

## *The Vindication of Eve*

### **Ginger Cooke**

My final artwork is rooted in my unwavering dedication to the causes of feminism. However, the term "feminism" seems insufficient to encapsulate the depth of my emotional connection to this subject matter. My creative impulse gravitates naturally towards the realm of classical dark tragedy, whether it be found in literature, music, theatre, or visual art. In creating my artwork, I sought to meld this affinity conceptually and physically.

I draw profound inspiration from the Old Masters, including luminaries such as Caravaggio, Raphael, Gentileschi, and Vermeer. For this piece, I delved into the Baroque and Romantic periods of art, immersing myself in the works of Elisabetta Sirani and John Everett Millais. From these artists, I learned the importance of colour, form, tone, line, and light, and furthered my skills in techniques.

These master's not only informed my understanding of tragedy but also provided a rich understanding of artistic techniques to weave into my own work. The Baroque era, in particular, stands out as a well of inspiration due to its proclivity for tragic and dramatised narratives, both in storytelling and presentation.

From these fountains of inspiration, I nurtured a desire to explore the concept of feminine rage, an emotion that transcends time, whether experienced today or centuries ago. Across the histories of civilisation, countless stories emerge of unceasing oppression and violence against women under the banner of male dominance and societal norms, another inspiration for my artwork is the non-fiction book titled *Who Cooked the Last Supper* by Rosalind Miles. This compelling literary work sheds light on the often-overlooked contributions of women throughout history, and the tragedies they faced due to their sex. This further fuelling my creative exploration. Women are often lauded as the societal backbone, draped in the cloaks of duty, obedience, politeness, and, above all, submission. I endeavoured to create an artwork that gives voice to the women of history that could not speak for themselves, that could not defend themselves.

My artwork serves as a voice for the countless women who were unjustly and violently silenced throughout history, such as the 100,000 women who perished during the witch trials across the US and UK, victims merely for their knowledge of natural medicinal remedies or the display of personal power. Even today, I think of the women in Afghanistan who are subjected to rape, murder, and torture under the name of religious duty, whose rights and freedoms have been brutally stripped away. It also bears witness to events like the Roe vs. Wade case in America, where the faces of 11-year-old girls graced the cover of Time magazine, highlighting the harrowing realities even children face as victims of assault.

My art does not merely seethe with anger; it exudes tragedy and sorrow, reflecting the world of oppression and violence that women continue to endure today. It is a collective expression of the global female rage, underscoring that our emotions are as potent and justified, if not more so, than those of men. If not for women's extraordinary capacity for self-control, the world would crumble. *This* is why women are the pillars of society; we recognise and understand our power, despite the constant pressure of a patriarchal society.

In *The Vindication of Eve*, I aimed to create a work that foretells a seismic shift, a day when a reckoning will arrive, potent and unyielding. My artwork is steeped in drama and brimming with fury. I channelled these emotions through a fiery palette of reds and oranges, set against a backdrop of brooding, encroaching clouds in a circular formation, symbolising the impending reckoning and emotional forces inherent in womanhood.

The women I depicted are adorned in timeless cloaks of fine cotton and silk in vivid colours, underscoring the timelessness of the feminist story. As women, our story spans centuries and persists to this day, honouring the women of old who bravely faced the brutality of men, not as forgotten victims but as celebrated icons of resilience and outspokenness.

Compositionally, I positioned the women on the right side of the canvas, creating a dynamic balance that allows nature to play an equally significant role within the artwork. As I learned from my study of Baroque artist, Elisabetta Sirani, weather serves as a potent symbol, conveying intense emotion and foreshadowing narrative events. The marshy landscape I painted mirrors the abuse suffered by women, akin to the maltreatment of Mother Nature, evoking the image of a battlefield. Here, I sought to draw a connection between the female form and Mother Earth.

In *The Vindication of Eve*, I believe I have created a powerful masterpiece, drawing upon techniques from luminaries such as Sirani, Everett-Millais, Caravaggio, and Gentileschi, using glazing and tonal work prior to the infusion of colour.