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# Re-setting the Agenda: Jeanne Mammen's re-possession of female agency and subjectivity

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# RE-SETTING THE AGENDA

JEANNE MAMMEN'S REPOSESSION OF FEMALE AGENCY AND SUBJECTIVITY

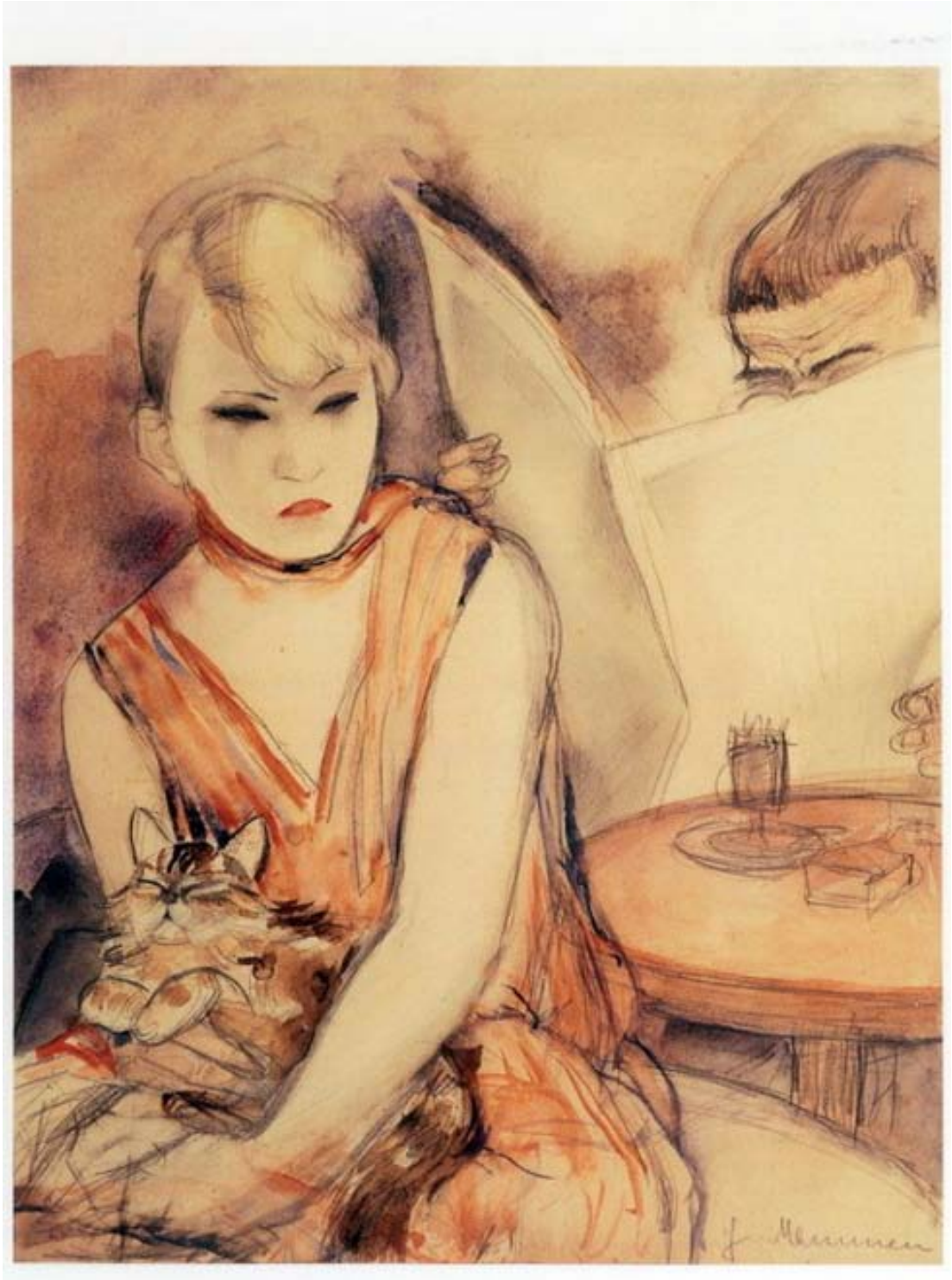

Figure 1: *Woman with a Cat* c. 1929

**CANDIDATE 27515**

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## Introduction

*'Women should be someone not something'*[1]

- Mary Cassatt


Figure 2: *Masked Ball* 1928

This work by the Weimar artist Jeanne Mammen is a signature image of late 1920s Berlin and depicts a female couple inside a crowded (presumably) lesbian night-club.[2] Entitled both *Masked Ball* and more symbolically, *She Represents*, subtitled *carnival scene*, it asks some intriguing questions regarding the display of the body, female sexuality and

[1] Letter from M. Cassat to S. Hallowell, reported by the latter in a letter to Bertha Palmer; see Nancy Mowll Mathews (ed.), *Cassat and Her Circle, Selected Letters*, (New York, 1984) p. 254

[2] M. Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*,(London, 1999), p.216

agency, gender roles and boundaries and the world of entertainment in Weimar Germany. Who or what does the central female figure represent? And to whom? Does her dramatic pose infer a performance of a particular role or identity as Marsha Meskimmon has claimed?[3] Does she exemplify a specific feminine stereotype? She exhibits herself, in trousers with a scarf and top hat, hands on hips, legs apart, a cigarette casually, yet strategically, dangling from her mouth. [4]Her direct stare challenges the viewer. This carefully constructed male appearance is accentuated by her partner's feminine style, of a red dress and flower in her hair. The image provides a glimpse of how women were beginning to publically experiment unorthodox sexual identities in the laissez-faire Weimar environment.

By closely interpreting Mammen's depictions of women, this dissertation will show that she succeeds in undermining and transcending the patriarchal repertoire of feminine stereotypes and in subverting fine art conventions, to empower her women.[5] Through the strategic choice of subjects and use of colour, lighting, setting, body language and clothing, she wilfully grants her women a sexual agency and subjectivity previously denied them. This dissertation will extend beyond the accepted view of female sexual identity in Weimar Germany, as dependent on an embattled male/female dynamic, towards the realisation of a female self that is individual to each woman and which operates on its own terms and in its own space. It will present a balanced and authentic signification of Weimar women and their lived experience of themselves, rather than the discursive invocation of Weimar 'woman' that has been projected ideologically in relation to 'Man' as his 'Other'.[6]

Historical studies of female identity in Weimar Germany have focussed on the changing social position of women post World War I. During the war, women entered the modern industrial workplace in great numbers. The New Woman was the agent of sexualisation of the public sphere, a role which she underlined by her appropriation of masculine style. By repudiating the traditional markers of femininity (housebound domesticity and a prescriptive dress code) women signalled their independence and challenged male social and cultural hegemony.[7] This outline of social tensions is consistently

[3]Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough*, p. 216-7
[4] B. Kosta, 'Cigarettes, Advertising and the Weimar Republic's Modern Woman', p. 135, in G. Finney (ed.), *Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany: Text as Spectacle*, (Indiana University Press, 2006)
[5] L. Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, (London, 1992), p. 8
[6] E. Lipton, 'Representing Sexuality in Women Artist's Biographies: The Cases of Suzanne Valadon and Victorine Meurent', *Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1990), p. 81
[7] M. Tatar, 'Introduction' in K. Von Ankum (ed.), *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Germany*,(University of California Press, 1997), p. 5

reinforced in contemporary texts.[8] The 'masculinisation' of woman has received considerable academic attention; Katie Sutton's extensive study has shed light on gender categories, identities and performance and pinpoints the increased visibility of 'queer' female masculinities in the Weimar media, notably, and in fashion and sport.[9]

Moreover, the work of leading male Weimar artists has been referenced to elucidate this public re-fashioning of female identity by women and the resulting 'Battle of the Sexes'.[10] Eva Karcher illustrates how Otto Dix casts his women in a range of stereotypical guises (prostitute, mother, muse and consumer.) They appear cold and conceited conveying Dix's personal concern at the corrupt values and louche behaviour of Weimar society.[11] Maria Tatar and Beth Irwin-Lewis's' studies of sexual murder in the works of Dix and George Grosz respectively, contend that their graphic depictions of the murderous mutilation of women express their aggressive resentment of women's encroachment upon masculine authority, and revulsion at women's shameless sexuality.[12] However, these specific studies show women in static, negative roles, sexualized and sexually available without any individuality or agency according to a misogynistic iconography.[13]

Bram Dijkstra reiterates the sexist nature of contemporary female imagery; 'from nuns, Madonnas, and invalids of the mid Victorian period to the vampires and man-eaters of the 1890s' and cites works by 'modern' artists such as 'Degas and Manet.'[14] Dorothy Rowe limits the depiction of women in Weimar art to being 'confined to the role of prostitutes, sex murder victims, widows… or anonymous bourgeois shoppers.'[15]An extensive variety of female stereotypes within high art, ranging from virgin, mother and muse, to witch and whore, has signified what is desirable (virgins and mothers) in a male dominated culture.

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[8] See, R. Bridenthal, 'Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women at Work' *Central European History*, Vol. 6 (1973), p. 148-66, B. Kundrus, 'Gender Wars: The First World War and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Weimar Republic' in K. Hagemann and S. Schueler-Springorum (eds.), *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth Century Germany* (New York, 2002).
[9] K. Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, (Berghahn Books, 2011)
[10] Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, p. 13
[11] E. Karcher, *Otto Dix*, (Taschen, 2010)
[12]M. Tatar, *Lustmord. Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany*, (Princeton, 1995), B. Irwine-Lewis, *George Grosz: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, (University of Wisconsin press, 1971)
[13] P. Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 73, No. 3, (September, 1991), p. 416
[14] B. Dijikstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, (New York, 1986), p. viii
[15] D. Rowe, 'Desiring Berlin: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Germany,' in M. Meskimmon and S. West, (eds.), *Visions of the "Neue Frau:" Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany* (Scolar Press, 1995), p. 3

Negative images of women as the 'original cause of all evil'[16] were anchored in western culture from the early Middle Ages onward and recall, as Larry Silver observes, 'the normative hierarchy of male domination.'[17]

The distinctive female voice in **Weimar** art has been discussed by Alessandra Comini in a comparative study of grief in the art of Käthe Kollwitz and Edvard Munch, who argues that the usual stereotypes were reversed.[18]However, Martha Kearns rightly points outs that, Kollwitz's women are limited to hunched, poverty stricken and sickly mothers and their children, and are primarily used to criticise social conditions in Germany.[19] She falls back on the accepted practice of typecasting women, ignoring the possibility of a multi-dimensional female identity. Other more advanced studies recognise the historical restrictions placed on women and female art. Pollock's investigation of Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassat, defends the specificity of woman's experience.[20] She examines not the positions in which women have been placed in by men but rather maps the female space that was available to them and that they occupied, outside of the male domain.[21]

The primacy of Mammen's work, derives from her vision of women outside of their engagement with men that affords them an original femininity and potency. However, she has received surprisingly little scholarly attention.[22] Her women are multi-dimensional and empowered. They present themselves to the viewer in new, specific ways. Close examination of these images therefore offers new insights into female subjectivity and agency.

Typically, historians have viewed Mammen's work as objective observations of women's ambivalent position in society.[23] Mammen herself declared, 'I have always wanted to be first a pair of eyes walking through the world unseen.'[24] Yet, for Annelie Lütgens they

[16] J. R. Sommerfeldt, *The Spiritual Teachings of Bernard of Clairvaux: An Intellectual History of the Early Cistercian Order,* (Cistercian Publications, 1991)
[17] L. Silver, 'The State of Research in Northern European Art of the Renaissance Era', *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 68, No. 4, (December, 1986), p. 529
[18] A. Comini, 'For Whom the Bell Tolls: Private versus Universal Grief in the Work of Edvard Munch and Kithe Kollwitz,' *Arts Magazine*, (March, 1977), p.142.
[19] M. Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz: Woman and Artist,* (The Feminist Press, 1976)
[20] G. Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in N. Broude and M. D. Garrard, (eds.), *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, (New York, 1992), p. 245-67
[21] Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity'
[22] At least two major texts addressing women's art from the Renaissance to the late 1900s exclude mention of Mammen: *Women Artists: 1590-1980* (Heller, 1987) and *Making their Mark: Women artists move into the mainstream* (Rosen & Brawer, 1989)
[23] http://www.jeanne-mammen.de/html/english/contents/foundation.html visited 2 December 2011
[24] http://www.jeanne-mammen.de/html/english/contents/foundation.html

convey unease with the increasing commodification of human relationships.[25] With their underlying eroticism, women are positioned as each other's allies, conspiring to confront great social change and the hostility of male-dominated society. However, her unquestioning acceptance of Mammen's depictions of certain stereotypes of women, such as the prostitute, denies them dimension. Mammen's ability as an artist as well as the conventional treatment of female subjects in art is overlooked.[26]

Katharina Sykora explores Mammen's images in relation to women's conflicting relationships with men and with one another. She particularly references a third gender type that was neither strictly female nor male, but a composite.[27] However, she oversimplifies, by claiming that Mammen documents stereotypes; the 'garçonne', the 'flapper' and what Sykora terms 'butch' types, who sport men's clothing and hairstyles.[28]Steven Spier's more sophisticated study *Urban Visions* concentrates on the potential for new and exciting identities for women by means of altered gender roles.[29] The performance aspect of gender identity is central to Marsha Meskimmon's work, *We Weren't Modern Enough*. She provides a fresh perspective on Weimar women's art, reclaiming the lost history of several artists, most significantly Mammen.[30] However, Meskimmon examines social categories like the 'New Woman' and 'Garçonne' and ignores the individual woman. Nor does she consider artistic practice.

This dissertation will go beyond earlier studies by focussing specifically on Mammen's depictions of women in order to delineate the way women perceived, displayed and enacted their sexual agency, outside of conventional categories.[31] It will ask: To what extent does Mammen take male stereotypes of woman; the sexual, provocative woman (the prostitute or Femme Fatale), the androgynous woman, the working woman (New Woman) and the naked woman, and subsequently subvert and transcend such clichés to depict women as dynamic individuals? Is Mammen's marginal treatment of the male subject a successful device to undermine male domination? According to Lynda Nead, universal acceptance of the established model of the female nude regularized female sexuality, containing and

[25]A. Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women: Images of City Life in the Work of Jeanne Mammen', in K. Von Ankum (ed.) *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture,* (London, 1997), p. 89-106
[26] Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women,' p. 101
[27] K. Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', *Woman's Art Journal,* vol. 9, no. 2, (1989), p. 28-31
[28] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 29
[29] S. Spier (ed.) 'Ladies and/or Gentleman: Jeanne Mammen' in *Urban Visions: Experiencing and Envisioning the City*, (Liverpool University Press, 2002), p. 50-5
[30] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough:*
[31] Nead, *The Female Nude*, p. 8

controlling it.[32] Mammen uses pre-established artistic conventions, like the female nude but undermines them to empower the women in her images. However, does Mammen depict women in conflict with men or engaging in their own femininities and agencies outside the male jurisdiction? And does this have implications for the identity of the viewer?

**Art as a Historical Source**

In the past, historians have disregarded visual sources, preferring □to deal with texts and political or economic facts, not the deeper levels of experience that images probe.□[33] However, the recent pictorial turn□ has brought a new clarity to historical issues 'second only to that which springs from actual observation.'[34] According to Larry Silver art is a vital shaper of culture.[35] Margaret Miles has used images of medieval women for information about their lives which she believes □is simply unavailable in verbal texts.□[36] Texts, testimonies and images are all important form of historical evidence[37]; just as text represents thought in the form of words, the works examined in this dissertation represent Mammen's thoughts in the form of images, composed of colour and form.[38]

Undoubtedly, using art works as primary sources raises a number of issues. It has been argued that 'we do not know exactly what pictures are, what their relationship to language is, how they operate on observers and on the world, and what is to be done with or about them'.[39] Images can be manipulated by the maker to promote a specific viewpoint or ideology. Miles notes that Medieval imagery was used to 'formulate and reflect a culture designed by men for the benefit of men' with different meanings in each case[40]. Although Mammen's work embodies personal reflection, her visual testimonies of the past are of real value, supplementing the evidence of written documents[41] and facilitating a recovery of the lost history of women and their viewpoint.[42]

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[32] L. Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality,* (London, 1992), p. 8
[33] P. Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, (London, 2001), p. 10
[34] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, p. 104
[35] Silver, 'The State of Research in Northern European Art of the Renaissance Era', p. 527-31
[36] M. Miles, *Image as Insight. Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Centre,* (Boston, 1985), p. 9-10
[37] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, p. 14
[38] N. Laneyrie-Dagen, *How to Read Paintings,* (Chambers, Edinburgh, 2004), p. XIII
[39] W.J.T.Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation,* (Chicago, 1994)
[40] Miles, *Image as Insight,* p.64
[41] P. Burke, *Eyewitnessing, The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, (London, 2001), p. 184
[42] N. Kampen and E. G. Grossman, 'Feminism and Methodology: Dynamics of Change in the History of Art and Architecture', *Working Paper*, No. 122, Wellesley College Centre for Research on Women, (1983), p. 2-6

The worth of these images cannot be understood without asking the proper questions about their production. Art history theory provides the technical expertise needed to interpret the significance of different body poses, colour, setting, lighting, and composition. Symbolic meaning and its relation to artistic genres must be understood, and what is excluded ('significant absences') must be looked at just as closely.[43] In the academic field of sexuality studies, Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock both expose a key issue, namely the aggressive 'male gaze'. 'For centuries the cultural record of our experience has been a record of male experience. It is the male sensibility that has apprehended and described life'[44] and constructed the female sensibility.[45] John Berger presses this point further in his statement that, 'men act and women appear.'[46] Both Berger and Kenneth Clark agree that from the Renaissance onwards, women were depicted as being 'aware of being seen by a [male] spectator.'[47]According to Paul Messaris advertisements addressed to women imply a male audience too.[48] Thus the female viewer is 'being invited to identify both with the person being viewed and with an implicit, opposite-sex viewer.'[49] Therefore the impact of the male gaze on Mammen's depictions of women must be taken into account.

L. Tickner has attempted to challenge the notion of female inferiority and to reclaim a sense of female power.[50] She has stressed that being a woman and therefore being the owner of the female body is different from looking at it; 'even the Venus of Urbino menstruated, as women know and men forget.'[51] As a woman, Mammen lived and worked within the patriarchal culture of Weimar Germany and so she could never fully remove herself from it. This may have qualified her experience and encouraged her to identify with the heterosexual masculine voyeuristic gaze, despite herself.[52] Tickner emphasizes this, noting that female identities 'have been moulded in accordance with the roles and images which that ideology has sanctioned.'[53] Lack of a specific language for women to express themselves with except

[43] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, p.188
[44] V.Gornick, 'Toward a Definition of Female Sensibility', *Essays in Feminism*, (London, 1978), p. 112
[45] T. Gonma-Peterson and P. Mathews, 'The Feminist Critique of Art History', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. LXIX, No. 3 (September, 1987), p.335
[46] J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (London 1972), p. 47
[47]K. Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, (Penguin, 1993) and Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 49
[48] P. Messaris, *Visual Persuasion: The Role of Images in Advertising*, (London, 1997), p. 41
[49] Messaris, *Visual Persuasion*, p.44
[50] L. Tickner, 'The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists Since 1970', *Art History*, I, (June, 1978), p. 241-2
[51] Tickner, 'The Body Politic', p. 239
[52] S. Barnet (7th ed.), *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, (New York, 2003), p. 109
[53] Tickner, The Body Politic, p. 238

the male one is clear and calls for women to find new forms of expression and meaning.[54] Mammen devises a positive agenda to replace the outmoded version of woman who exists courtesy of the male gaze.

**Aims**

It might be said that a wider scope, to include work of other artists, would draw more representative conclusions. However, a study of limited length, which attempts to cover more artists and sources, would lack serious depth and would be less valuable than an extensive analysis of one lesser-known artist. This dissertation will closely analyse Mammen's depictions of women and her subversion of male constructed categories of women as well as high art conventions. It will also redress the particular neglect of Mammen as an important eyewitness of the Weimar period. It will be argued that Mammen bestows an original autonomy on her women, thereby giving them identities beyond that of mere protagonists in the battle of male against female. Chapter One will address Mammen's expression of agency and individuality within her women in the public sphere via her subversion of particular female stereotypes. In Chapter Two, her sketches of personal female relationships and the female nude will be examined in light of typical artistic treatment of such subjects.

[54] Nead, *The Female Nude, p. 62*

**Chapter One**

Born in Berlin in 1890, Mammen grew up in Paris, studying fine art at the renowned Académie Julian, the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and at the Scuola Libera Academica, in Rome.[55]. Clearly talented, her early work was exhibited in the 'Salons des Indépendents' in Paris and Brussels c. 1912.[56] Mammen's academic training based and extensive travel exposed her to classical art and the Old Masters. Furthermore, growing up in Paris was a seminal experience; Mammen almost certainly encountered the work of Toulouse- Lautrec and the Symbolists and absorbed their influence.[57] Mammen's social position also had an impact on her work. At the outbreak of World War I her family fled to Holland, to escape internment and her father, formerly a wealthy merchant, had his property confiscated by the French government.[58] Consequently the years during and after the war were marked by deprivation and financial struggle.[59] Reduced circumstances brought Mammen into contact with different types of people, and most significantly a wide range of women. Such women, who actively sought out their own futures in the world of work in a clear display of their female agencies, must surely have affected her. As a female artist Mammen was naturally drawn to the female subject and by extension to want to question its limited traditional representation.

The adoption of female stereotypes by male artists as a strategy to suppress the threatening female persona was therefore duly noted and then undermined by Mammen. The women she depicts embody her own social experience. Autonomous and free from dealings with men they repudiate visual convention. Mammen adapted archetypes such as the androgynous 'Garçonne', Femme Fatale (prostitute) and working girl (New Woman) to individualize and authenticate her depictions of women.

Alongside Mammen's project to create nonconformist representations of women, the modernization of Berlin, growth of the leisure industries and increased public presence of women was in progress.[60]Greater female self-determination and independence led to sexual

[55] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 28
[56] A. Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen' in L. R Noun (ed.), *Three Berlin Artists of the Weimar Era: Hannah Höch, Käthe Kollwitz, Jeanne Mammen*, (Des Moines, 1994), p. 93
[57] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 28
[58] Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 93
[59] A. Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women: Images of City Life in the Work of Jeanne Mammen.' in K. von Ankum (ed.), *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, (California, 1991), p. 89
[60] Rowe, *Representing Berlin*, p. 131

experimentation within Berlin's growing nightlife.[61] The world of pleasure, with its nightclubs and carnivals where women interact is a preferred setting for Mammen to draw upon and challenge the archetype of the socially ambiguous 'Garçonne woman.[62] In German society, androgyny stood for blurred gender roles and sexual identities such as lesbians and bisexuals.[63] Mammen removes these generalisations to present an alternative of independent and individual women. *Carnival I* 1931 (fig. 3) and *Carnival II* 1931 (fig. 4) image the same female couple amid a buoyant carnival crowd. Both picture one woman femininely dressed and the other in more masculine attire, their roles reversed in each.

Figure 3: *Carnival I* 1931

[61] E. D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*, (Princeton, 2007), p. 310-12
[62] M. Meskimmon, *Women Artist's in the Weimar Republic* (California, 1999), p. 199
[63] M. Lavin, 'The New Woman in Hannah Höch's Photomontages: Issues of Androgyny, Bisexuality, and Oscillation', in N. Broude & M. D. Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005), p. 327

All the while, their individualities are preserved through different hair colours and personalized body language. Despite their physical proximity and revealing party attire, the scene describes a warm, un-erotic intimacy. Instead, the women's deliberate and fluid change of attire affirms a female agency and unity. Traditionally, (male) artists made connections between fashion and women's identities and professions.[64] Mammen rejects this practice. Female identity here is not a matter of role-playing or superficial adjustment to the rules of a male-dominated society.[65] It cannot be readily changed via clothing but is deeply personal and subjective to each woman. The works subtly parody the 'Garçonne' archetype and subsequently disable it.

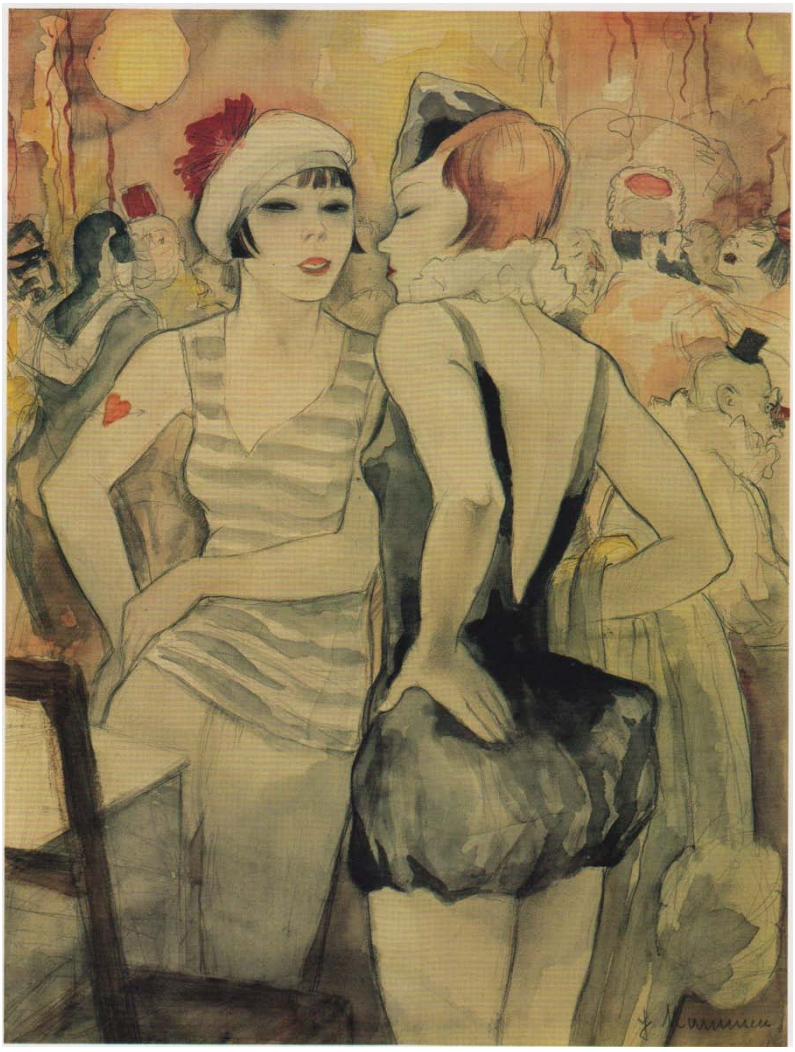

Figure 4: *Carnival II* 1931

[64] D. Dietrich, 'Refashioned Traditions: Kurt Schwitters' Collages of Women', *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, (Yale, 1991), p. 79

[65] J. Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', in Broude & Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005), p. 349

*Two Women Dancing* c.1920 exemplifies Mammen's attempt to move beyond sexist pigeon-holing. Two women dance together, but their neutrality thwarts any suggestion of sexual undertone typically conjured for the male viewer's pleasure. In *Zeebrugge* c.1920 two women reject female stereotyping by flaunting their so-called archetypal androgynous style whilst safeguarding their separate identities. *Transvestite* 1931 (fig. 5) demonstrates a similar strategy to grant female agency. In a cafe, raised on a chair and dressed in masculine attire a woman displays herself to the enraptured gaze of men. However, she exhibits herself, the 'Garçonne', as a sight; a derisive tactic to undermine their restrictive social categorization of her as the 'Transvestite' based solely on her style of dress. The stereotype of alternative sexuality is as Foucault highlights a sign of 'repressive tolerance'.[66] Her clothes challenge the culturally imposed standards of femininity; by dressing and advertising her sexuality as she pleases, she usurps the masculine power of her audience.[67]

Figure 5: *Tranvestite* 1931

[66]N. Broude & M. D. Garrard, 'Introduction' in Broude & Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005), p. 14
[67]Cole, "Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity", p. 350

This active denial of social typecasting is carried out in *Masquerade Ball* 1931 (fig. 6) by a young woman parading herself provocatively to a carnival guest, arms behind her back and hips thrust out, yet entirely unreceptive to his advances. The satirical character of *Untitled* c.1920 (fig. 7) expresses a similar reaction. Lütgens maintains that this female indifference emanates from a state of pessimism and a loss of purpose felt by women, but these images should be viewed as bold assertions of female autonomy, where men, and women's interaction with them, are deemed irrelevant and separate to women's relationship with themselves.[68] *Cafe Nollendorf* 1931 (fig. 8) presents female diversity with women engaging in a number of roles; barmaid, lover, voyeur, each in her own female space. Mammen therefore allows the viewer to envision alternatives to the status quo.[69]

Figure 6: *Masquerade Ball* 1931

[68] Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 99
[69] Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', p. 345

Figure 7: *Untitled* c. 1920

Figure 8: *Café Nollendorf*, 1931

Mammen also employs the Femme Fatale typecast a favoured subject for male artists, to reclaim agency for her women. Historically the Femme Fatale was upheld as a negative gender stereotype of the Other, relegating women to a lesser category and denying them both personality and intellectual distinction, in order to preserve male primacy.[70] Furthermore, no indication of any changes occurring in the position and status of women was present.[71] Carol Duncan asserts that Picasso's *Demoiselles D'Avignon* 1907 (fig. 9) epitomizes this sexist anti-humanist display of the Femme Fatale and helps 'to justify and celebrate the domination of woman by man.'[72]

Figure 9: *Demoiselles D'Avignon* 1907

[70] N. Broude & M. D. Garrard, 'Introduction' , in Broude & Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005), p. 21
[71] W. Slatkin, 'Maternity and Sexuality in the 1890s', *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring - Summer, 1980) p.18
[72] C. Duncan, 'Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting' in Broude and Garrard, *Feminism and Art History* (1973), p. 305

In contrast, Mammen presents a positive image of women as autonomous and distinct beings, displacing men as their sole raison d'être. *Prostitutes* 1930 (fig.10), show two streetwalkers at night in front of a lit window.[73] Whilst clearly on the look-out for customers, they support each other both as colleagues and companions, their silhouettes mingling and fusing to emphasize their partnership. Freudian and Lacanian theory that helped to reinforce patriarchal ideas and practices defined women by their lack of access to authority and by their inability to construct themselves as subjects and agents of their own desire.[74] However, the three women depicted in *Vacancy* 1928 powerfully contradict this definition as they hungrily await their next client. Likewise the women in *The Kaschemme Bar* c. 1925 exert their autonomy on their male dance partners and meet the viewer's gaze with impish stares. *Berlin Cafe* 1930 (fig. 11) displays this female potency in two women leaving a cafe. The women are individualized; a blonde who is smoking, is in profile and the other, a redhead, wearing a raincoat, hat and scarf, faces the viewer. Their overlapping forms and the mirrored left hand grip of their purses stress their female alliance. They exert independence as they take charge of the image; a couple in the left hand background fights for space and a man on the left struggles to read the menu, squashed in by their commanding presence. *At Kranzler's* 1929 three smartly dressed women, at a cafe together, occupy their surroundings with superior assurance. The woman in *In the Cafe* c. 1920 (fig. 12) controls her surrounding space, marginalising both her male companion and the male waiter there to serve her. Her calculating smile signals recognition of her agency. The men are mere props to her primacy.

[73] Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 96
[74] Lipton, 'Representing Sexuality in Women Artist's Biographies', p. 91

Figure 11: *Berlin Café* 1930

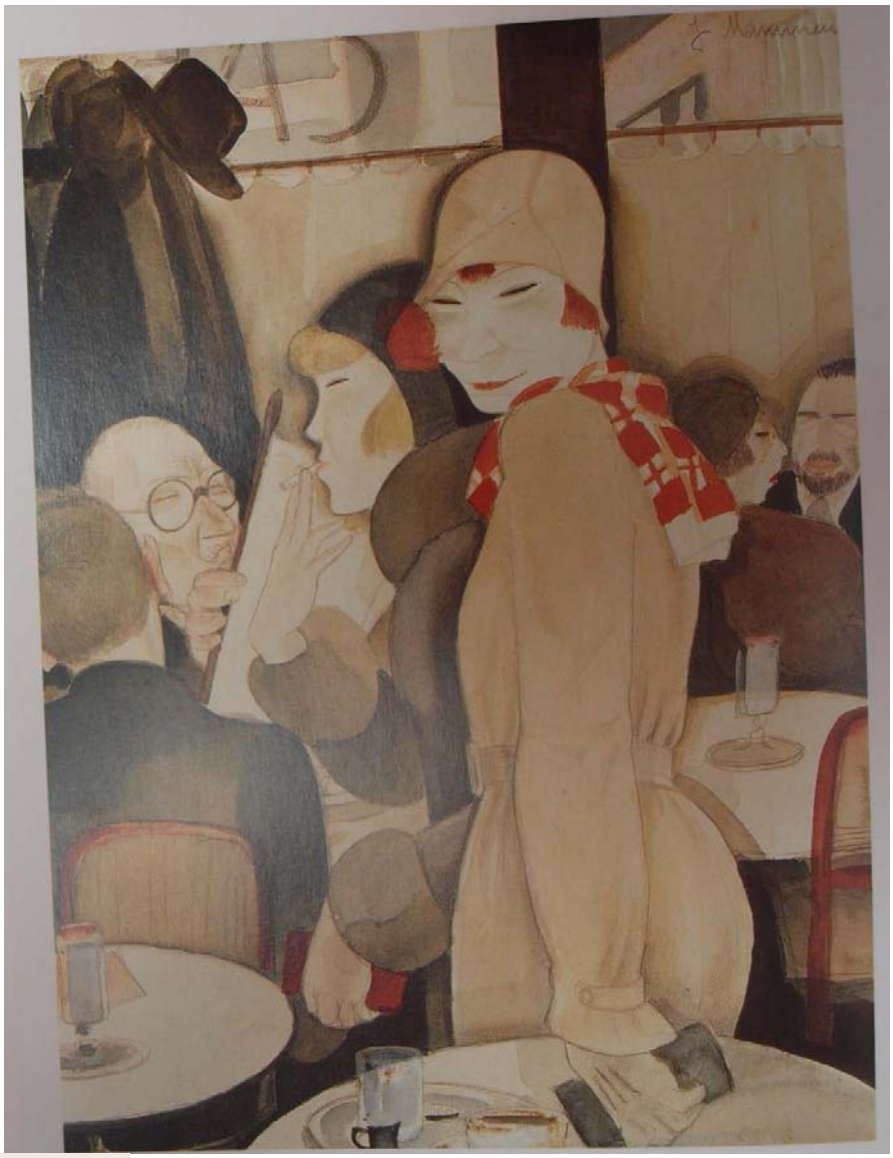



Figure 12: *In the Cafe* c.1920

Additionally, Mammen depicts some of her women participating in the entertainment industry employing exaggerated familiar gender signifiers to the point of parody.[75] With theatrically heavy make-up, in contrived settings and clothing, they pose for the (male) viewer. In *Before the Performance* 1928 (fig. 13) women prepare for a show and put on harsh make-up, a nod to the convention of associating women with mirrors and vanity.[76] They are highly manufactured and purposefully presented to the viewer in their undergarments acknowledging the shallow and objectified role women were usually assigned.

Figure 13: *Before the Performance* 1928

[75] Cole, 'Cahun, Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', p. 346
[76] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 47

*Berlin Street Scene* 1927-9 (fig. 14) also pointedly presents a caricature of women at leisure sitting in a cafe. A crowd walks past, eyeing those sitting in the cafe. Their exaggerated self-importance makes them faintly ridiculous.[77] The cafe guests are similarly narcissistic as they smoke, drink and exchange their spiteful glances.[78] The women play up to the social connection of women with vanity in a strategy to create a valid space for themselves and their identities on their own terms, beyond narrow typecasting as in *Boring Dollies* 1929 (fig. 15) where two nonchalant women pose in elegant clothes and jewellery. One smokes a cigarette; the other is leaning against the crossed legs of her girlfriend as they stare out of the canvas. Behind them sits a doll dressed as a clown with overstated make-up and half-closed eyes. Its presence caricatures their uniform appearance, deliberately blurring the difference between the painted doll and the doll-like women.[79]

Figure 24: *Berlin Street Scene* 1927-9

[77] Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 96
[78] Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 96
[79] Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women: Images of City Life in the Work of Jeanne Mammen', p. 99-100

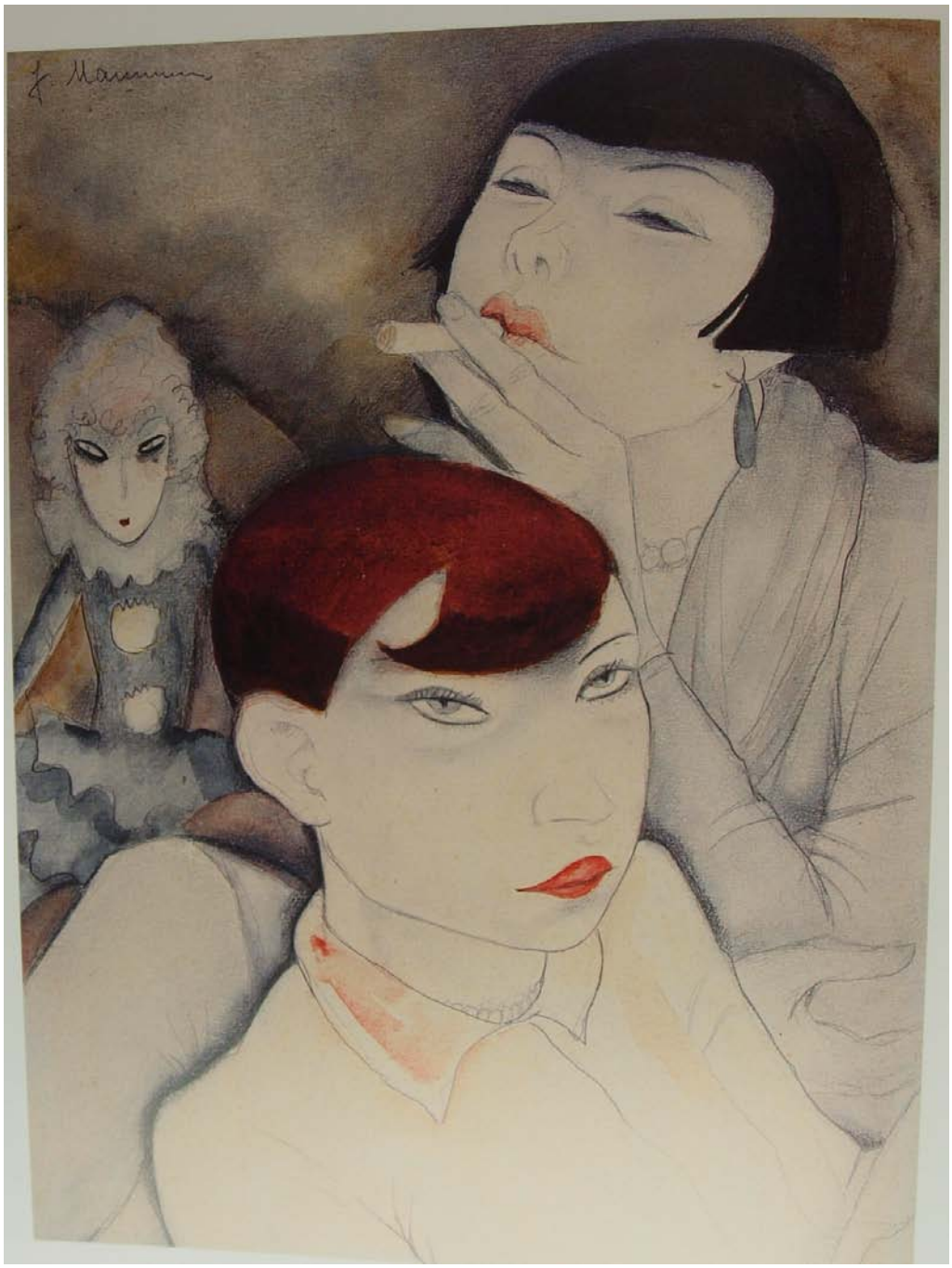

Figure15: *Boring Dollies* 1929

The accepted framework of the New Woman as a masculine working woman in androgynous dress with cropped hair is also challenged by Mammen. The belief that women were fundamentally different from men was entrenched in contemporary society. Even the enlightened sociologist Georg Simmel wrote that 'women in general are more deeply embedded in the species type than are men, who emerge from the species type more differentiated and individualized'. [80] Mammen's working women dispel this narrow view. In a cosmetic salon, *You Have Beautiful Hands* 1929 (fig. 16) displays a customer receiving a manicure from a beautician. Together they embrace the independence granted by earning their own living. Their female gender and exclusively female surroundings remove them from any exchange with men. Their relationship is one of trust and intimacy.[81] Their exchange of knowing glances and touch of hands suggest a mutual confidence. The women are self aware and presented on their own terms, in their own world which affords them potency. The customer and saleswoman in *The New Hat* 1929 are similarly displayed.

Figure 16: *You Have Beautiful Hands* 1929

[80] G. Simmel, 'Prostitution', 1907 in D. N. Levine (ed.), *On the Individuality and Social Form: Selected Writing*, (Chicago, 1971), p. 123
[81] Lütgens, 'The Conspiracy of Women', p. 95

Again, *The Discarded* 1929 (fig. 17) omits any male presence. Exclusively women are assembled in a library, some working, others idly gossiping. They wear uniform dress, ironically pigeonholing the 'look' of the New Woman, although this generalized appearance is reversed by their diverse hairstyles. The scene is of a female bonding ground away from male observation or involvement epitomised by the three women conversing in the foreground. *Two Girls in the Library* 1929 (fig. 18) presents a parallel female amity stripped of the erotic undertones typically used in art to suppress female agency. It pictures two women at work in a library, collaborating and supporting each other. Exhausted, one leans affectionately on the other, as they share a book. *In Front of the Bars, Behind the Bars* 1930 (fig. 19) offers a comparable image of girls in cohesion at work. Two young women at a counter in the packaging booth of a department store are overwhelmed by customers.[82] There A sense of inter-communication is reinforced by their overlapping figures. One with round face and bob faces the viewer, while the other, with red hair, expressionless, faces the crowd.[83] They stand close together in alliance but are separated by their particularized appearances, with scant acknowledgement of the viewer. Therefore the potency of the male viewer is disabled.

Figure 17: *The Discarded*, 1929

[82] A. Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen' in L. R Noun (ed.), *Three Berlin Artists of the Weimar Era: Hannah Höch, Käthe Kollwitz, Jeanne Mammen*, (Des Moines, 1994), p. 96
[83] Lütgens, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 96

Figure 18: *Two Girls in the Library*, 1929

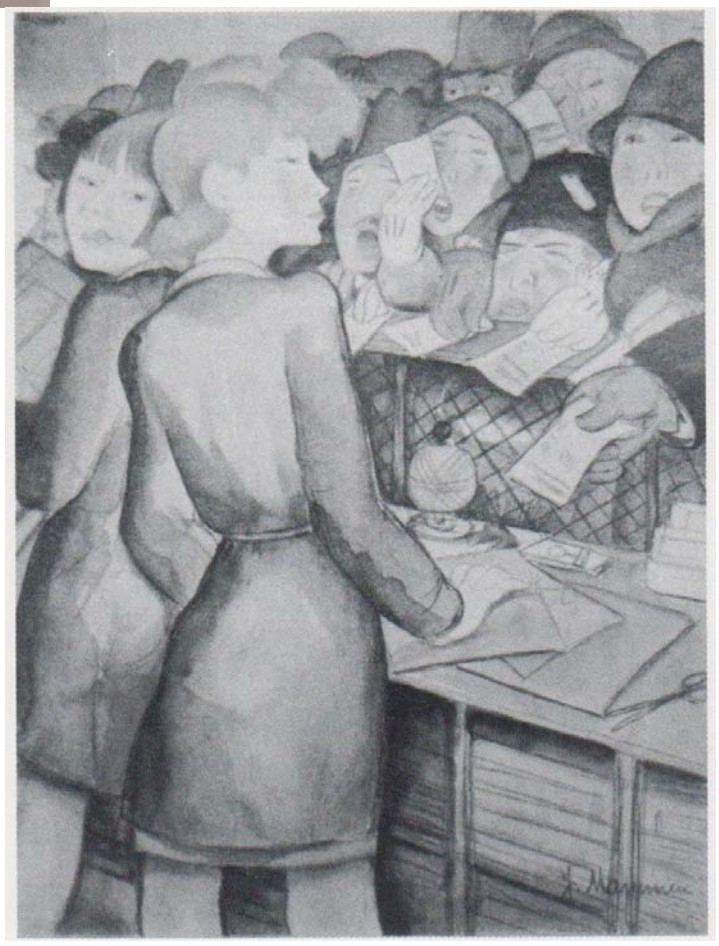

Figure 19: *In Front of the Bars, Behind the Bars* 1930

Elsewhere, women publically engaging in leisure activities are the singular focus of Mammen's works. Her studies of glamorous women were often designed for film posters and the front covers of society and fashion magazines.[84] Actively swathed in personality and subjectivity, they subvert the convention of portraiture. Traditional portraiture, codified by Sir Godfrey Kneller, depicted the male aristocracy in a public display of wealth and position.[85] Portraits of women were made but solely for the rich and influential; frequently, women appeared with and secondary to their husbands, as wives and mothers.[86] In *Redhead* 1928 (fig. 20), Mammen takes the female portrait but underscores a break with its traditional representation. The woman has command of the image and forces her male hairdresser into the background. Mammen reverses the conventions of portraiture; man is now secondary to woman. She is not presented for the use or pleasure of men. The man is present to serve her. Her fiery red hair, confident pose and calculating expression add to her forceful presence. Her beauty is intimidating. Her unflinching stare engages the viewer and generates immediacy and dynamism, subverting traditional female passivity.[87] *The Collar* 1931 (fig. 21) portrays a pretty woman with cropped hair, made-up face, wearing a dress and pearls. She sits before a mirror but turns away from it to look out at the viewer. Her enigmatic smile recalls the Mona Lisa, which despite granting its sitter □a mind of her own□, remains part of the traditional portrait canon.[88] Her expression is purposeful; to beguile the viewer and objectify her. Mammen subverts this look in its expression of the woman's agency.[89] She seems reserved and mysterious yet also entirely self assured and highly charged. Her male companion is pushed into the right corner. She ignores his touch on her exposed shoulder and back. J. Berger notes the customary inclusion of a male lover in female portraits, who is often ignored by the female subject.[90] She usually looks out to the viewer who she considers her true lover.[91] Mammen acknowledges this convention, but transforms the viewer from male lover into female comrade.

[84] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 28
[85] D.H. Solkin, 'Great Pictures or Great Men? Reynolds, Male Portraiture, and the Power of Art', *The Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (1986), p. 42
[86] G. C. Aymar, *The Art of Portrait Painting*, (Philadelphia, 1967)
[87] Lipton, 'Representing Sexuality in Women Artist's Biographies', p. 81
[88] E. H. Gombrich, (16th ed.), *The Story of Art*, (London, 1995), p. 300
[89] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 56
[90] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 56
[91] R. Parker& G. Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, (London, 1981), p. 116

Figure 20: *The Redhead* 1928



Figure 21: *The Collar* 1931

Likewise, *Concession* 1928, *Cocktail Bar* 1928 and *In the Ballroom* 1928 empower their women by actively disrupting traditional portraiture codes. Uninterrupted female gazes replace the titillating voyeurism of the 'male gaze' as epitomized in the 'Three Graces' trope.[92] Whereas Paris (on the orders of Zeus) had three naked goddesses to choose between, Mammen makes the viewer a collaborator with her female protagonists.[93] The illusion of a traditional narrative space combined with relatively realistic painterly style invites the viewer to interpret her work in the conventional manner of the portrait genre.[94] However, the cultural suppression of individuality that favoured the creation of types widely practised by male artists is discredited by Mammen.[95] She presents a positive view of women foregrounding autoeroticism and autonomy.

[92] M. Bull, *Mirror of the Gods: Classical Mythology in Renaissance Art*, (London, 2005)
[93] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 421
[94] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 421
[95]Dietrich, 'Refashioned Traditions: Kurt Schwitters' Collages of Women', p. 72

**Chapter Two**

Mammen's formal training and cosmopolitanism, discussed in the previous chapter, indicate an awareness and comprehension of fine art precedent and practice, and significantly, the assumption that in psycho-sexual terms, the artist is always necessarily male and the model always female.[96] This binary of opposites: Man as Authority and Woman as Other appeared consistently to Mammen throughout her studies and her travels and especially in the treatment of the female nude.[97]

The traditional genre of the female nude originates in antiquity, but the modern format of a passively seductive female body on canvas was popularised in the sixteenth century.[98] It is a convention customarily used by males (from Titian's *Venus of Urbino* 1538 (fig. 22) to Lucien Freud's *Naked Girl* 1966) and has been largely unchanging in its objectification of women, whatever other meaning may be present in the works.[99]

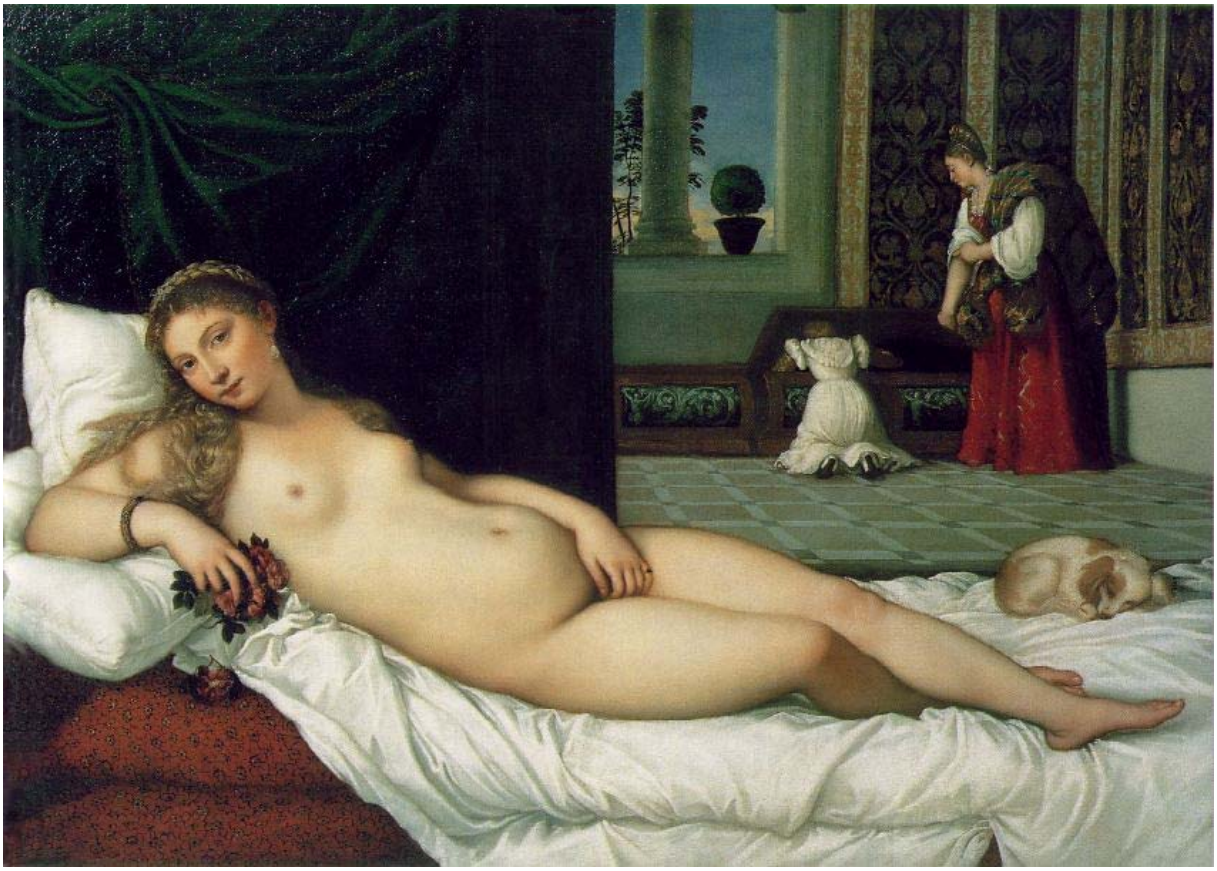

Figure 22: *Venus of Urbino* 1538

[96]Lipton, 'Representing Sexuality', p. 82
[97] Lipton, 'Representing Sexuality', p. 81
[98] Parker & Pollock, *Old Mistresses,* p. 115
[99] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 416

This male 'gaze', which historically framed representations of the female body as a 'bearer (not maker) of meaning' has consistently denied woman any personality or agency.[100] In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking was and always had been split between active/male and passive/ female.[101] Linda Nochlin has demonstrated that 'erotic' invariably means 'erotic for men' and 'about women for men's enjoyment, by men'.[102] This gaze, according to Freud, is 'always implicated in a system of control'.[103] Ingres's work, *La Grande Odalisque* 1814 (fig. 23) for example represents the 'classic' tradition of the nude and addresses the spectator explicitly in a number of ways.[104] The languid nude reclines, and although her body is turned away from the viewer, the glimpse of her breast and the expanse of her buttocks and thighs emphasize her sexual availability. Her inviting gaze is complicit with the viewer and is accentuated by the drawn curtain which suggests that a sight normally hidden has been revealed. Her body itself is smooth and fleshy, reinforcing the essential passivity of her pose. The harem setting has connotations of extreme sensuality and slavery and implies that the woman is literally possessed by the man who looks at her.[105]

Figure 23: *La Grande Odalisque* 1814

[100] L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in B. Wallis (ed.) *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, (New York, 1984), p. 362, 366
[101] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 362, 366
[102] T. B. Hess & L. Nochlin, *Woman as Sex Object. Studies in Erotic Art 1730-1970*, (New York, 1972), p 8-15.
[103] K. Linker, 'Representative Sexuality' in B. Wallis (ed.) *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, (New York, 1984), p. 407
[104] E. Prettejohn, *Beauty and Art*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 94
[105] R. Betterton, 'How do Women Look? The Female Nude in the work of Suzanne Valadon', in *R. Betterton* (ed.), *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and the Media*, (London. 1987), p. 5

The importance of the representation of the body is elucidated by Elizabeth Grosz who astutely identifies the body as central in the formation of individual identity and the site of the subject's desires and fantasies, actions and behaviour.[106] Therefore, as a subject the female nude has potential to reveal the real and individual woman who is not confined, controlled or defined by the artist's needs.[107] Male dominance of the status quo has blocked expression from a female viewpoint.[108] Women themselves have fuelled this 'system of control'[109] in their complicity with the male gaze and by appropriating images of so-called ideal femininity to themselves.[110]R. Coward summarizes: 'they (women) are in love with their own desirability'[111]. 'The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female[112]. Thus she turns herself into an object: a sight'.[113]

Carol Duncan has discussed the use of the female nude by the Fauves, Cubists and German Expressionists amongst others before World War I. Powerless, often faceless nudes with 'passive available flesh', testify to the artist's sexual virility,[114] reflecting the male need to demonstrate cultural supremacy at a time when the struggle for women's rights was at its height.[115] Mammen's decision to recast the female nude is therefore a transgressive action by definition[116]; no parallel tradition for women artists and the female body existed. Duncan has observed that the male nude is treated fundamentally differently from the female.[117] Dynamic individualism replaces passive generalisation notably in Matisse's *Boy with Butterfly Net* 1907. Furthermore, compositions of women naked together and stripped of any allegorical or mythological meaning were rare. The lesbian sexual body remains a forbidden object outside of patriarchal stereotypes. Either the female nude is appropriated for male heterosexual fantasy, or it is rendered socially invisible.[118]

Mammen's nude women demonstrate a conscious effort to move away from this limiting gaze. She takes a conventional subject matter but confounds expectations about how women's bodies should appear in art by portraying female identities beyond those normally

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[106] E. Grosz,'Corporal Feminism', *Australian Feminist Studies*, (Summer 1987), p. 3
[107] Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', p. 353
[108] T. B. Hess & L. Nochlin, *Woman as Sex object. Studies in Erotic Art 1730-1970*, (New York, 1972), p. 101
[109] Linker, 'Representative Sexuality', p. 407
[110] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p.47
[111] R. Coward, *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today*, (London, 1984), p. 78
[112] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 47
[113] G. Finney (ed.), *Visual Culture in Twentieth Century Germany: Text as Spectacle*,(Indiana, 2006), p.2
[114] Duncan, 'Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting', p. 30-39
[115] Parker & Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, p. 126
[116] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 418
[117] Duncan,'Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting', p. 30-39
[118] Nead, *The Female Nude*, p. 107

considered appropriately feminine.[119]Their bodies are un-idealised and individualized. They exist outside the normative heterosexual paradigm and no longer play the subordinate female role strictly defined by culture.[120]Her *Bilitis* series 1930, commissioned to illustrate Pierre Louy's new edition of *Les Chansons de Bilitis* (a collection of erotic poems inspired by Sappho)[121] boldly convey her own visualization of women and their inter-relationships. Their banning by the Nazis has led both Sykora and Lütgens to substantiate the series as erotically loaded, a homage to lesbianism and emblematic of the decadent Weimar era.[122] However, these images extend beyond a depiction of lesbian love scenes. They show private affection between women for who Mammen creates a new space, separate from the one they share with men. The series crosses the boundaries of bourgeois propriety by challenging both the idea of what is proper and appropriate in both style and subject for women artists.[123] As sketches, Mammen reorders the traditional association of line and design with masculinity, and colour with femininity, in her choice of line primarily over colour to describe her women.[124] It also breaks new ground by allowing women individual personalities and agencies beyond the male domain. *In the Morning* 1930-2 (fig. 24) shows the rear view of two embracing-women sitting on a bed. A bedside table, lamp and closed shutters indicate an intimate domestic setting.[125] A long-haired girl, wearing a transparent negligee top, puts her arm around her lover's shoulder and the latter reciprocates.[126] *In the Morning II* 1930-2 (fig. 25) sketches a similar scene, this time more intimate, as the two women appear naked. With their backs to the viewer Mammen closes off their bodies from sight. For women to command their chosen spaces, they must be able to opt out of being 'looked' at viewed as objects.[127] The nudes here do not 'desire to be desired'.[128]They decline the viewer's gaze by turning away towards each other. They are relaxed in their own un-idealised bodies and at ease with each other, mutually absorbed.[129]The bedroom setting is absent of sexual tension. They sit awkwardly without erotic undertones in opposition to the all encompassing, passionate bedroom embrace of

[119] W. Chadwick (4th ed.) *Women, Art and Society*, (London, 2007), p. 8
[120] Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', p. 349
[121] http://www.jeanne-mammen.de/html/english/contents/foundation.html, visited on 2nd December 2011
[122] Lütgens □Jeane Mammen□, p. 100 and K. Sykora, □Jeanne Mammen□, p. 38-9
[123] Mathews, □Returning the Gaze□, p. 418
[124] P. L. Reilly, 'The Taming of the Blue: Writing Out Colour in Renaissance Theory', in Broude & Garrard, (eds.) *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism & Art History*, (New York, 1992), ch. 4
[125] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 30
[126] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 30
[127] S. Ardener (ed.), *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps for Women*, (Taylor & Francis, 1981), p. 26
[128] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 427
[129] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 429-30

traditional 'lovers for male delectation.[130] Love is shown not as sensual desire typical of the male/female convention, but as a more meaningful, tender companionship, which grants its subjects individuality and autonomy and blocks the typical male gaze.[131]

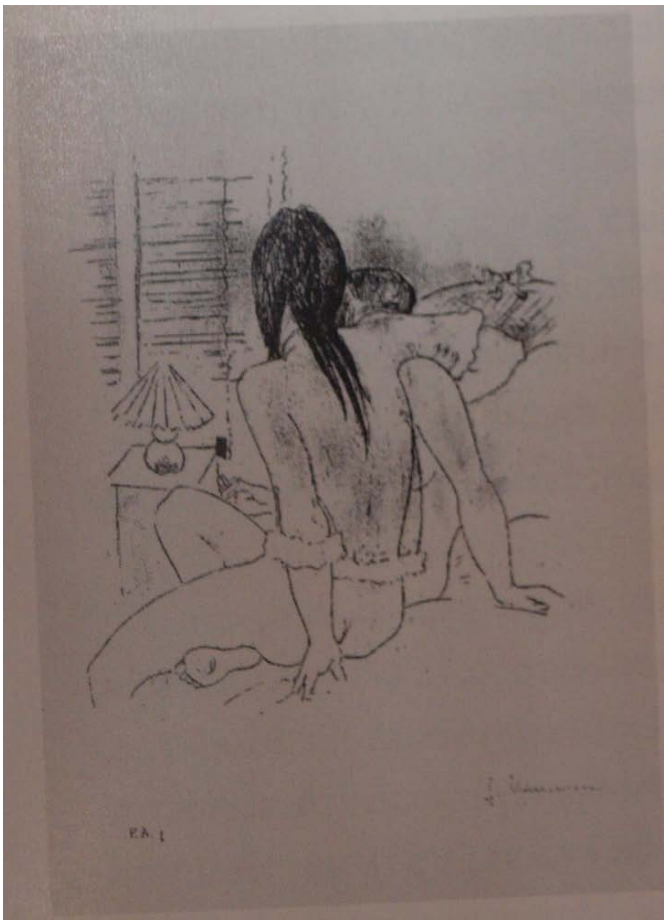

Figure 25: *In the Morning I* 1930-2

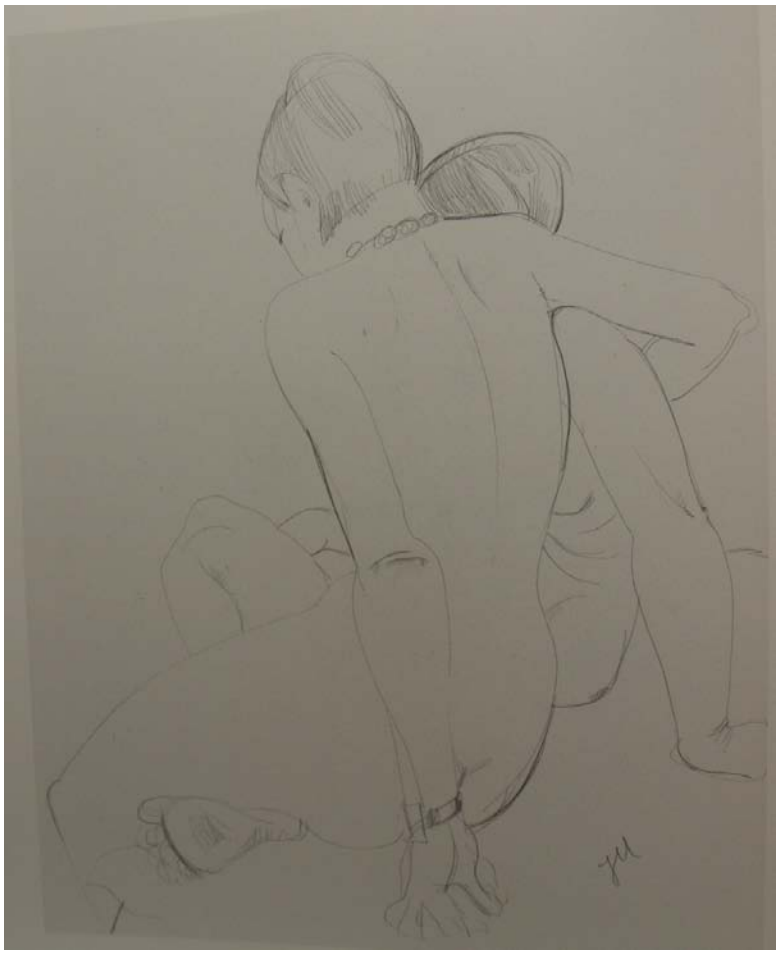

Figure 26: *In the Morning II* 1930-2

[130] See P. Kopper**,** *America's National Gallery of Art: A Gift to the Nation*. (New York, 1991), p.195 and R. Goffen, *Titian's Women*, (Yale, 1997), no. 131
[131] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 56

In, *Siesta* c. 1931-2 (fig. 27) two women in bed, drift into sleep. The space has been feminized both by their gender and by their speculative lesbian sexuality.[132] They wear delicately undergarments which slip off their shoulders, heightening the tactile appeal of their skin as they embrace.[133] The woman on the left, in her hat and veil to preserve her individuality, rests her hand on her lover's shoulder. They are quietly at ease together in their own realistically rendered bodies outside the limited roles assigned to them as either sexually desirable to men or as ideals femininity for women to narcissistically compare themselves to.[134] Thus they exude agency.[135] *Jealousy* c. 1931-2 (fig. 28) portrays passion that has become compromised. Heavy shadowing around the two women enhances the destructive drama of the scene. A woman at her dressing table looks crushingly at her former lover, who, kneeling on the floor behind, flings her arms around the hips of her standing protagonist, an impassioned supplicant.[136] The standing woman is clothed but her low cut dress is revealing. It is not meant to eroticise the work, but signifies the intimacy the women once shared. The dress hides her body from her former lover, signalling the termination of the relationship. The image is dynamic in its emotional tension and the women are shown as agents of their own desires.

Figure 27: *Siesta* c.1931-2

Figure 28: *Jealousy* c. 1931-2

[132] Broude & Garrard, 'Introduction', p. 6
[133] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 30
[134] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 30
[135] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, ch. 3
[136] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 29

*The Make Up* 1930-2 depicts a plump elderly woman sitting on a low stool, dressed in a lace negligee, her breasts exposed. She bends over a young woman, devotedly helping her into her slipper. The other stands naked her left foot on the woman's knee and her pubic hair on view, preening herself in a mirror. She clearly dominates the relationship, but there is no destructive exchange between them.[137] The portrait, *Friends* 1930-2 (fig. 29), shows the tender bond experienced between two women. One turns to the other, whose eyes are closed in appreciation. The faint outlines of their breasts indicate that they are naked and imply a sexual connection between them. Visual stereotypes of the lesbian as androgynous impose a rigid classification.[138] However, Mammen's couple with their womanly curves and long hair clearly disputes such misogyny. Furthermore, both women acknowledge the standard conventions of female display and sexual availability but purposefully evade the viewer by refusing to make direct eye contact and by sharing an intimate moment together.[139] Themes of female understanding and passion are interlaced consistently throughout these works, granting a new dimension for women outside the traditional confines of male desire.

Figure 29: *Friends* 1930-2

These studies highlight the difficulties that the much deliberated artistic discourse on the nude raises. Kenneth Clark understands that to be naked is simply being without clothes whereas to be nude is a form of art.[140] However, J. Berger advances a powerful argument: to be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not be recognised for oneself, whereas to be naked is to be oneself.[141] Mammen's series, takes the genre of the nude, but subverts it to

[137] Sykora, 'Jeanne Mammen', p. 30
[138] Lavin, 'The New Woman in Hannah Höch's Photomontages', p. 328
[139] Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', p. 355
[140] Clark, *The Nude*, p 5
[141] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 54

produce candid images that reveal the women as individuals, as themselves, naked not nude.[142] They do not seek to satisfy an ideal but are highly charged, realistic and authentic. Her nudes are not passive agents for the use and pleasure of others. Instead they actively define the spaces in which they move driving their own identity expressing their own personalities and desires.[143]

Mammen's studies of the female nude present this positive view of women, underscoring autoeroticism and autonomy.[144] In *Standing Female Nude with Right Knee on Chair* 1930 (fig. 30) the woman's expression and her bodily tension suggest that she resists the viewer's intrusive gaze.[145] Male artists of the nude genre consistently, but not exclusively, ensured that the nude figure always returned the male gaze with one of receptivity.[146] Here, although the male gaze is admitted, the woman's clear disdain simultaneously defies it.[147] Her body appears ordinary and un-idealised, with rolls of skin and flabby flesh, naked, not nude. She exemplifies a real and relatable woman. Seventy years earlier, Manet had launched a deliberate attack on the academic art establishment presenting female nudes as identifiable, realistic and confrontational women in *Dejeuner Sur L'Herbe* 1863 (fig. 31) and *Olympia* 1863.[148]

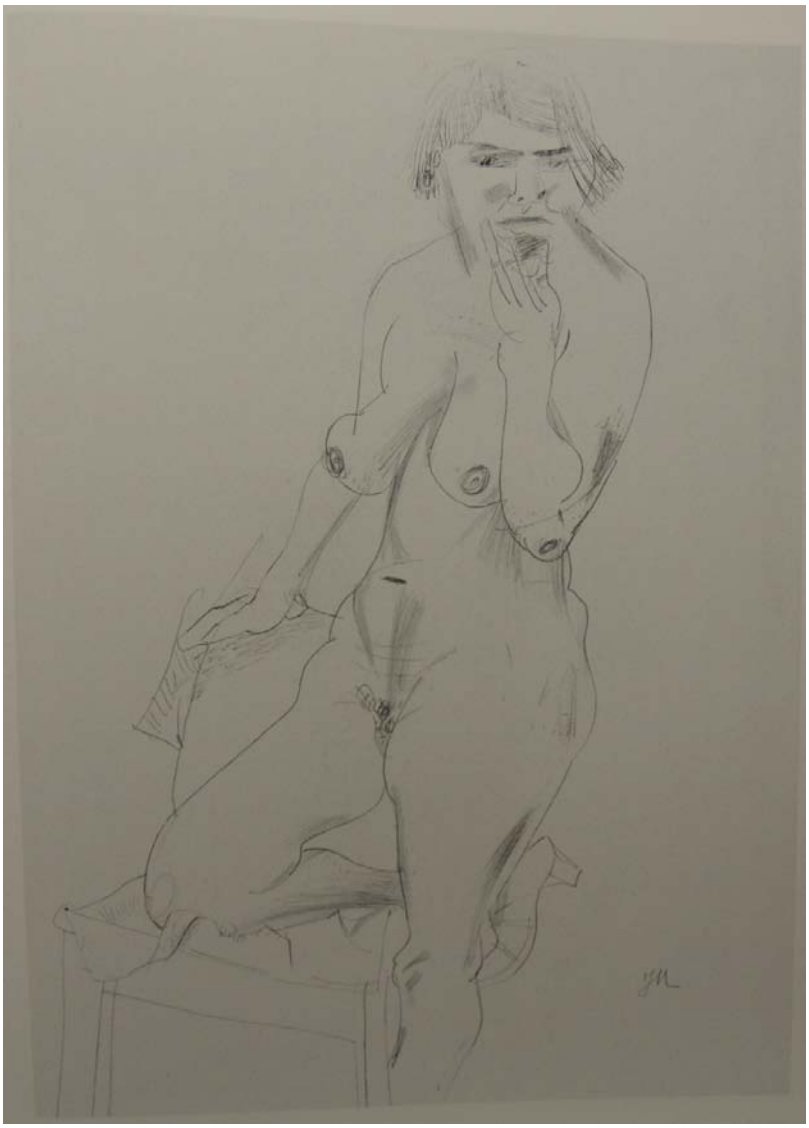

Figure 30: *Standing Female Nude with Right Knee on Chair* 1930

[142] Nead, *The Female Nude,* p. 331
[143] Dietrich, 'Refashioned Traditions: Kurt Schwitters' Collages of Women', p. 73
[144] Nead, *The Female Nude,* p. 28
[145] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 424
[146] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 426
[147] Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 424
[148] Gombrich, *The Story of Art,* p. 514 and Laneyrie-Dagen, *How to Read Paintings,* p. 166

In 1907, Picasso's assault on convention in *Demoiselles D'Avignon* (fig. 9) was savage and shocking but like Manet, he objectified his women to accommodate the male gaze. [149]

Figure 31: *Dejeuner Sur L'Herbe* 1863


Mammen's work deserves a separate category. It transgresses the respected rules and traditions of fine art governing the nude in a completely different way. Mammen's women exist without reference to men. They justify their own space. *Standing Female Nude with Right Knee on Chair* with a female figure whose right knee rests on a stool exposing her pubic hair breaks a taboo. By tradition, hair was identified with 'sexual power and passion'[150] but historically the female nude had no pubic hair. To eliminate it was a deliberate tactic to minimise woman's sexual passion and give the spectator the monopoly.[151] Mammen overturns this principle to empower the woman. Her contrived pose, with her face cupped in her hands and still wearing shoes, robs the scene of gravitas, effectively destabilizing the

[149] R. Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and a Century of Change*, (London, 1991), p. 21 and Laneyrie-Dagen, *How to Read Paintings*, p. 178
[150] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 55
[151] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 55

traditional treatment of the female nude. This contrivance characterises *Seated Female Nude with Her Legs Folded* 1930, (fig. 32) where the subject poses primly and upright on a chair, her legs crossed and hands clasped on her knee in a half hearted gesture of modesty, since her pubic hair protrudes beneath her hand. Her hair covers her eye and she looks away from the viewer without concern. *Standing Female Nude Her Left Arm on Her Hip* 1930 (fig. 33) features a similar posing female nude, this time in profile, and hand on hip with one leg in front of the other. Her agency is expressed in her absolute control of her body.

Figure 32: *Seated Female Nude with Her Legs Folded*

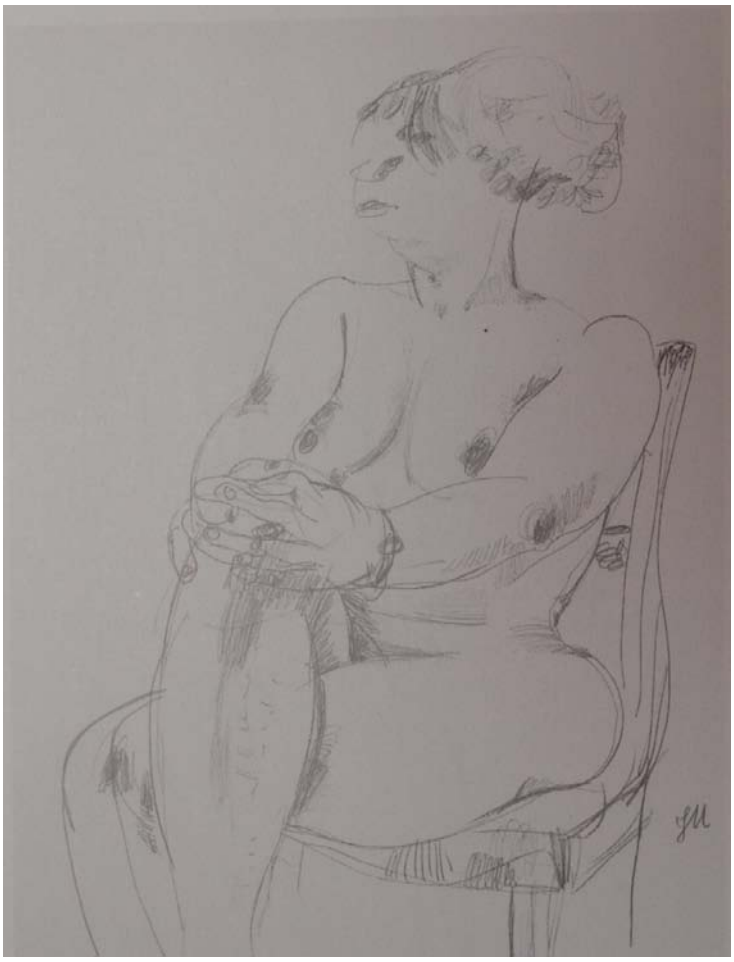

Figure 33: *Standing Female Nude Her Left Arm on Her Hip* 1930

Both *Standing Female Nude with Raised Arm* 1930 (fig. 34) and *Seated Female Nude Supported with Her Hands* 1930 (fig. 35) look beyond the top left of the frame, discounting the viewer's primacy. Their bodies are recorded with realism; protruding bottoms, bloated tummies, bony chests and body hair are all on show. Heavy shadowing accentuates bodily imperfections. Male artists in painting the female nude often exaggerated the belly of the woman as a symbol of fertility and childbearing capability.[152] However, here Mammen simply supplies the viewer with an objective and authentic documentation of women's bodies defying the idealisation of the female form otherwise ascribed to the genre.

Figure 34: *Standing Female Nude with Raised Arm* 1930

Figure 35: *Seated Female Nude Supported with Her Hands* 1930

[152] M. Lazzari & D. Schlesier (4th ed.), *Exploring Art: A Global, Thematic Approach*, (Wadsworth, 2012)

## Conclusion

*Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth*[153]

- Simone de Beauvoir

As Simone de Beauvoir articulately reminds us women's bodies and their images were traditionally shaped by heterosexual male needs and their identities defined solely in terms of their relationships to men.[154] In art they usually appear fragmented, dispersed, devoid of agency, responsibility or of political potential and are denied subjectivity. Mammen's images of women perform a dual function as both a critique of existing values and in the construction of new and progressive meanings for the female subject.[155]

Historically, Weimar Germany has been characterized by the ongoing 'Battle of the Sexes'.[156] Mammen offers an alternative view. The Weimar Republic granted women with the right to vote and by extension opened up possibilities of work in the public domain and financial independence.[157] The importation of American culture which fuelled a growth in entertainment and consumer industries and the increased availability of the oral contraception also served to liberate women from their subservient place both at home and outside it. This increase of women's 'scope of action and responsibilities' breached gender boundaries and called into question traditional prescriptive male roles, namely as defenders and providers.[158] Maria Tatar's explanation of the frequent representation of female sexual mutilation by male artists and writers in Weimar Germany as a strategy for managing male social and sexual anxieties and in order to dominate and contain their female enemy, uncovers these male/female collisions at their most excessive.[159]

Mammen provides women with a more truthful visual identity that does not conform to such conventional analyses of the period. She acknowledges that their experience and

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[153] S. De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (1989), p. 143
[154] J. Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity' in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005), p. 345
[155] L. Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity & Sexuality*, (London, 1992), p. 62
[156] K. Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, (Princeton, 2011), p. 13
[157] L. R Noun 'Introduction' in L. R. Noun (ed.), *Three Berlin Artists of the Weimar Era: Hannah Höch, Käthe Kollwitz, Jeanne Mammen*, (Des Moines, 1994), p. 9-10
[158] K. Hageman & S. Schüler-Springorum (eds.), *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth Century Germany*, (Oxford, 2002), p. 3
[159] M. Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, 1997) and also see B. Irwin-Lewis, *George Grosz: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* " (Wisconsin, 1971)

identity vary.[160] She shows her women relaxed into their own bodies, each conveying a femininity and agency personal to them, and places them in their own female space set apart from the male/female battleground.[161] As a woman herself, Mammen thus proposes the artist and model as equal participants in a mutual project: the disruption of gendered stereotypes.[162] In her representations of women she draws upon the oppressive misogynistic visual codes governing the relationship of sexual power and subordination between men and women. However, she deconstructs these dominant stereotypes (for instance that of the Garçonne, Femme Fatale and New Woman) via particular visual strategies[163] and specifities to offer women positive and fresh images of themselves, mobile and dynamic outside of their engagement with men.[164] Her depictions destabilise societal definitions of femininity and empower women both as artistic subjects and as viewer.[165]

The issue of the 'male gaze' that typically reduces women to spectacles for male gratification is re-balanced by Mammen. She opens up the viewing space to women who are given freedom to construct their own interpretations of what they see and even to order a new definition of themselves. The viewer is not made to witness a display but shares in the women's' real experiences of their bodies and each other which signify their true identity.[166] No single woman is envisioned.[167] In particular, Mammen's studies of the female nude imply new ways of seeing the female subject; as singular and potent entities, not as aesthetic sexual objects sanctioned by the customary nude genre.[168] She replaces the mastering male gaze in favour of a distinctive female gaze, which discards the vain appropriation of idealised female images and instead allows the female viewer to appreciate and identify with autonomous and autoerotic individuals. By refusing to meet the male gaze they are confident to appear vulnerable and to reveal their true selves.[169] Mammen converts them from objects into

[160] P. Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of *S*uzanne Valadon', *The Art Bulletin,* Vol. 73, No. 3, (September 1991), p. 416
[161] P. Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p 428
[162] J. Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', in Broude & Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005) , p. 345
[163] M. Meskimmon, *Women Making Art,*(London, 2003), p. 109
[164] R. Betterton, 'How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon', (London, 1987), p. 4
[165] M. Lavin, 'The New Woman in Hannah Höch's Photomontages', in Broude & Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005), p. 338-9
[166] L. Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality,* (London, 1992), p. 81
[167] J. Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', p. 356
[168] R. Betterton, 'How Do Women Look?', p. 3
[169] J. Cole, 'Cahun Moore and the Collaborative Construction of Lesbian Subjectivity', in Broude & Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005), p. 347

subjects.[170] In the end, as Diane Fuss asserts, the point of female artists is 'not to imprison women within their bodies but to rescue them from enculturating definitions by men'[171]. Mammen removes women from the traditional battleground, where they are in conflict with men and places them in a separate dedicated space.[172] By granting her women dynamic agency and identity she achieves a representation of the world hat is the work of women for themselves and on their own terms.

[170] M. Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, (London, 2003), p. 98
[171] See N. Broude & M.D. Garrard, 'Introduction',in Broude & Garrard (eds.) *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After PostModernism*, (California, 2005)
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*Carnival I* 1931

*Carnival II* (1931)

*Two Women Dancing* c.1920

*Zeebrugge* c. 1920

*Transvestite* 1931

*Masquerade Ball* 1931

*Untitled* c. 1920

*Cafe Nollendorf* 1931

*Prostitutes* 1930

*Vacancy* 1928

*Kaschemme Bar* c. 1925

*At Kranzler's* 1929

*In the Cafe* c. 1920

*Before the Performance* 1928

*Berlin Street Scene* 1927-9

*Boring Dollies* 1929

*You Have Beautiful Hands* 1929

*The New Hat* 1929

*The Discarded* 1929

*Two Girls in the Library* 1929

*In Front of Bars, Behind Bars* 1930

*The Redhead* 1928

*The Collar* 1931

*Concession* 1928

*Cocktail Bar* 1928

*In the Ballroom* 1928

*In the Morning I* 1930-2

*In the Morning II* 1930-2

*Siesta* 1931-2

*Jealousy* 1931-2

*The Make-up* 1930-2

*Friends* 1930-2

*Standing Female Nude with Right Knee on Chair* 1930

*Seated Female Nude with Her Legs Folded* 1930

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