

Leonora Carrington's subversive feminism off and on screen

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"Most of us, I hope, are now aware that a woman should not have to demand Rights. The Rights were there from the beginning; they must be Taken Back Again," (Leonora Carrington, 1976). Determined to be an artist, Leonora left England to revolt against the patriarchal norms of her upper-class upbringing. After joining the Paris Surrealist in 1937, she rebelled against the gendered roles of 'femme-enfant' and 'muse' by attaining artistic independence and developing her own symbolic system between visual and literary works. In *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde* (1990) Susan Suleiman analyses the subversive role of Carrington's intertextual oeuvre. Departing from Gayatri Spivak's argument that feminist expressions gain little from being associated with male predecessors' works, Suleiman claims substantive ideological distinctions between feminist avant-garde practices and the formal innovations by male avant-garde artists that still reproduce patriarchal structures. Within the same conceptual framework, this research offers an autonomous perspective on Carrington, whose artistic development has often been validated through her intimate affiliation with Max Ernst and associations with André Breton's Surrealist circle. The article explores to what extent the under-researched cinematic and televisual mediations of the artist represent her feminist intent. The research studies Carrington's cinematic cameo appearances in *There Are No Thieves in This Village* (Isaac, 1964) and *Un Alma Pura* (Ibanez, 1965) as artistic gestures that extend her subversive creative practice towards the film medium. The paper also discusses TV documentaries, such as *The Lost Surrealist* (Griffiths, 2017) that represent the artist's iconic image in Mexico (where she died in 2011) and her recent (re)discovery in her native Britain. The analysis explores in how far Leonora has been rendered as a visible and invisible trailblazer on both sides of the Atlantic and whether these televisual constructions acknowledge her engagement with the Mexican Women's Liberation movement. Then the text addresses the docu-fiction *Female Human Animal* (Appignanesi, 2018) that borrows its title from Carrington's essay *What is a Woman?* (1970) and re-uses her intertextual symbolic system as a creative strategy to subvert gendered roles.

Bio:

Lora Markova's research interests and publications focus on transcultural aesthetics and media arts. Lora is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher in Media and Film at Edge Hill University, UK and has completed a PhD (Cum Laude 2017) at Deusto University – Bilbao, Spain with research mobilities at the University of Birmingham, UK; Goldsmiths – University of London, UK and the University of Aveiro, Portugal. Lora's professional background involves positions at the former Netherlands Media Art Institute-NIMk, the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage-ICN, Greenpeace International (Amsterdam) and the European Commission (Brussels). Since 2012 Markova is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Artists (UBA) and has served as a selected EACEA/2007 Expert for the EU Culture and MEDIA programmes.