How gender policies affected the visual arts in the GDR before the Wall was torn down

Visualization of Gender in Art within Socialist Eastern Germany in the 1980s

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1. Introduction

Art in East Germany is often viewed as created under repressive conditions. Artists faced criticism of their work and were sometimes required to offer self-criticisms or had their work removed or destroyed. Despite this, art held power in East Germany as it was believed to influence people. This belief goes back to the immediate post-war years, when in Eastern Germany, the Soviet Union encouraged the creation of art that would offer people new models for behaviour to help counteract twelve years of Nazi rule.[1] In the regime, where any form of "free thinking" was a threat to state security, the artists were also a target for the secret police. The tension between cultural authorities and artists existed from the German Democratic Republic's (GDR's) beginning, as artists sought to resist and influence the official aesthetic program. This mirrored the official mandate of the GDR that placed a high value on culture.[2] Like in society, women were structurally disadvantaged in the art world and did not receive the same attention as their male colleagues. The GDR was no different, despite the importance it placed on gender equality. East German feminists, at that moment of political urgency, had a double motivation: political and feminist. Susanne Von Falkenhausen notes that this was linked to the representation of the individual identity, individualism was not a category of political or theoretical discussion. The categories were – economic and social equality, society, justice and the construction of gender, albeit with different priorities and meanings. [3]

I am focusing on visual arts and national exhibitions as an artistic practice in the GDR decade before the unification and the increased representation of women in those fields. I will argue the development of a socialist-feminist critique of the patriarchal bias of East German society and how by the late 1980s, these policies had led to important changes in the art world and contributed to a more diverse and inclusive cultural landscape.

I will begin by touching on the cultural policies of the GDR and its influence on the arts. I will review the ongoing cultural and artistic gender discourses in the GDR around the 1980s, and their approach to art and the creative process. Furthermore, I will argue that, despite the constraints of socialist realism, East German artists engaged with similar issues as their Western counterparts and made significant contributions to modern art. Following, I shall

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[1] Eisman, Art and Controversy in Dresden: Angela Hampel and Steffen Fischer's Mural for the Jugendklub "Eule (1987)", 85.

[2] Blaylock, *Parallel public,* 6.

[3] Falkenhausen, "Feminism Contra Politics, 30 Years After the Berlin Wall".

summarize the professional and creative challenges female artist faced, and introduce two individual female case studies - Angela Hampel from the East and Martha Rosler from the West. I will follow with data visualization of practical gender relations and geographical origins within the arts, and will then explore the impact of these social constructs on the female artist's representation. To support this case, I will analyze the gender representation in the 1980s art scene in Eastern Germany and the West, by comparing data from the 9th GDR National Exhibition 1982-1983 (Dresden, Germany) and Documenta 7 (1982, Kassel, Germany) art fairs. There are two data sets available for analysis, created by Isotta Poggi and Antonio Beecroft, co-headed b Isotta Poggi and Emily Pugh as a part of the GRI Research Project: "*On the Eve of Revolution: The East German Artist in the 1980s*". One dataset includes information on 5,438 applicants based on GDR map data, while the other contains data on 2,827 records of artist's resumes. After removing 50 duplicate entries, a total of 2,777 unique applicants were identified. Of these, around 1,488 artists were accepted across the nine exhibition sections, which include painting, sculpture, architecture art, decorative arts, design, applied arts, photography, caricature/cartoons, and theatre set. The data set is quite extensive and includes information on gender, birthplace information, institution, awards, degree.

Looking at the available data, my aim is to provide an unbiased perspective on the representation of women in the art scene through a visualization of gender representation in the arts of the West and East, as well as the geography of the artists. Through this analysis, I hope to explore the role of gender and ideology in the arts during this period. By focusing on birthplace and gender, I plan to uncover the political aspects of the art scene at that time. I will finish this paper with my overall experience of working with data and project narrative, explain how the data was created, and what steps I took to analyze and clean it. I will describe my encountered challenges and share how I addressed them.

Reviewing the current state of the research on my question, I will refer to the works on the subject of the relationship between politics and culture, women's role in the GDR's art world, and the connections between East German art and politics by a historian of modern Germany, April Eisman, who has a particular focus on the cultural and artistic developments of East Germany during the Cold War era. As well as Sara Blaylock, who is concerned with the visual culture of the GDR during the 1980s. I will also review feminism as a subject in the works of the female artists exhibiting in the exhibitions from my studied data sets.

How did socialism attempt to create communist visual art during the Cold War, and what was its role for gender in the art scene? What are the challenges faced by female artists in the late GDR? How do we read the data to see how politics and gender affect these processes?

2. Socialism art behind the Berlin Wall and its role for the female artists in the late GDR

With Germany's modern art legacy in mind, East German artists approached the creative process as a philosophical enterprise with the objective of obtaining greater personal autonomy. Their hope for pure or authentic expression seems at times naïve, even quaint, when set against the backdrop of postmodern artistic practice emerging concurrently in the West. And yet in the GDR we could witness the dissolution of the other side of the debates over aesthetics and politics that produced the formalist aesthetic which defined the Cold War. The Eastern Germany culture was born of modernism but raised in state socialism pursued on its own terms many of the same issues central to what has come to define artistic practice in the West. [4]

East Germany's first generation adhered faithfully to the to the Socialist realist doctrine, including its attack on aesthetic formalism. These people were generally already middle-aged or older at the end of World War II. The second generation, born between 1915 and the late 1930s, was willing to participate in building a socialist state, but was nevertheless critical of it. The third generation had all but abandoned the political idealism of socialism and chose instead to work not only independent of it but also largely indifferent to its credo. To wit, the writer, Uwe Kolbe describes the condition of being "*born into*" (*hineingeboren*) the GDR's state socialism as the unifying hallmark of his generation. In his framing, Kolbe underscores East Germanness as an accident of birth, rather than opportunity for self-actualization that governmental leaders had continued to claim it to be. His term is in fact literal, referring explicitly to people born around the time of the Berlin Wall's surprise erection in 1961.[5] Those born into the GDR came to adulthood during a period of marked social strain that undermined the authority of the country's leaders as well as the surety of its ideological foundation. While actually celebrated by some artists as an opportunity to produce a communist culture unadulterated by the influence of capitalism, the Berlin Wall (officially

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[4] Blaylock, *Parallel public,* 6.
[5] Blaylock, *Parallel public*, 8.

called the "*anti-fascist-protection rampart*") has lost its allure by the 1980s. By the time this generation entered early adulthood, East Germans had witnessed the public censure of a series of visionary artists who had sought to recast socialist culture in more global mind.[6]

In East Germany, most of the debates were about the style of the works created rather than their content, claims April Eisman in her article *Art and Controversy in Dresden*. She says that content was rarely an issue politically because most artists believed East Germany was the better Germany, albeit in need of significant change. [7] The GDR – like the rest of the Eastern Bloc – adopted socialist realism as its official aesthetic. This politico-aesthetic cultural philosophy united art and culture to the ideological vision of communism. Cultural policy was then political policy. The "realism" of socialist realism was meant to be new, critical, and – counterintuitively – antinaturalistic. "Unlike naturalism" the historian Regine Robin writes, "*the new realism is not limited to being a copy, a photograph, or reality; it is not simply constative, but depicts reality in its dynamics, its movements, its developments. It is not limited to fragments but seeks the totality of the social relationships of an era. Socialist realism was inherently idealistic and aspirational, providing a narrative of history that glorified the proletarian and a view of the present always one step ahead of reality. All visual objects were thus meant to not only reaffirm the national vision, but to construct it*". [8]

The GDR inherited the formal structure of its cultural bureaucracy, as well as the socialist realist doctrine, from Soviet powers in the immediate post-World War II period of occupation. In the Soviet Union since the October Revolution, which has sought to bring art equally to the masses regardless of location, East Germany's ruling party poured money into establishing cultural centres across the country. The government sustained its interest in these spaces and included them in the new apartment complexes and building renovations alike. As a Stasi repost on Berlin-based cultural centres compiled in the 19080s attests, the quantity of these centres was not insubstantial. National policy has long supported the arts. During the soviet occupation (1945-1949), artists benefited from a law that permitted "qualified scholars, engineers, and artists" to receive the ration cards ordinarily reserved for "heavy laborers and workers in hazardous trades". East Germany continued to prioritize cultural workers even after it achieved its own autonomy in 1949. Funds for artists were ample, making it possible for those admitted into the Union of Fine Artists (as well those

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[6] Blaylock, *Parallel public*, 9.
[7] Eisman, Art and Controversy in Dresden: Angela Hampel and Steffen Fischer's Mural for the Jugendklub "Eule" (1987), 85.
[8] Blaylock, *Parallel public,* 11.

training in art schools) to earn comfortable incomes and to real housing, material, and travel benefits otherwise unavailable to the average citizen. Artists earned these kinds of awards because they were expected to lead a cultural renewal through the adoption and dissemination of communist ideology in their art – to be, in Stalin's famous dictum, *the engineers of the human soul*". Specifically, artists came to understand how they benefited from the GDR's cultural system without compromising their creative integrity. [9]

After Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, even state-sponsored artists in the GDR were not required to meet the idealism of his orthodox cultural philosophy. By the 1980s, for the vast majority of artists an amorphous set of individualized aesthetic ambitions had long replaced a shared hope for communist-minded world.

Already in the 1950s, women were 15% of artists exhibiting in the German Art Exhibition, a prestigious exhibition of contemporary art in East Germany that was held every four to five years in Dresden during the Cold War period. By the end of the 1980s, women were more than 25% of the artists in those exhibitions. They were also 33% of the Association of Visual Artists in the GDR (*Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR)* and over 40% of the students in the four main art academies. It is important to mention, that the VBK was a decision-making union in the art scene, it controlled all art exhibitions and sales. Private galleries were not allowed, which also meant that no private art market existed. [10] While far from true equality, these percentages of female presence were nonetheless significantly higher than in the West, where women in the Documenta exhibitions ranged from just 4% in the 1950s to 13% in the 1980s. April Eisman's research and my data visualization, following in the second part of this paper, allow us to better understand how gender policies affected the visual arts and offer a valuable overview of East German art and cultural policies by the close examination of the German Art Exhibitions in Dresden (called the Art Exhibition of the GDR after 1971).[11]

In stark contrast to official claims and despite the gender equality that was nominally enshrined in GDR laws, the state was a male-dominated one. Of course, women were integrated into and accepted within the working world. They were employed in industry and were celebrated by state officials, not least in numerous speeches by Walter Ulbricht. Decisions, however, were made almost completely by men; telling in this regard was the notable absence of women in the upper echelons of the GDR's political machine. While

[9] Blaylock, *Parallel public*, 11.
[10] Falkenhausen, "Feminism Contra Politics, 30 Years After the Berlin Wall".
[11] Eisman, "From Economic Equality to "Mommy Politics*", 175-203.*

women could become crane drivers and technical assistants, men seldom engaged with domestic work or childcare.[12] In everyday speech, the term feminism, as was the case in many other Eastern Bloc states, was laden with negative connotations. [13] The interplay of official claims, proclamations, realities, and the perceptions of self and other is complex and often contradictory. Problems associated with gender equality were perceived as non-existent in the GDR, largely because of the effective assimilation of women into a masculine world, as exemplified, following in this research, Angela Hampel.

Hauser points out: „*in der DDR verschwand das zweite Geschlecht als werktätiger Mensch in der Ideologie*".[14] The concern for women's equality did not, however, reflect the beliefs of the larger East German public in the early post-war years: most men and women at the time would have agreed with their West German counterparts that a woman's place was in the home. Gender equality, and especially the idea of women working outside the home, was thus an ideal that was propagated from above and required effort and time before it was adopted by the people. Art played an important role in the latter, helping to visualise a reality that did not yet exist. Later on, the idea that East Germany had largely achieved gender equality was commonplace in the 1970s, presumably encouraged by Erich Honecker's speech to this effect in 1971. Although his statement exaggerated East Germany's achievements, the GDR had made real progress with regard to gender equality. By the early 1970s, 66.1% of all women were in the work force, and the taboo against working women that had been so strong in the immediate post-war years had been largely eliminated. Indeed, according to the American historian Donna Harsch, "*The majority of women, including young mothers, saw waged labor as a central feature of their identity*", and "*the majority of husbands accepted that their wives worked for wages.*" As the first generation of East Germans entered the workforce, gender equality was considered obvious, even though women held lower-wage and lower-prestige jobs, with men dominating leadership positions. [15] In the 1970s, the GDR shifted its focus from economic equality to, American sociologist Myra Marx Ferree term "mommy politics" to address the burden of women doing both housework and full-time jobs. They made abortion legal, provided free contraception, and expanded daycare and after-school care. More than 80% of children under six were enrolled in nursery school or kindergarten, and the "baby year" was introduced, along with subsidies for children. Men's

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[12] Kelly, Wlodarski. *Art Outside The Lines*, 175.
[13] Kelly, Wlodarski. *Art Outside The Lines*, 179.
[14] In the GDR, the second sex disappeared as a labouring human being in the ideology.
[15] Eisman, "From Economic Equality to 'Mommy Politics'*", 175-203.*

reluctance to share household responsibilities led to the official policy of assigning those tasks to women, who were then seen as unreliable by some employers because of the possibility of pregnancy. In the 1980s, women started questioning the rhetoric of equality, prompting female sociologists to investigate gender inequality. Apart from policies implemented in the early 1970s, they found that different expectations and socialisation of men and women played a role in continuing gender inequities.[16]

As a result, the progress towards more equal gender representation in the arts was made, from the post-war era to the 1989, including more female representation in the labour market, as well as the art scene.

2.1. **Women in the East art scene, case study – Angela Hampel**

The art world has long been a male-dominated space, with women artists struggling to gain recognition and equality. In the case of East Germany, the socialist government implemented gender policies aimed at increasing women's rights and representation in the arts. While true gender equality was not achieved, these policies had a positive impact on women artists, fostering a socialist-feminist critique of patriarchal biases and increasing their representation in major exhibitions. In contrast, West German women faced greater gender inequality until the mid-1970s, needing their husband's permission to work outside the home. [17]

Women in the art world began to question their role and the difficulties they encountered as women in a socialist society. A good case study is female artist Angela Hampel, from the dataset of the Dresden Art Exhibitions 1982-1983. She was aware of the inequality, and became a vocal advocate for gender equality in East Germany. Born in the East in 1956, Hampel, as many artists in the GDR, first trained in another career - forestry, before turning to art. She studied painting and graphics at the Dresden Art Academy from 1977 to 1982. Shortly after graduating, she began creating neoexpressionist paintings. Her work caught the attention of the West German gallerist Hedwig Döbele, who invited her to show in an exhibition that would travel to five cities, in West Germany and Austria. Hampel, like many other women artists, faced a common assumption at art events that she was merely the partner of a male artist, rather than an artist in her own right. In 1984, when she was offered a solo

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[16] Eisman, "From Economic Equality to 'Mommy Politics'", 175-203.
[17] Eisman, "From Economic Equality to 'Mommy Politics'", 175-203.

exhibition at the Galerie Mitte in Dresden, she decided to invite a male artist to join her. Unfortunately, many visitors perceived the exhibition to be his show, relegating Hampel to a secondary role. She expressed her frustration, stating that "*in the end it appeared that he had an exhibition and some young woman or other was also there.*" [18]

In the 1980s, Christa Wolf's best-selling book, *Cassandra*, which criticized the patriarchy and advocated for matriarchy as a counter to war, played an important role in raising women's consciousness. It resonated with Germans, particularly women artists, on both sides of the Berlin Wall during the Pershing II cruise missile crisis. For artist Hampel, it was a revelation.[19] Hampel explored powerful women from mythology and the Bible, such as Medea, Salomé, and Judith, questioning why they are often portrayed as monsters (fig. 1). The women were, who killed a man in cold blood (decapitation), or her own children. Her works conveyed both aggression and sadness, contrasting with the portrayal of such women by male artists and questioning the marginalisation of the female perspective in patriarchal society. Hampel was very actively supporting the gender equality in East Germany, organizing exhibitions and monthly meetings for women to discuss art-related issues and giving speeches in defence of gender equality. As she explained it, "*...we got a lot of flack because [the exhibition] was only women. That's where it really started . . . the engagement with feminism. Because that really upset us . . . I thought, aha, this is in fact a topic. One needs to take a closer look.*"

At the Tenth Congress of the Artists Union in November 1988, she criticized the underrepresentation of women in art exhibitions and on juries. She then went on to point out that there were only five women (versus forty-three men) on the jury for the Tenth Art Exhibition, and ended by stating that the "*thousands of years of male dominance in politics, economics, culture and religion [...]*" needs to be complimented by a "*feminization of society*", or else "*humanity will not have a future.*"[20]

During this time, Hampel created installations, including " *Offene Zweierbeziehung (Open Relationship)*" with Steffen Fischer (fig. 2). The piece presented nine life-sized figures trapped in a net and dangling above an artillery shell, inspired by an Italian play about a toxic marriage. The installation was intended to comment on gender relations, but the fall of the Berlin Wall affected how visitors interpreted it, with some seeing it as reflecting the helplessness of political participation. The installation was on view at the Twelfth District Art

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[18] Eisman, "From Economic Equality to 'Mommy Politics'", 175-203.
[19] Ibid. 175-203.
[20] Hampel, Dresdner Sezession '89, 43.

Exhibition in Dresden in the autumn of 1989, closing less than three weeks before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In December 1989, Hampel and 22 other women met for a Christmas party at Galerie Mitte. They were inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall and decided to become an official organization. In March 1990, they became the first all-women artist group in Dresden's history, called *Dresdner Sezession 89*. They opened a gallery a year later, which became a hub for promoting women and their interests. A little bit later signs of a potentially bleak future emerged as Helmut Kohl's visit to Dresden indicated that those advocating for an improved East Germany were being overshadowed by those pushing for unification. In a photograph from the following day, Hampel can be seen holding up the center of a banner stating, "*CDU-Männer an der Macht — heißt es für Frauen bald: gut' Nacht.*" This sentiment was echoed in a speech given by Katrin Rohnstock of the *Lila Offensive*, a newly formed women's group, at an anti-unification demonstration in Berlin two days earlier.

2.2. **Women in the West arts, the case study – Martha Rosler**

Several of the female exhibiting artists at Documenta 7 were important for the feminist movement in their own way and have made significant contributions to women in arts and philosophy. One of the examples, is Martha Rosler, trained as a painter, her work spans a variety of mediums, including photography, video, and installation and sculpture. Rosler's career has focused on questioning power structures demanding that we think through any preconceived ideas regarding social exchange. Her work addresses issues related to the public sphere, consumerism, war, domesticity, urbanism, and with a focus on how these affect women. In the 1960s, Martha Rosler used photomontages to expose the material and psychological subjugation of women by manipulating popular magazine ads. Her work is both conceptual and activist, with a commitment to political agitation. She spent the 1970s in California and Canada before returning to her native Brooklyn in 1980, where she currently lives and works. [21]

Her 6:09 min video artwork "*Semiotics of the Kitchen*", from the 1970s is a feminist critique of domestic labor and gender roles (fig. 3). In this video she takes on the role of an apron wearing housewife and parodies the TV cooking demonstrations popularized by Julia Child in the 1960s. She goes through the alphabet from A to Z, assigning a letter to the

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[21] e-flux, "Domination and the Everyday: Videos and Films by Martha Rosler – Part I.

different tools she finds in the domestic space, from knives to nutcrackers. Rosler shows the frustration and induced madness of oppressive women's roles.[22] In her interview about this artwork she says: "*It's a work that young women in class see and go… RIGHT, and realize one of my primary points which always goes through all my work – you can do this.*"[23] Rosler has said of this work, "I was concerned with something like the notion of 'language speaking the subject,' and with the transformation of the woman herself into a sign in a system of signs that represent a system of food production, a system of harnessed subjectivity."[24]

Rosler is convinced that women are constantly navigating a liminal space between the public and private spheres, and that societies have strict rules about women's appearance in public. It is taken for granted that women belong in the domestic sphere and do not own the public space, which is dominated by men. Rosler views every question through a lens of masculinism, examining issues such as display, transportation, and the street from the perspective of a woman's experience navigating these spaces. Women are an important social group, whether they choose to acknowledge it or not, and must respond to this reality at every moment. Even women who publicly reject feminism are speaking to, for, and about women.[25]

Seeing A. Hampel and M. Rosler's works from two side of the world, we could draw a parallel that both were empowering young avant-gardist female artists', whose body of work was built around the same subject matters. Both artists were active against the war and advocated for the Women's Liberation movement. Through their works they sit and talk to women, expressing the powerful communal form of solidarity in deprogramming themselves from the ideological imperatives cast at them.

3. Gender and geography of visual arts in the 1980s art exhibitions (visualization)

Documenta, one of the world's most important art shows, comes once every five years. It is funded by the regional government of its host city, Kassel, West Germany. The Documenta 7 from summer 1982, features over a thousand art works by about 180 artists from 21 countries, mainly the U.S. (52), Germany (41), Italy (26), Dutch (12), British (9), Swiss (9), French (6), Spanish (1), Belgian (1), Yugoslav (1), Polish (1), Austrian (6), Canadian (3), etc. (fig. 4)

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[22] Moma, "Martha Rosler: Semiotics of the Kitchen, 1975."
[23] Rosler, "In Conversation with Martha Rosler (Interview)."
[24] Moma, "Martha Rosler: Semiotics of the Kitchen, 1975."
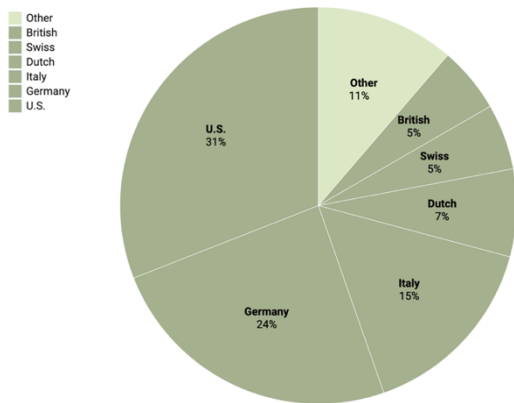[25] Rosler, "In Conversation with Martha Rosler (Interview)."

Figure 4
Country of origin of the participating artists at Documenta 7
Data source: documenta.de

There are just 25 women in total, 10 of them were American. Based on the numbers we have, the percentage of female artists from the total artists in Documenta 7 is approximately 13% versus approximately 87% male, which is almost six times more men than women (fig. 5). On the contrary to Documenta 4, 1968, where only 4 of the 150 participants were women, it is a big step forward for the female representation in the art exhibitions of such a scale in the West.

This exhibition provides a broader view of where the contemporary art is moving, compared to smaller exhibits or biennials that focus on national self-image.[26] The 1982 exhibition is noteworthy for its characteristic aspects. The exhibition sought to balance the dominance of North American art by featuring a broad cross-section of European artists. Additionally, German artists sought to distance themselves from North American influence by reconsidering their origins (fig. 6). However, Documenta 7 was criticized for promoting a conservative view of modern art, focusing on established artists and tradition. Younger artists were marginalized, and the exhibition was seen as reflecting the curatorial elite's self-congratulation. The exhibition was seen as reflecting the role of publicly-funded institutions in mediating art culture in Europe, where curators are seen as kings. American art critic and poet Peter Schjeldahl provides a sharp perspective on art-world event the Documenta 7:

"The tenor of the thing is truculently modernist-conservative this year. The American and European minimal/conceptual
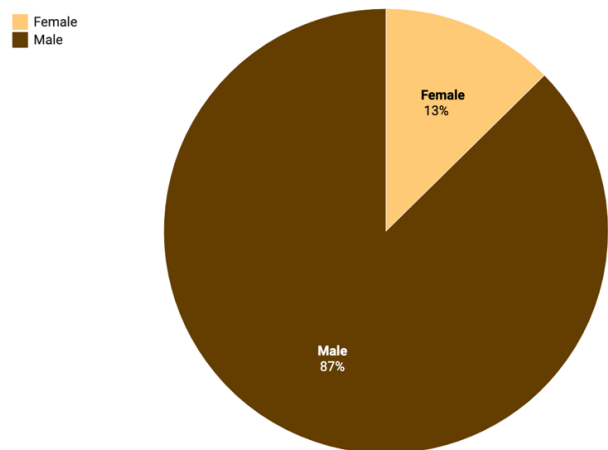

Figure 5
Gender of the participating artists at Documenta 7
Data source: documenta.de

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[26] Sischy, "Documenta 7".

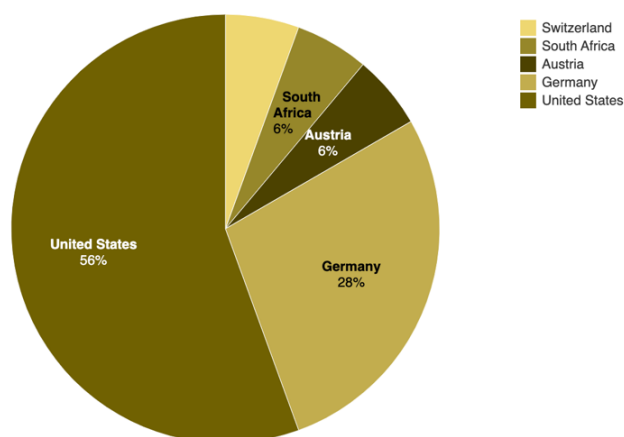Country of origin of the participating female artists at Documenta 7

Figure 6
Country of origin of the participating female artists at Documenta 7
Data source: documenta.de

generations of the late sixties and early seventies are favored, as is, to a lesser extent, the older group of prominent German painters (Baselitz, Lupertz, Penck, Polke, Richter). Younger painters are largely shoved to the peripheries. "Tradition" is approvingly, even fulsomely, evoked. Site-specific extravagances by institutional favorites Joseph Beuys, Daniel Buren, and Lawrence Weiner dominate the grounds of the show's main building. You quickly grasp that youth and change are not to be the bywords here. Briefly put, Documenta 7 is about the muscle-flexing and self-congratulation of a curatorial elite. In Europe, unlike the market-influenced U.S., publicly funded institutions have the mediation of art culture in their pocket. Curators there are not kingmakers but kings; and in Documenta director Rudi Fuchs, a forty-year-old staggeringly arrogant Dutchman, this system has a perfect little Metternich. Fuchs seems intent on stabilizing the international art situation for the security of its reigning heads, versus the bugbears of commercialism, nationalism, populism, feminism." [27]

Meanwhile behind the Wall, already in the 1970s women began to emerge in greater numbers and with more complex works at the national exhibitions in Dresden. The exhibition was trying to display on various aspects of life in the GDR, including politics, economics, culture and social welfare. The 9th GDR National Art Exhibition was a significant propaganda tool for the ruling Socialist Party, and its contents were carefully curated to present a positive image of the GDR to both citizens and international visitors.

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[27] Schjeldahl, *The Hydrogen Jukebox,* 141.
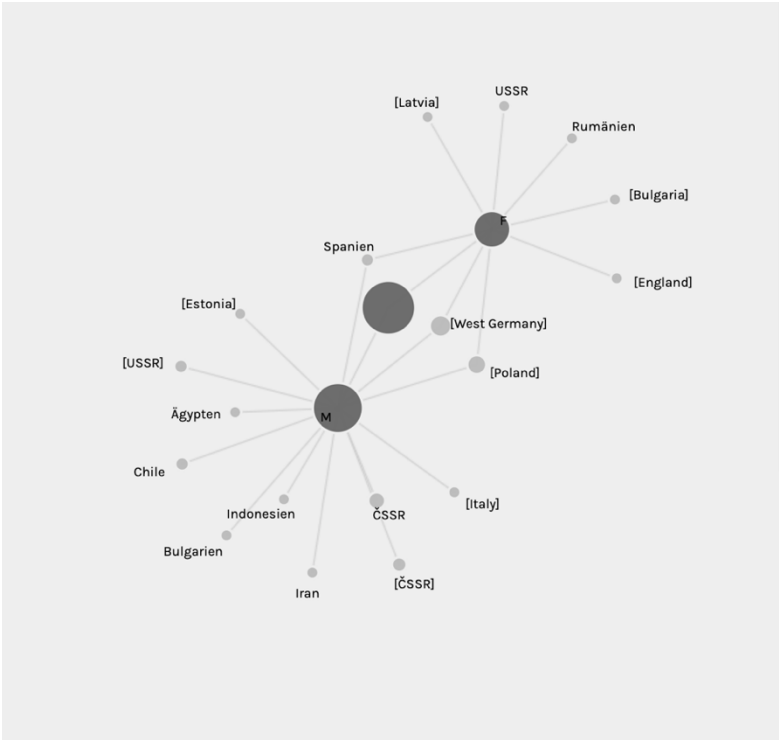
Figure 7
Country of origin of the participating artists at 9ᵗʰ Dresden Art Exhibition
Data source: GDR_forms_data, GRI Research Project

Most of the female representing in the Dresden exhibition were from the GDR and friendly to regime countries, like Poland (18), ČSSR (9), Bulgaria (3), USSR, Latvia and others (fig. 7). To the Dresden National Art Exhibition in the 1982 almost 1500 artists were accepted, 982 from them were men and 366 women. What is also interesting, is that more than 480 applied, but were rejected.Based on the numbers we have, the percentage of female artists in 9ᵗʰ Dresden art exhibition is approximately 27% versus approximately 73% male (fig. 8). The women were represented more than a quarter among the exhibited artists.

Moreover, in the research report of the visitors "*Zur Resonanz der IX. Kunstausstellung*" from B. Lindner, U. Schnabel and D.

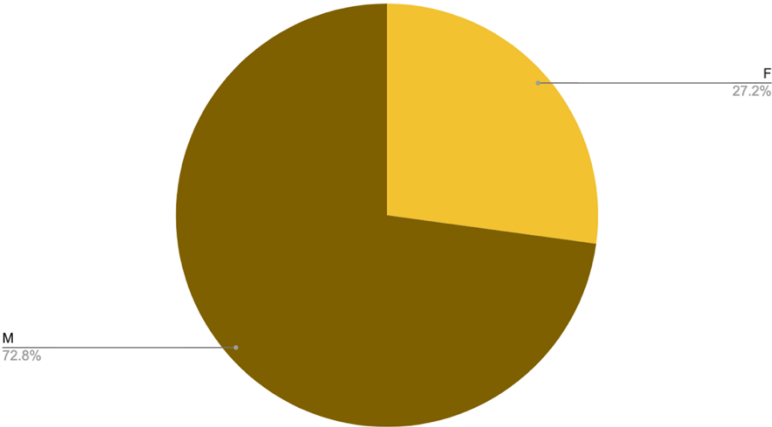*Figure 8*
Gender of the participating artists at 9ᵗʰ Dresden Art Exhibition
Data source: GDR_forms_data, GRI Research Project

Wiedemann the data states that, a lot of visitors were women and they also dominate among younger visitors who practicing art as a leisure activity:[28]

"In Ihrer Freizeit malen, zeichnen und moddellieren hauptsächlich Jugendliche, insbesondere Schüler und Studenten. Bei denen, die diese Freizeitbeschäftigung nur gelegentlich ausüben, dominieren die Frauen." [29]

"Während unter den Schülern und Fachschulabsolventen die Mädchen und Frauen leicht überwiegen, sind es unter den Facharbeitern/ Meistern und den Hochschulabsolventen die Männer*. Das Verhältnis beträgt jeweils cirka 60 zu 40 %."[30]

As a result, the numbers from the data visualization show that the 9th Dresden Art Exhibition exhibited around 366 women, which was 27-30% of the 1491 participants, and in the Documenta 7 there were 25 women, which is 13% of the 182 exhibited artists. Despite the scale of the art exhibitions and number of the participating artists being incomparable the data indicates the female artists representation was higher in the Dresden National Exhibition than in the neighboring West Documenta 7. The presence of mainly GDR and other socialist countries' female artists in the Dresden exhibition indicates that the GDR's art scene was controlled by politics and influenced by the socialist state's priorities. It also suggests that the GDR sought to establish cultural and political ties with other socialist states. Additionally, the data visualization suggests that the art scene in the West during the Cold War was male-dominated and predominantly centered on American artists.

4. Project Narrative

For what my project is doing the data visualization in the style of the chart is really significant and can show the uneven representation of gender in numbers, and its percentage from the whole; the map can point geographically the origin of the analyzed subjects and spatially how these different correspondents are related to each other. In the beginning, I was asking myself, how I could get more accurate results from the existing data to build my argument of gender in the visual arts around the 1980s. Another challenge was how to read the data to see how politics affect the processes of gender in the arts. The whole narrative to work with data is spanning around technical skills such as data analysis and finding the

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[28] Lindner*,* Schnabel, Wiedemann, "*Zur Resonanz der IX. Kunstausstellung,*" 8, 16.
[29] In their free time, mainly young people, especially pupils and students, paint, draw and model. Among those who only occasionally pursue this leisure activity, women dominate.
[30] While girls and women slightly predominate among schoolchildren and technical college graduates, men* predominate among skilled workers/master craftsmen and university graduates. The ratio is about 60 to 40 % in each case.

proper tool in the field, which gives more accurate results for the data to analyze. I started with organizing and refining the existing databases from the GDR art exhibition, as well as collecting new ones to compare and show the contrast of similar art events.

Working on the data from the GDR national art exhibition, at first seemed overwhelming, the multiple spreadsheets and thousands of cells, but asking a specific question in advance and over the progress of research, building my argumentation based on the visuals, helped me find a right tool to refine and extract the data. For the male-female representation, I filtered the Gender (M/F) and Exhibition section categories in the Google spreadsheet and copy them to the new page, after I changed the order into A to B. Applying the same workflow for the exhibition section and by cleaning the 0 value from it, I got the approximate number of the participants who applied and were accepted because the 0 corresponded to the artists who didn't exhibit. In this way, I could get more accurate data to compare the exhibited female artists from the Documenta 7 and 9th Dresden Art Exhibition. For my visualizations, I used Google Charts, which is a perfect tool for pie charts with a few data categories and multiple data points. On the contrary, for the geographical visualization of the country of origin of the exhibiting artists, Palladio is doing better work. Linking the Gender (M/F) and Birth_Country (if not East Germany) I could prove the argument that the majority of the participants were from socialist countries.

To compare similar event data, I created the Documenta 7 database from the public archive information on the Documenta website. Each Documenta art exhibition is represented in numbers and given a short text introduction to it. I created my own spreadsheet with the participating artists from 1982 by using AI as a refining tool. Firstly, I divided the male and female artists by category of gender and country of origin, in the same way, that is represented in the GDR Art Exhibition: male, female, country. This method was very accurate, but the AI still recognized some female names as male, and made around 4 mistakes, by placing the men in the female list and another way around. Manually improving the categorization helped me to get more accurate results for the data visualization. My next step was to calculate the percentage of women among the artists, I needed to divide the number of women by the total number of artists and then multiply by 100 to get the percentage by using the simple formula (Number of women / Total number of artists) x 100. Plugging in the values, we get: percentage of women = (23 / 182) x 100 = 12.64% Therefore, the percentage of women among the artists is approximately 12.64%. This action was repeated for the men. Substituting the values, we get the percentage of men = (159 / 182) x 100% = 87.36%. Therefore, the percentage of men on the list is approximately 87.36%. I

tried to use AI image generation to help me with creating a data visualization process, by using the text-to-image technique and DALL-E 2 and Craiyon as a tool. I had a simple descriptive prompt: "pie chart with 13% women and 87% men", after a couple of experiments I couldn't get any good results. I concluded that AI image generation is not yet good usable for data visualization, as it doesn't understand how to design data visualization built on real data that has a message to a reader (fig. 9). The results were rather more artistic, a good source of inspiration for the other data visualization tools to create effective graphs, maps, and charts, but that it another essay itself.

At the beginning of this project, my assumptions were not correct, and I was surprised to see my visualizations of gender in the art within socialist Eastern Germany in the 1980s female representation was almost twice as high as in the neighboring West. The political-historical research enhanced this thesis. The under-representation of women in the exhibition reflects the broader gender inequalities in the art world during this period. Women artists faced significant barriers to recognition and success, with many struggling to gain access to education, exhibition opportunities, and critical recognition. Primarily, the fact that there were so few women artists represented in the exhibition suggests that the art scene in the West during the Cold War was characterized by a pervasive gender imbalance and a concentration of power and influence among a few male artists, particularly in the United States.

For a more well-rounded perspective on the topic, I could also spend more time researching and working on the visualizations of the age and the medium that the female artists were representing in the exhibitions in the West. From the April Eisman research, we could learn that especially women painters were playing the important role in the socialist visual arts culture, and in the West, the exhibited works were more broadly represented, by letting more experimental mediums being introduced to the public.

For the most part, my experience of working with the data was challenging, but rewarding at the same time, I learned technical skills and applied creativity to get insightful meaning for my research questions.

5. Conclusion

Significant progress towards greater gender equality in the art field was made in the 1980s and it was a revolutionary decade for political regimes. My data visualization of the representation of female artists at prestigious art fairs in both East and West Germany enhances reflection on my question within a historical context and provides an example of the complex social-political changes that occurred during the last decade of the forty-year-long socialist regime of the GDR. By forcing us to engage with analytical insights and enabling creative interpretations, refined and filtered metadata from big datasets can enhance art-historical research by strengthening arguments and providing a better understanding of existing discourses.

The numbers depicted in the charts demonstrate that women from the GDR fought hard to gain increasing representation in prestigious exhibitions, art associations, and art academies, with their presence in fact surpassing that of women in the Western art scene. An important step towards recognizing the contributions of women and greater gender equity in the arts, could be seen by comparing the data points. However, the full gender 50% to 50% chart was never achieved, but the art itself played an important role in visualizing a reality of gender equality, as well as the younger generation artists like Martha Rosler, Angela Hampel with her group *Dresdner Sezession 89,* who had a different perspective on gender roles compared to older generations.

After the March 1990 election, East Germans' aspirations for a new and fairer society faded. The majority now favored unification over socialism, and women's rights advocates shifted their focus to preserving the rights that East German women already had, such as the right to work and reproductive freedom, in light of conservative views in the West. German unification in 1990 created new opportunities. However, for many artists and intellectuals who were highly regarded and able to travel during the Cold War, the losses were more profound, it was setbacks in women's rights. The peaceful revolution initially promised a socialist future with gender equality, but unification closed down those possibilities and introduced Eastern Germans to a capitalist system with different values and ways of doing things.[31] In the visual arts, unification led to a significant decrease in the numbers of East German women included in major exhibitions, including those focusing specifically on East German art. Whereas in East Germany, women were an important – and ever increasing –

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[31] Eisman, "The Impact of Unification on East German Art: The Case of Angela Hampel," 8.

part of the art scene, making up 33% of the Association of Visual Artists in East Germany and more than 25% of the artists in major exhibitions by the mid-1980s, their numbers dropped to under 10% in most books and exhibitions about East German art after 1990. Of the 137 artists in the award-winning blockbuster exhibition, Kunst in der DDR, in 2003, for example, only thirteen were women. [32]

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[32] Eisman, "From Economic Equality to 'Mommy Politics'", 175-203.

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7. Images

Figure 1
Angela Hampel, Zu Christa Wolfs Kassandra, 1984

Figure 2
Angela Hampel and Steffen Fischer, Offene Zweierbeziehung, 1989

Figure 3
Martha Rosler, Semiotics of the Kitchen, 1975, video still
Courtesy of the artist
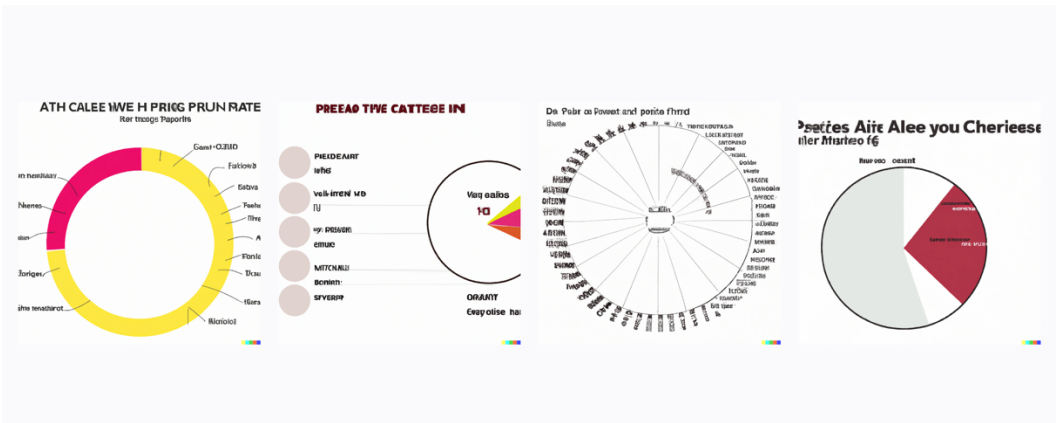
Figure 9
Data visualization, AI generated image with DALL-E 2

8. List of images

Figure 1: 1984

Eisman, April. "*The Impact of Unification on East German Art: The Case of Angela Hampel*," in *The Sudden and Startling Vanishing of a State*, Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies, Freie Universität (10/2020): 7-11

Figure 2: 1989

Eisman, April. "*The Impact of Unification on East German Art: The Case of Angela Hampel*," in *The Sudden and Startling Vanishing of a State*, Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies, Freie Universität (10/2020): 7-11

Figure 3: 1975, Martha Rosler - Semiotics of the Kitchen 1975, 6:09 min, Everythinghasitsfirsttime, Youtube.
Last accessed 13.04.2023.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuZympOIGC0&ab_channel=Everythinghasitsfirsttime

Figure 4: 2023: Google Charts

Figure 5: 2023: Google Charts

Figure 6: 2023: Google Charts

Figure 7: 2023: Palladio

Figure 8: 2023: Google Charts

Figure 9: 2023: DALL-E-2
Text-to-image generation

9. Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Kultur-, Sozial- und Bildungswissenschaftliche Fakultät

Name: ..**Natalya**.................................. Vorname: **Bashnyak**................................

Matrikelnummer: ..**617232**.........................

Eigenständigkeitserklärung zur

☒ **Hausarbeit**   ☐ **Magisterarbeit**
☐ **Bachelorarbeit**   ☐ **Masterarbeit**

Ich erkläre ausdrücklich, dass es sich bei der von mir eingereichten schriftlichen Arbeit mit dem Titel

How gender policies affected the visual arts in the GDR before he Wall was torn down.
....
Visualization of Gender in Art within Socialist Eastern Germany in the 1980s
....

um eine von mir erstmalig, selbstständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasste Arbeit handelt.

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Datum ....**14.04.2023**.............   Unterschrift

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Berlin, ...   (Unterschrift)

10. Prüfungsprotokoll

Prüfungsprotokoll

über eine Prüfung im Studiengang Bachelor of Arts/Kunst- und Bildgeschichte/kein LA/Kernfach/2014
im Fach/Modul 2550 Bildgeschichte / Methoden / Wissenschaftsgeschichte - **2559 Bildgeschichte / Methoden /
Wissenschaftsgeschichte** im 1. Versuch im Wintersemester 2022/2023.
Prüfungsform: Hausarbeit

Studentin: Natalya Bashnyak, 617232
Prüferin: Prof. Dr. Emily Pugh

Studierendenausweis und PA/Reisepass lagen vor: Ja / Nein
Identität geprüft: Ja / Nein
Bei Gruppenprüfung Anzahl der Kandidat:innen:

Prüfungsdatum: 14.04.2023   Beginn: Uhr   Ende: Uhr

Gegenstände und Verlauf der Prüfung:
(hier sind in Stichworten die Themen aufzuführen, zu denen der Kandidat/die Kandidatin befragt wurden)

1. Frage: Fühlen Sie sich gesundheitlich in der Lage, die Prüfung zu absolvieren? Ja / Nein

Bewertung (bitte geben Sie die Noten in Ziffern gemäß Schlüssel – s.u. – an):

Prüfungsnote: bei Erteilung der Note 5 – Begründung:

oder Abbruch der Prüfung:

Unterschriften:

Prüferin: Prof. Dr. Emily Pugh

Prüfer:in:

Beisitzer:in:

Das Prüfungsprotokoll ist nach der Unterzeichnung durch Prüfer:innen und Beisitzer:innen der beim FB/Institut geführten Prüfungsakte innerhalb von 24 Stunden nach der Prüfung beizufügen.

1,0 1,3 sehr gut	1,7 2,0 2,3 gut	2,7 3,0 3,3 befriedigend	3,7 4,0 ausreichend	5,0 nicht ausreichend