

Notes taken by students

International Symposium

Education and Gender Equality

Wellesley College, October 20 & 21, 2017

Plenary Session – Saturday, 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. – How artistic creativity can empower women?

Speakers:

- Raliatou Tamsir Niane Cochery, Actress, film maker, founder of the independent contemporary art center "Le Petit Musée" (Guinea)
- Esther Nelson, Boston Lyric Opera Artistic Director
- Alice Friedman, Professor of the History of American Art at Wellesley College
- Jessica Nussenbaum, Cultural Programs Manager at the French Cultural Center of Boston

Moderator:

- Odile Cazenave, Chair of the Department of Romance Studies at Boston University

Main points:

- Art has the capacity to unite and express different perspectives that may not be heard in mainstream social dialogue (art is about the power of human emotion, which is universal).
- Design and planning is critically important in urban spaces, work spaces, transportation, and housing.
- Architecture must emphasize the users of spaces.
- Art allows us to reflect on the more distressing realities of our world.
- Culture is a tool for mass education.
- The arts are largely about struggle, feeling, and taking multiple perspectives into account. Art can provide a representation and a voice for marginalized people.
- Female artists have the power to define the limits of their gender and the way they relate to the world: in taking back concepts and spaces, they empower themselves.
- In America, there's a deep historical connection between female artists and artists of color.
- Art is political – in all its forms, it has a lot of power to influence the political, cultural, and social spheres.
- We need more art education policies implemented across nations, so that young people and elders can embrace and preserve their cultural identities. If there are no policies, we produce people who have no knowledge of their own culture because they don't share and learn about their art.
- When we, as humans, develop our imagination, produce images, and participate in arts, it gives us an ability to live and emerge with a hopeful possibility of the future. It can also allow us to take ownership of the present realities.

Best practices evoked regarding public policies, corporate actions, civil society or academic initiatives:

- Public policies: support art education in schools at all levels; provide funding for arts.
- Early arts education and exposure, particular to female artists and writers, for both young boys and girls.
- Corporate actions: allow women to engage in the creation of their own spaces within the work environment.
- Academic initiatives: support female architectures on campus and give them the ability to transform the living environment and space.
- Urban planning needs to take structural oppression into account (and answer women's needs).