to line, weightlessness, lift, and extension [of] an ethereal presence rather than a real corporeality” (Wolff, 136). The Keri brand wants to link its product with the classic body; implying that buying and using their product Keri Renewal can turn the body of the consumer into the classic body of this “real odalisque”. Anthony J. Cortese states in his book *Provocateur* that “Advertising is well known for taking famous pieces of art... and sneaking them in the back door of popular culture” and by doing this advertisers “increase the value of the product... This is value by association, or value leakage” (Cortese, 134). The Keri brand’s Renewal skin lotion line can only find success and value if consumers envy the classic body in the advertisement.

It is my belief that the target audience of this advertisement is primarily women; this is evident in the use of a ‘real’ woman for the advertisement. If the audience of the Keri advertisement, this reification of *Grande Odalisque*, is female, then can the autonomous pre-Symbolic female gaze of Wendy Leeks’ psychoanalysis be applied to female spectatorship of this image also? At first glance, the odalisque in the Keri Renewal advertisement seems to have all the proper visual elements that create the asexuality, which establishes the odalisque as ‘lackless’ and thus pre-Symbolic, remain present; the viewer can only see secondary sexual characteristics. I believe there is something residing within the Keri advertisement that nullifies the use of psychoanalysis

to successfully establish an “ungendered” female spectator; this impediment is the addition of the actual Keri Renewal product along side the image of the female figure.

In Leeks’ psychoanalysis of the original *Grande Odalisque*, the creation of the female spectator was made possible through the pre-Symbolic isolation of the odalisque and the viewer. In the Keri Renewal advertisement, the product image disrupts the “unity” between viewer and female figure; this occurs because the product is placed visually dominant (in the foreground) to the female figure (in the background), thus diverting the viewer’s attention away from the female figure and toward the product. The product image could be also seen as a phallic presence (visually- two erect products) that forces the pre-Symbolic relationship into the Symbolic.

The Symbolic, the language of the father, needs to be appropriated by the spectator to understand why the lotion is even present within the image; otherwise the inclusion of the image would not make sense. The language appropriated to understand this advertisement carries with it connotations and definitions steeped in patriarchal (Symbolic) traditions. The image of the skin-lotion connotes the idea that female skin needs to be ‘soft’, ‘youthful’, and ‘glowing’. These connotations are applied to the image of the female figure with the addition of an apparent glisten to the female figure’s skin (not in original), which gives its surface a moist, soft, and youthful complexion.

The female consumer is supposed to look at the Keri advertisement, accept the phallogocentric Symbolic language brought on by the product image, and then view the female figure with the envious need to achieve her level of physical beauty. At the same time, the female viewer is asked to identify what she herself lacks compared to the image of the odalisque. Thus, the female consumer is asked to survey herself, make herself the

object of 'lack' and the 'Other'. John Berger, in his book, *Ways Of Seeing*, described this when he explored the idea of the female surveyor (from within), which "determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. Because the surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object- and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (Berger, 47).

There are two possible reactions to this new articulation of *Grande Odalisque*. One reaction is the need for physical perfection, a kind of narcissism that wishes to achieve the figure's standard of beauty when viewing the female figure. This reaction is similar to what Mary Ann Doane theorized as the adoption of "a passive or masochistic position" (Doane, 65). The female spectator who is instead repulsed by the Keri image's definition of femininity also has to on some level internalize the male gaze. In the process of repulsion, the male-defined concept of femininity is understood before the reaction of disgust. In both these possible reactions, the "ungendered" female spectator, as defined by Leeks, cannot be recreated within this advertisement because the spectator is coded and defined as female by patriarchal notions of femininity.

Interestingly enough, the Keri advertisement is not the only contemporary reiteration of *Grande Odalisque* that can be found in circulation today. Ingres' image was also recreated for the Guerrilla Girls' 2004 political work titled; *Do women have to get naked to get into U.S. museums?* [see Figure 6].



Figure 6

This image was the result of a commission by the Public Art Fund for a billboard in New York City. The inspiration for this work of art came from what The Guerrilla Girls describe as a “weenie count” at the “Metropolitan Museum of Art, comparing the number of nude males to nude females in the artworks on display” (Guerrilla Girls, 61). The informal survey conducted by The Guerrilla Girls revealed that works of art depicting nude females out-numbered that of nude males and that the presence of female artists within the Metropolitan’s permanent collection was practically nonexistent. What also could have influenced the creation of The Guerrilla Girls’ representational critique were the media statistics, which divulged that women, in advertising, often were depicted in a state of undress; in 1997, 62% of white women and 53% of black women appeared “scantily clad” (Ruby, 16).

The Guerrilla Girls incorporated text, and statistical information, into their image to allude to the under-representation of women and over-representation of nude females in premier museums. The statistical information was used as a foil for the main question “Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?”, which explained that more

women are depicted nude by male artists than showcased as artists in control of their own images of femininity. The text of the work was then combined with an altered version of Ingres' *Grande Odalisque*. The idea of using the image of *Grande Odalisque* for the Public Art Fund's commission came from its status as a classical female nude body, much like the Keri advertisement. But instead of venerating this idealized body type, the Guerrilla Girls desecrate the classic iconography of Ingres' original by rendering the female figure in high black and white saturation, changing the color of the fabrics, and placing a gorilla mask on the odalisque's head.

When the Public Art Fund viewed the finished work, they were not particularly pleased, saying that the work of art was not "clear enough" and rejected the entire commission. The Guerrilla Girls did not however let the distribution of their political work of art be impeded by the Public Art Fund's sudden disavowal to their finished image. Instead they "rented advertising space on NYC buses and ran it ourselves" (Guerrilla Girls, 61). But history proved to repeat itself and soon the NYC bus companies rejected the display of *Do women have to get naked to get into the Met. Museum?*, stating that "the image... was too suggestive and that the figure appeared to have more than a fan in her hand" (Guerrilla Girls, 61). The bus company was responding to the fact that in the Guerrilla Girl poster the female figure's fan could be perceived as extremely phallic shaped. The Guerrilla Girls' reaction to the bus company's final rejection was that "Maybe bus companies aren't so enlightened after all" (Guerrilla Girls, 61).

This statement, responding to the second of two rejections of their work *Do women have to get naked to get into the Met. Museum?*, sums up some of the humor and

mockery that is often infused into the political activist imagery of the Guerrilla Girls, who came onto the political art scene during the 1980's when "The headiness of the first wave of the feminist art movement was long gone" and feminism was no longer 'in vogue' (Raizada, 1). The Guerrilla Girls consider themselves to be *artists*- artists who create work, which utilizes "a strong visual language, subversive wit, and collective identity [to] serve as key weapons for their interventions into the worlds of art, politics, and the media, exposing domains where gender, racial, and sexual injustices still lurk" (Raizada, 1). A large portion of the activist images created by the Guerrilla Girls comment on the general exclusion of women from the art world, i.e. textbooks, film, galleries, museums, commissions, history of art academic curriculums, etc.

This critiqued focus on the art world was fueled by "record-breaking prices for works created by a select group of young, male art stars" and museums who "continued to organized large, group exhibitions of contemporary art with virtually no women artists represented" (Raizada, 1). The main goal the Guerrilla Girls' debunkery of the Western art tradition through their images is to "present provocative images and statements, backed up by information, that give the audience a chance to think about an issue and come up with a conclusion, hopefully on the side of feminism and social change" (Flanagan et al., 4). The recreation of Ingres' *Grande Odalisque* and the inclusion of statistical text in *Do women have to get naked to get into U.S. museums?* is an example of their type of visual revolutionizing.

But does this *Grande Odalisque* image by the Guerrilla Girls promote autonomous female spectatorship through psychoanalysis or does it, like the Keri advertisement version, require the female spectator to internalize a male gaze? It is in the

altercated elements present in the Guerrilla Girls image of the original *Grande Odalisque* where this question can be answered. It is my belief that the addition of a gorilla mask on the odalisque disconnects the viewer from the odalisque. I do not mean to presume that the odalisque's gaze is the essential element for the possibility of female identification with this image- there is always a chance that a female spectator would connect with the image despite the mask. But, in my belief, the impersonality of the mask creates an extreme disconnection between the image and spectator, where the viewer cannot engage the odalisque directly face-to-face. Because of this, the formation of the autonomous female spectator through a pre-Symbolic relationship with the figure is interrupted. The viewer cannot reach "unity" with the figure because the spectator is not allowed to engage with the figure; the mask acts as the barrier, which impedes the formation of the pre-Symbolic "unified" dyad between female figure and spectator. The addition of the gorilla mask thus cannot make Leeks' psychoanalytic construction of an autonomous female spectator applicable to the Guerilla Girls version of *Grande Odalisque*.

If the image of *Grande Odalisque* by the Guerrilla Girls, like the Keri advertisement, doesn't construct an autonomous female spectator by way of Leeks' psychoanalytic methodology, then does the image require a female viewer to appropriate the male gaze to articulate the image? I believe that the Guerilla Girls' use of *Grande Odalisque* does not force female spectatorship to become a self-surveyor or an acceptor of the male gaze. Instead, I believe that the odalisque image by the Guerilla Girls creates a new kind of autonomous female spectatorship that can be established outside of Leeks' psychoanalysis.

I believe that the Guerilla Girls create active female spectatorship through several iconoclasm of Ingres' *Grande Odalisque*. The visual construction of *Do women have to get naked to get into U.S. museums?* purges the male gaze from the image. The odalisque in the Guerrilla Girls work is rendered in a highly saturated grayscale. This obscures the body of the odalisque, masking her nudity from the objectifying male gaze. The original odalisque's feathered fan has been changed, from a clear image containing a wide spectrum of color, to an obscured image in stark black and red. The obscurity of the fan makes it seem like the odalisque is holding an object that looks like a penis. By holding a phallus-like object, the odalisque could be seen as demonstrating a woman's dominance over the metaphoric "phallus" of the patriarchy. Also deflecting the male gaze is the gorilla mask, which both protects and hides the odalisque from male spectatorship by creating the barrier that disconnects the image from the male spectator.

For the female spectator, the Guerrilla Girls image does not ask women to internalizing the male gaze by either wanting to 'be like' the odalisque or becoming 'repulsed' with the image. The active female spectator is free to look at this work, make up her own mind, and come up with her own conclusions without the masculinist influence on how the image gains its meaning. I believe that the statistical text, supplementing the main question of this work, is directly speaking to this active female spectator by giving her the facts about how women are traditionally constructed and represented in the patriarchy and letting her voice her own opinions about it. The iconoclasm of the odalisque figure serves as a repellent against the male gaze, so that the active female spectator can surface and claim her own unadulterated gaze.

The Keri Renewal and the Guerilla Girls use the image of Ingres' *Grande Odalisque* in two different ways. In addition to their aesthetic difference, both images solicit a different type of female spectatorship that nullifies the autonomous female spectator established through Wendy Leeks' psychoanalysis of the original work of art. The Keri brand uses the image of a real woman, reenacting the original painting, to install the belief within female consumers that they can achieve the same 'beauty' of the figure if they use the Keri brand of lotion. The placement of the product image in the foreground, between the female viewer and the figure of the odalisque, achieves this connection and creates two different antagonistic relationships between the female viewer and the odalisque.

The female viewer can view the advertisement as self-surveyor and think that she 'lacks' the level of perfection represented by the image of the women. This antagonistic relationship with the female figure is governed by extreme envy for the physical perfection of the figure. The female viewer of the Keri image can also recognize that the female figure is an impossible 'beauty' ideal for real females. This antagonist relationship does not result in envy but instead extreme repulsion for the female within the image. Both types of female spectatorship created by the Keri usage of the *Grande Odalisque* do not create a sense of 'unity' or 'completeness' with the female figure representative of Wendy Leeks' autonomous female spectator. Instead, both reactions to the Keri brand female figure require the internalization of the visual language created by male-defined ideals of 'Beauty', whether through critique (then rejection) or jealousy (then acceptance).

I created an informal and anonymous questionnaire of women whose ages ranged from 19-39 to observe female their responses to the Keri advertisement. In my all of my questionnaire, none of the female respondents stated that they were in any way familiar with the original painting *Grand Odalisque*. My results coincided with my belief that the advertisement hindered the creation of the autonomous female spectator and required one of these two antagonist reactions. One woman said, “To me, it is representing this ‘perfect’ woman who has perfect skin and she is nude with a come hither expression, it all fits together” and that she was “amazed by the objectification of women. This woman does not even look like a woman- she looks like a doll”. The other woman who commented on the Keri advertisement saw the implied connection between the female figure and usage of the Keri lotion when she said, “The image...portrays her sexually desirable [with] shimmering, clear serum-soaked skin...and a lot of it” and thought that the use of “nudity to advertise [is] silly, regardless”. Both reactions to the Keri advertisement took an antagonistic stance against the female figure in the form of critique and repulsion. Though they rejected the image of male-defined ‘Beauty’, these women still had to internalized the male language to define the ideals that they thought were ridiculous. Their inability to become ‘one’ with the female figure proves that the image of *Grande Odalisque* within the Keri advertisement cannot solicit the psychoanalytic construction of Wendy Leeks’ autonomous female spectator in the original painting.

The image of *Grande Odalisque* used by the Guerrilla Girls’ activist image critiqued the art world’s traditional representation of women as solely nudes and the continued exclusion of female artistic achievement from museums. The image of the odalisque is altered to null the elements of the female figure that traditionally are icons of

male-defined 'Beauty'. The Guerrilla Girls achieve this by changing the colors of the original work of art and placing a large gorilla mask on the odalisque's head. The Guerrilla Girls also implant the image with a humorous ambiguity concerning the phallic nature of the odalisque's fan through color alteration.

The use of *Grande Odalisque* by the Guerrilla Girls, like the Keri advertisement, nullifies the autonomous female spectator defined by Wendy Leeks' psychoanalysis of the original work of art. The Guerrilla Girls' image blocks the formation of a connection between the female viewer and the female figure with the addition of the gorilla mask as the barrier. The mask, and the grayscale skin tone, distances the female figure from the viewer because the odalisque is 'hidden' - her face and her nudity. The female viewer of this image thus is not supposed to feel 'unity' or a 'connection' with the female figure, which voids the pre-Symbolic dyad to occur. But the inability to create a psychoanalytic-based autonomous female spectator in the Guerrilla Girls use of *Grande Odalisque* does not mean that the female viewer is forced into an antagonistic relationship with the image like the Keri image. Instead, the Guerrilla Girls create a space for an active female spectator through the freedom of interpretation. The iconoclasm of *Grande Odalisque* repels the male gaze's control of the artist image, which allows the female spectator to make up her own mind on the statistical facts, without the interference of male-defined visual language or sway. In essence, the Guerrilla Girls want the female spectator to create her own language when interpreting their image of the odalisque and the information given while, in the process, etching new meaning into male-defined visual culture. The activeness of the female spectatorship in the Guerrilla Girls image basis

itself upon the possibility for an infinite number of interpretations, which all become personal and unique to each woman.

The reactions by the women to the Guerrilla Girls *odalisque* seemed to reflect broader personalized beliefs about the treatment of women in society as a whole. One woman said that the image of the *odalisque* elicited a feeling of “annoyance and frustration”. To her, the “startling image” had directed her “to [the] text” and her annoyed and frustrated response came from “Society’s preoccupation or focus on women’s body with little regard for her identity.” Another woman who viewed the Guerrilla Girls image was also drawn to the text- stating, “the text was more striking to me”. The interpretation of the second woman was that women are generally perceived as “less than men- their brains can’t work like men’s... but their bodies are up for objectification.” I believe that the Guerrilla Girls’ reconstruction of *Grande Odalisque* enables the female spectator to critique the male gaze directly instead of creating a reaction that was solely a backlash against the female figure, like those who viewed the Keri advertisement. These reactions to the Guerrilla Girls use of *Grande Odalisque* provided a greater opportunity for the female viewer’s free interpretation without the presence of male visual discourse. In this contemporary reoccurrence of the original created by the Guerrilla Girls, these responses display a different type of female autonomy, which replaces Wendy Leeks’ psychoanalytic autonomous female spectator in *Grande Odalisque*.

It is a necessity for the images, which haunt our visual world, to be rearticulated. The re-articulation of visual culture enables images of our past and present to not, as Laura Mulvey states, be “left behind”. Instead, new methods of interpretation can be used to break down the male-defined visual language within historical images to create a new

language that creates autonomous female spectatorship. Wendy Leeks' use of Lacanian psychoanalysis is an example of a new method of a feminist re-articulation of the visual past. The newest reiterations of *Grande Odalisque* not only demonstrate the power of male-defined female 'Beauty' to create long-lasting visual tropes, but also demonstrate how hard it is for the position of an autonomous female to be successfully achieved. Both the Keri advertisement and the Guerilla Girls' use of *Grande Odalisque* display how Wendy Leeks' autonomous female spectator can only be applied successfully to the original work of art. The Keri advertisement's use of *Grande Odalisque* demonstrates how male-defined female 'Beauty' is still asserting its dominance over how women perceive images of themselves- whether through assimilation or rejection. The Guerilla Girls use of *Grand Odalisque* is a counter-example of how different versions of autonomous female spectatorship are still being created to attack the male gaze.

Ingres' work of art *Grande Odalisque* is a battleground where both the male and female gaze have been fighting to become the victor. The longevity of Ingres' work throughout Western culture's visual history verifies how powerful the icons of female 'Beauty' become when constructed by the male gaze. This is why *Grande Odalisque* has been an important symbol within the contemporary visual arena for feminist constructions of autonomous female spectatorship because its position as a male-defined archetypal symbol of femininity makes its re-articulation a forecast of the total destruction of a world defined solely by the male gaze's visual language. In its absence is a world where women have the power to finally describe themselves- a world that is already being created through the images of the Guerrilla Girls and Wendy Leeks' feminist psychoanalysis of *Grande Odalisque*.

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