

# Deciphering the Genius of Artemisia Gentileschi During the #MeToo Moment

The Dorotheum auction house will sell the Baroque painter's "Lucretia," heavily advertising the artist's traumatic past as a 17th-century woman.

[Olivia McEwan](#) 3 days ago

This increased feminist-leaning sensibility has touched everything from equal pay in the museum and heritage sector (with the major auction houses scrutinized for their pay gaps), to programming. 2018 thus far has seen prominent shows on Anni Albers, Frida Khalo, Tacita Dean and women's right to vote. **In July, the National Gallery in London purchased Gentileschi's "Self-portrait as St. Catherine of Alexandria" (1615–17) for £3.6 million (~\$4.7 million) from the London dealer Robilant + Voena.** It previously sold for £2.3 million (~\$3 million), more than ten times its estimate in 2017. The high profile purchase conscientiously increased the number of paintings made by women in the collection of 2,300, to 21.

[...]

Born in Rome in 1593, Artemisia trained under her father Orazio, so outshining her siblings that she was producing professional work by age 17. Following her rape, she moved to Florence and set up her own studio, becoming a successful court painter under the Medicis and gaining such success that she was eventually inducted into the Accademia del Disegno, an enormous accolade to be awarded any painter in that era. It enabled her to buy paint and supplies without a man's permission, travel by herself, and sign contracts.

The content of her body of work itself, however, is suggestive that Gentileschi not only survived and used to her advantage the scandalous incident but possessed an agency that exploited her "exotic" position as a female in a patriarchal society to further her own career. Of roughly 60 paintings attributed to her, around 40 feature striking female figures demonstrating strength and agency: Judith and Holofernes (Judith beheads an aggressive warlord); Saint Catherine (martyred on the wheel); and the allegories of Inclination. Her mastery of nudes and facial expressions, she combined with the chiaroscuro practices of Caravaggio (Orazio was a friend) and dramatic depictions of violence that were shocking coming from a female hand. Several self-portraits demonstrate less a portrayal of victimhood and adversity and more of a self-assured businesswoman as the creator of these bold and highly desirable paintings. She has overcome not just a single act of violence, but an entire patriarchal society.

Read the full article online: <https://hyperallergic.com/458592/artemisia-gentileschi-metoo-movement/>