

Remembering, (Re)-forgetting, and Revisionism: Corporate Marketing and the Rhetoric
of Progressivism in Tate Modern's 2017 Fahrelnissa Zeid Retrospective

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Abstract

“Remembering, (Re)-forgetting, and Revisionism: Corporate Marketing and the Rhetoric of Progressivism in Tate Modern’s 2017 Fahrelnissa Zeid Retrospective.”

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This thesis addresses the perennial problem of exceptionalism in exhibiting women artists and examines such exceptionalism as a product of the institutional political and economic agendas imposed by corporate and state investors in art museums. Using the 2017 retrospective exhibition of Fahrelnissa Zeid’s oeuvre, which concluded the four-year International Arts Partnership between Tate Modern and its sponsor Deutsche Bank, I interrogate Tate’s characterization of Fahrelnissa Zeid as an artist ignored because of her gender and international origin who was “saved” by the Deutsche Bank International Arts Partnership. I demonstrate that both institutions manipulate the art histories and exhibition promotion they produce by relying on a rhetoric of neoliberal feminism and performative progressivism to achieve their political and financial goals. I also expose the extent of corporate and state intervention in the cultural field and explain the deleterious results for the independence and critical potential of bank-sanctioned arts initiatives. By identifying the causes of historiographic and promotional manipulation in the Tate Modern/Deutsche Bank retrospective, I re-examine Zeid’s history to provide evidence contrary to the reductive institutional history which Tate and Deutsche Bank produced.

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Contents

List of figures.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Section 1. Origins and Historical Context	10
<i>Zeid and Abstraction</i>	11
<i>Posthumous Legacy</i>	20
Section 2. Contested Histories	25
<i>The Problem with (Inter) Nationalistic Exhibitions</i>	26
<i>Re-claiming a Legacy: Becoming Part of Tate Modern 's Narrative</i>	28
<i>Digital Marketing Campaign</i>	30
Section 3. Causes and Consequences of Misrepresentation	40
<i>Material Stakes in Exhibitions and Historiography</i>	43
Section 4. Financial and Cultural Stakeholders in Tate	47
<i>Institutional Governance</i>	50
<i>Corporate Takeover</i>	55
<i>Deutsche Bank 's Strategy</i>	61
Conclusion	66
Bibliography	70
Figures.....	76

List of figures

Figure 1. Fahrelnissa Zeid, *My Hell*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 205 x 528 cm. Istanbul Museum of Modern Art Collection, Şirin Devrim and Prince Saad donation, <https://www.istanbulmodern.org/koleksiyon/cehennemim>.

Figure 2. Photograph of *My Hell* in progress at Fahrelnissa Zeid's studio in Paris in 1952, in Léon Degand and Julien Alvard, eds. *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait* (Boulogne: Éditions de l'art d'aujourd'hui, 1952), 283. Photo: G. Parmiser.

Figure 3. Photograph of Fahrelnissa Zeid with her work *Towards a Sky* (1953) at the eighth Salon des réalités nouvelles, Musée de l'art moderne de la ville de Paris, in André Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid* (Amman: Royal Jordanian Institute of Fine Arts), 32.

Figure 4. Fahrelnissa Zeid, *Resolved Problems*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm. Istanbul Museum of Modern Art Collection, Eczacıbaşı Group Donation (Istanbul, Turkey) © Raad bin Zeid © Istanbul Museum of Modern Art.

Figure 5. Fahrelnissa Zeid, "Plate XXIV." Pochoir print, 23.5 x 20 cm. Printed by Atelier Renson – Cité Riverin, in Léon Degand and Julien Alvard, eds. *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait* Léon Degand and Julien Alvard (Boulogne: Éditions de l'art d'aujourd'hui, 1952). Photo: Amorosart Print Auctions, https://en.amorosart.com/artwork-zeid-couleurs_sur_fond_noir-131839.html.

Figure 6. Cicéro Dias. "Plate X." Pochoir print, 21.5 x 17.5 cm. Printed by Atelier Renson – Cité Riverin, in Léon Degand and Julien Alvard, eds. *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait* Léon Degand and Julien Alvard (Boulogne: Éditions de l'art d'aujourd'hui, 1952).

Figure 7. Marie Raymond, "Plate XXV." Pochoir print, 22 x 17.5 cm. Printed by Atelier Renson – Cité Riverin, in Léon Degand and Julien Alvard, eds. *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait* Léon Degand and Julien Alvard (Boulogne: Éditions de l'art d'aujourd'hui, 1952).

Figure 8. Fahrelnissa Zeid, *Emir Zeid*, 1967. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown to me, in *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Portraits et peintures abstraites* (Paris: Galerie Katia Granoff, 1972), unpaginated.

Figure 9. Nick Ansell, "Fahrelnissa Zeid's five-metre canvas at Tate Modern," in Hannah Ellis-Peterson, "Fahrelnissa Zeid: Tate Modern resurrects artist forgotten by history," *The Guardian*, June 12, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/jun/12/fahrelnissa-zeid-tate-modern-resurrects-artist-forgotten-by-history>.

Introduction

Fifty-three years have passed since Linda Nochlin published her foundational essay, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”¹ The persistent questions of how and why to incorporate women into the Western art canon have been a subject of enduring debate within the discipline of art history and feminist historiography.² This thesis addresses the perennial problem of exceptionalism in exhibiting women artists and examines such exceptionalism as a product of the institutional political and economic agendas imposed by corporate and state investors in art museums. Using the 2017 retrospective exhibition of Fahrelnissa Zeid’s oeuvre, which concluded the four-year International Arts Partnership between Tate Modern and its sponsor Deutsche Bank, I interrogate Tate’s characterization of Fahrelnissa Zeid as an artist ignored because of her gender and international origin who was “saved” by the Deutsche Bank International Arts Partnership.³ I demonstrate that both institutions manipulate the art histories and exhibition promotion they produce by relying on a rhetoric of progressivism to achieve their political and financial goals. I also expose the extent of corporate and state intervention in the cultural field and explain the deleterious results for the independence and critical potential of bank-sanctioned arts initiatives.

1. Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” *ARTnews*, May 30, 2015, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists-4201/>. The essay was first published in the January 1971 issue of *ARTnews*.

2. Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews, “The Feminist Critique of Art History,” *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (1987): 326–57. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3051059>, gives a detailed explanation of the emergence of feminist art history and criticism in the western world during the 1960s-80s.

3. “Corporate Support: Deutsche Bank,” Tate.org, accessed November 22, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180117053441/http://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/corporate-support/sponsorship/deutsche-bank>.

Answering her own question, Nochlin cautioned feminist art historians against responding to patriarchal assertions of art historical canons with counter examples of exemplary female artists.

Attempting to defend the merits of specific women artists,

whether undertaken from a feminist point of view [...] or more recent scholarly studies on such artists as Angelica Kauffmann and Artemisia Gentileschi, are certainly worth the effort [...]. But they do nothing to question the assumptions lying behind the question “Why have there been no great women artists?” On the contrary, by attempting to answer it, they tacitly reinforce its negative implications.⁴

In short, searching for women artists to augment the existing patriarchal canon fails to address the underlying structures of history which excluded them in the first place. Nochlin’s essay has been rightly questioned for several reasons, not least of which is her myopic view of Western art history as the natural focus of feminist historiography. For another, her contention that women artists were not included in art histories because of their exclusion from the rarified academies and apprenticeships which were reserved for men, has been ably challenged by Paris A. Spies Gans’ response to Nochlin in “Why Do We Think There Have Been No Great Women Artists? Revisiting Linda Nochlin and the Archive.”⁵ However, the ongoing obsession with artists like Artemisia Gentileschi, and more recently the “recovery” of Hilma af Klint, proves Nochlin’s observation that feminists are quick to point to exceptional women in art history as a counterargument to patriarchal art histories.⁶

4. Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” unpaginated.

5. Paris A. Spies-Gans, “Why Do We Think There Have Been No Great Women Artists? Revisiting Linda Nochlin and the Archive,” *The Art Bulletin* 104, no. 4 (2022): 70-94, doi10.1080/00043079.2022.2070397.

6. Anni Reponen, “Breaking Myths! Unveiling the storytelling processes in the reception of Hilma af Klint from the 1980s and 2010s,” (MA Thesis) (University of Stockholm, 2020), presents extensive examination of af Klint’s rise to the mythic status of woman artist.

Griselda Pollock approaches the same problems in feminist historiography by pointing to the risks of “heroizing” or “othering” women artists within art history. She raises relevant questions which feminist historiographers continue to encounter in our efforts to (re)write and examine scholarship on the “woman artist” as a category. She views the canon of art history as a discursive structure which, if it is to be deconstructed, must not be merely augmented with previously marginalized names. In short, “However strategically necessary the new privileging of the Other certainly is in a world so radically imbalanced in favour of the ‘privileged male of the white race,’ there is still a binary opposition in place which cannot ever relieve the Other of being other to a dominant norm.”⁷ Despite decades of debate on the feminist critique of art history in the academy, art institutions like Tate Modern continually direct focus toward and create reductive narratives about “the maverick ‘she’” which can only ever exist as a foil to “the presumably neutral ‘one’—in reality the white-male-position-accepted-as-natural,” which was already an object of feminist critique in the last century.⁸ If this approach to feminist art historiography is so self-defeating, why does such rhetoric persist in recent art history and exhibitions?⁹ As I will argue, the Deutsche Bank/ Tate Modern International Arts Partnership retained this ineffectual rhetoric to promote their Fahrelnissa Zeid retrospective precisely because of its inefficacy. Reiterating Zeid as a marginalized other, in contrast to the Western male

7. Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminism and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), 5.

8. Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” unpaginated.

9. “Now You See Us: Women Artists in Britain 1520–1920,” Tate.org, 16 May 2024, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/women-artists-in-britain-1520-1920>. Tate Modern has retained this approach to presenting women artists even in 2024. Of course this exhibition includes a work by Artemisia Gentileschi, the quintessential “woman artist.”

canon of art history, allowed Tate Modern and Deutsche Bank to use their apparent resurrection of the artist in support of a politically and economically motivated public relations strategy.

To promote their International Arts Partnership, Tate, Deutsche Bank, and their media affiliates coordinated a marketing campaign to accompany an exhibition catalogue and other educational materials for the public. The campaign, represented across digital media platforms, repeated a reductive and sometimes sensational narrative which framed Zeid as an obscure, peripheral figure, granted relevance by Tate's institution-wide, long-term, and (ostensibly) benevolent efforts to diversify their programming. This insistence on presenting Zeid as forgotten is not only historically inaccurate, given Zeid's significant success during her life and legacy after death. It also overlays interpretation of Zeid's work with Euro-centric expectations of what a female artist should be. This clouded interpretation redirects analysis of her paintings toward themes that Zeid did not personally espouse or consider relevant and displaces her from the discourses in which she viewed herself as active participant. As Adila Laidi-Hanieh suggests in her biography of Zeid, focusing on identity categories instead of artworks in art scholarship "distracts from the individuality and contemporaneity of Fahrelnissa's practice."¹⁰ Zeid's own words on her work undermine the narrative painted by Tate's publicity.

In his response to Zeid's appearance in the 2015 Sharjah Biennial, art critic Kevin Jones presents a more balanced perspective on Zeid's place in art history:

Zeid's current story is not one of rediscovery [...]. For many, Zeid never disappeared. In Turkey, she is something of a national hero, credited with having accelerated the pace of modern art in the country, whereas in the Middle East, her work and legacy have been steadfastly admired and fortified by a select few. Like hundreds of other artists, Zeid was

10. Adila R. Laidi-Hanieh, *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Painter of Inner Worlds* (London: Art/Books, 2017), 166.

never completely written out of memory, nor has she been written into the broader art history of the 20th century.¹¹

Jones's evaluation of Zeid's career undermines Tate's claim that their collaborative retrospective "Rediscover[s] one of the greatest female artists of the 20th century."¹² In suggesting that it is Tate's acknowledgment which legitimizes an artist, the museum reiterates the Euro- and andro-centric art histories which the exhibition claims to disrupt and gives the lie to the campaign's outwardly progressive intent. By highlighting artists with historically marginalized identities, Tate Modern, the British government, and Deutsche Bank defused criticisms of their role in perpetuating the Euro-centric, capitalist power structures which have created racialized and gendered marginalization and instead placed those criticisms in the service of that same power. All three stakeholders in the Zeid retrospective found cultural and financial profit in promoting their support of diversity and progress. Their collective appropriation of diversity rhetoric only works when there is a marginalized subject (that is, the exceptional woman) for them to rediscover. Zeid, a woman born outside Western Europe, was chosen to serve that role. In this case, that narrative came at the cost of accurate and sensitive treatment of Zeid's history. As I will argue, the exhibition campaign strategically reduced the specificities and nuances of Zeid's life to better fit the general category of Woman (or women artists), whose condition as a marginalized group the museum purports to rectify. Unlike strategic essentialism¹³

11. Kevin Jones, "Fahrelnissa Zeid: The Courage to Unlearn," *Art Asia Pacific* 95, no. 9 (2015): 93.

12. "Be mesmerised by the kaleidoscopic paintings of the international female artist, Fahrelnissa Zeid," Tate.org, June 13, 2017, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/fahrelnissa-zeid>.

13. See Section 3 of this thesis for a full explanation of how I use the term strategic essentialism.

initiated by members of a marginalized group to cultivate collective consciousness and unified action against subjugation, Tate's campaign reduces Zeid to limited identity categories which more easily meet their state- and corporate-imposed demands for diversification without undermining the political and economic structures from which Tate and its partners benefit.

Fahrelnissa Zeid as a case study is the impetus for an institutional critique which comprises the greater part of my thesis. I devote much of this text to an interrogation of British museums' evolution from custodians of arts and culture to quasi-brands which market their cultural reputations to attract visitors and corporate sponsors. However, this structural critique necessitates an overview of the artist's career and historical reception for several reasons. The deeper my understanding of Zeid's history, work, and the surrounding contexts, the more effectively I can identify instances when Tate's marketing has de-emphasized certain aspects of that history. I am fortunate that so many written and visual records of Zeid's career remain in archives and books.¹⁴ This evidence enables me to follow Paris Spies-Gans' directive to return to the primary documents of the historical record as I aim "to suggest new ways of considering women artists from past places and times on their own societies' terms—untangling our own set of presumptions and contradictions, feminist and otherwise."¹⁵ Zeid's most substantial interviews

14. Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry, eds. *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), xiii. Because of her socio-economic status, high level of education, and connection with political and cultural elites in her lifetime, Zeid is highly visible in the textual and artistic records of history. This makes her an exception to the difficulties which many feminist historiographers face in discovering and researching women in the historical record. *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources* presents a diverse set of case studies and strategies to recover women who have truly been excluded from the conventional historical record. Such strategies include engagement with oral history, object-oriented studies, and reading extant documents "against the grain" to "reconstruct the lives of women in the past."

15. Spies-Gans, "Why Do We Think There Have Been No Great Women Artists?" 70–71.

are published in André Parinaud's *Fahrelnissa Zeid* (1984), an anthology of critical reviews, personal interviews, and historical timelines; in Edouard Roditi's *Dialogues on Art* (1961), a series of conversations between Roditi and prominent abstract artists of the mid-century; and in *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait* (1954), a collection of artists' statements edited by the critics who promoted Zeid's career in Paris. In addition, transcriptions of her diary writings appear in Adila-Laidi Hanieh's biography. Although they are translated excerpts, these diary writings are the nearest equivalent to consulting a physical archival document.

Though Zeid's statements on her work are as abstract as her paintings, she maintains a consistent emphasis on the metaphysical aspect of her practice which she described as a process "when one transcends oneself, when one reaches the divine, as it were."¹⁶ In her biography, Adila Laidi-Hanieh reviews the ways in which critics like André Maurois and Charles Estienne have exaggerated Zeid's cultural influences in the past. Whether in critical reviews or in the crafted narrative of the Tate's retrospective campaign, attempts to "impute their [Zeid's works'] difference to her gender, social status, and cultural background," always "distracts from the individuality and contemporaneity of Fahrelnissa's practice."¹⁷ By studying the depth and breadth of Zeid's successes, I identify the "individuality and contemporaneity of Fahrelnissa's practice" rather than her alleged decline, as the defining characteristic of Zeid's legacy.¹⁸ I have selected a range of sources, drawn from the most prolific period of her career, to demonstrate her

16. André Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid* (Amman: Royal Jordanian Institute of Fine Arts, 1984), 38.

17. Laidi-Hanieh, *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Painter of Inner Worlds*, 144; 166.

18. Laidi-Hanieh, 166.

engagement in contemporary artistic movements and her highly original stylistic developments from 1949 to 1991.

To avoid as much as possible misrepresentative historiography in my own scholarship, I prioritize primary sources containing Zeid's own explanations of her artistic practice. However, no source is infallible. I face several barriers in my pursuit of Zeid's history. For one, many of the closest sources to the artist are transcribed or translated by Zeid's supporters and family. Adila Laidi-Hanieh's biography of Zeid is the only complete record of the artist's life. Although it contains invaluable diary entries and other archival materials which are inaccessible to me through other means, I acknowledge the limitations of encountering these sources in translation. Laidi-Hanieh was a student of Zeid's, and as such Laidi-Hanieh's biography carries both the credibility of firsthand knowledge, and the bias, of close personal association with, the artist. Because Zeid's personal archive is inaccessible to me, I rely heavily on transcriptions of interviews and recollections of conversations as presented by André Parinaud, Léon Degand and Julien Alvard, Shirin Devrim, and Edouard Roditi.¹⁹ Devrim is Zeid's daughter, while Parinaud,

19. Edouard Roditi, *Dialogues on Art* (New York: Horizon Press, 1961), 196-7. Zeid's comments to Roditi, for example, are limited by Roditi's Orientalist perspective. I work around such limitations by acknowledging their influence and cross-referencing the opinions expressed in the interview with other records of Zeid's artistic philosophy. Despite the interpretive lens of its interlocutor, the Roditi interview is still insightful into Zeid's views on her practice (philosophically and formally), perhaps even more so because she is forced to define herself more clearly in contradiction to Roditi's assumptions. While she politely entertains Roditi's fanciful observations of various Oriental influences, she clearly asserts that her works "surge within me from depths that lie far beyond peculiarities of sex, race or religion." This statement is consistent with her descriptions of her practice in Degand and Alvard's *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait* and in Parinaud's *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, where Zeid also identifies unconscious and metaphysical (rather than personal or cultural) inspirations as the defining features of her practice.

Degand and Alvard, and Roditi were admirers and friends of Zeid's. Each of these sources is limited by its interpretive, rather than objective, representation of Zeid's words.

Tate's campaign presents "woman artist" as a coherent identity, or, to use Nancy Fraser's term, an "identificatory positivity," which can be treated as a fixed category that is then used to augment the existing system – in this case, the Western artistic canon.²⁰ I question this solution, which Fraser would describe as an affirmational approach to remedying recognitive inequity.²¹ By highlighting the nuances and particularities of Zeid's history, I pursue a transformative critique which emphasizes multiplicity of identity and escapes the dichotomy of the existing canon by destabilizing strict identity categories. Building on critical feminist art historiography by scholars such as Griselda Pollock and Malin Hedlin-Hayden, I employ alternate means of evaluating women artist's contributions to their field than inclusion in established canons, to demonstrate how art histories can redirect metrics of legitimacy away from institutional canons which, for reasons that I argue throughout my thesis, prove unreliable given the exigencies that their financial and political positions introduce. Since my ability to pursue a representation of Zeid's history as she understood it is hindered by the inaccessibility of her personal archive, I have selected sources which bring me as close to the artist's own perspective as possible.

20. Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' age," *New Left Review* 212, no. 1 (1995): 83.

21. Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition?" 84; 87. Fraser's term "transformative" (that is, approaches to cultural inequity which "redress disrespect by transforming the underlying cultural-valuational structure" and "destabilizing existing group identities," derives from Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction. Transformative approaches are intended to redress cultural, recognitive inequity, which Fraser categorizes as a separate but related issue to distributive, economic inequity. Representation within an artist canon or cultural discourse, which is the issue at play with Zeid at Tate, is an issue of cultural nonrecognition, rather than economic distribution. In terms of economic distribution, Zeid lived in incredible socioeconomic privilege.

Section 1. Origins and Historical Context

Speaking of Fahrelnissa Zeid in his 1981 biographical anthology, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, André Parinaud wondered, “Can one imagine a greater adversity [...] than wealth, luxury and the pressure of social events [...] to alienate a creator from his sources and his vocation?”²² Parinaud was deeply impressed by Zeid’s ability to maintain her creative output and originality despite the “artificial environment” of life as a wealthy socialite and diplomat’s wife. If wealth and popularity were indeed a challenge to artistic creation, Zeid certainly overcame her “great adversity” admirably throughout her lifetime. Across continents, artistic milieux, and a 50-year exhibition career, Zeid’s practice evolved in conversation with her contemporaries and helped her students realize their own artistic abilities. Zeid was born in Istanbul in the Ottoman Empire in 1901. Her family were politicians, her father an ambassador and her uncle a Grand Vizier. Her parents pursued amateur arts and crafts, and they encouraged their daughter to follow their examples.²³ Aided by her high socioeconomic status and family support, she faced no opposition in her pursuit of artistic studies, which began at the Women’s Fine Arts Academy in Istanbul. Like her primary and secondary education, mostly conducted in French, Zeid’s time at the Arts Academy exposed her to the European masters and influences which were characteristic of the “modern urban milieu” of Istanbul on the brink of democratic nationalization.²⁴ At this time, arts education was limited to the highest socioeconomic classes. The Women’s Fine Arts Academy

22. Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, 39.

23. Roditi, *Dialogues on Art*, 191.

24. Laidi-Hanieh, *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Painter of Inner Worlds*, 21; 18.

was founded by an aristocrat in a similar class to Zeid's family.²⁵ Like many of the upper-class women whom she observed were moving into the professional world, Zeid worked within the context of Turkey's transition into a "modern" Western nation state.²⁶ As a result, while Zeid was learning and living in an increasingly Westernized urban society, she continued to occupy the rarefied social class which she grew up in and in which she would remain for the rest of her life. Zeid enjoyed the cultural and intellectual aspects of modernisation without sacrificing any of her social prestige to the risks of overt political action.

Zeid and Abstraction

By the 1920s, Fahrelnissa Zeid was establishing the pattern of travelling which she would follow most of her adult life with her first husband Izzet Devrim and her second husband Prince Zeid. Travelling with Devrim for his work and doctoral studies, Fahrelnissa built on her education in the artistic capitals of Western Europe. She saw Baroque masterworks in Italy and monumental

25. Özlem Gülin Dağoğlu, "Mihri Rasim and the Founding of the Women's Fine Arts Academy, İnas Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi: a Double-edged New Social Reality," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 6, no. 2 (2019): 33-54, muse.jhu.edu/article/746706, provides a comprehensive study of the Women's Fine Arts Academy, its founder, and functions.

26. Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Resat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 125. Social mobility was complicated, and it was often easier to allow upper class women to enter elite cultural education than to allow lower class men into those same institutions. Kandiyoti expands on the issue of gender and class intersections in the transition from empire to nation state in Turkey. As she explains, "The growth of elite cadres was specialized and technical education may necessitate the recruitment of people from manual-labour or peasant origins if upper- and middle-class women do not begin to enter professional schools. The favorable climate of opinion about women's education was instrumental in the recruitment of upper and middle-class women into prestigious...occupations. Essentially, expansion of women's education may initially have acted not so much as a means of mobility as of class consolidation, since recruiting women may have been less threatening than admitting upwardly mobile men from humbler origins." Zeid's specialized post-secondary education may have been a result of these anxieties.

Northern Renaissance religious paintings in Munich.²⁷ All the while, she studied these works and described their influence on her thinking in journals and sketchbooks which Adila Laidi-Hanieh translates in her biography of the artist. Viewing Rubens's *The Last Great Judgement* (1614-17) in 1928, Zeid described the visceral quality of the painting and referred to the work as a version of Hell.²⁸ Though it would be years before these artistic experiences came to fruition in the monumental works or monographic exhibitions which comprised Zeid's later career, the influence of both the emotional intensity and physical scale of the old masters seems to have lasted in Zeid's mind. Her oil on canvas, *My Hell* (1951), recalls Rubens's hectic detail and immense dimensions (Fig. 1). The work is so large that, to accommodate it in her Paris studio, Zeid hung the canvas across the space like wallpaper (Fig. 2). Monumentality is a defining characteristic of Zeid's abstract works. Whether in Parisian modern art exhibitions or the aristocratic social circles she deftly managed as a diplomat's wife, when Zeid found herself in "an arena of major players," she "decided to become one," through any means necessary.²⁹ Pictured in front of *Towards a Sky* (1953) at the eighth Salon des réalités nouvelles, Zeid may be physically diminutive, but her artistic presence is massive (Fig. 3). Her work easily dominates even the vast halls of the Musée de l'art moderne de la ville de Paris. It is difficult to reconcile this prestigious exhibition history with the obscurity which Tate's media would assign to Zeid in 2017.

27. Laidi-Hanieh, *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Painter of Inner Worlds*, 35.

28. Laidi-Hanieh, *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Painter of Inner Worlds*, 36.

29. Shirin Devrim, *A Turkish Tapestry: The Shakirs of Istanbul* (London: Quarter Books), 93.

Zeid's year in Paris at the Académie Ranson heavily influenced her development into abstraction. Zeid grew more attached to the French abstract milieu at the Académie Ranson in 1927. Under the tutelage of Roger Bissière, Zeid worked among culturally diverse academy students.³⁰ Her teacher encouraged her to apply herself not just as an upper-class amateur, but as the professional artist someone with her talent could become.³¹ Although Zeid would not fully turn to abstraction until the mid-1940s, her training at the Académie Ranson impressed her deeply. Bissière pushed Zeid to expand her work beyond representation. As Zeid recalled decades later, Bissière told her: "If you have something to say—if you have an inner song—you will express them through this means. But [representational work] has nothing in common with Art."³² This early teaching in the techniques and philosophies of abstraction planted the seeds of abstract philosophy, which (as I will explain further later in this section) Zeid would develop and eventually teach in her later life.

The formal and philosophical influence of Zeid's time in Paris came to fruition in Istanbul in the 1940s. The intervening 1930s were a turbulent decade of divorce, remarriage, and adjustment to the schedule of diplomatic life as the wife of Iraqi ambassador Prince Zeid. Returning from their diplomatic posting in Berlin in the wake of the 1938 Anschluss (the annexation of Austria into the German Reich), Zeid and her husband moved to Istanbul. Modernist ideas and artistic developments which she had encountered in Paris and Berlin were proliferating in Istanbul too, brought by other Turkish artists who had travelled to the European

30. Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, 28.

31. Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, 28.

32. Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, 37.

academies.³³ These artists, who called themselves the D Grubu (D group), considered themselves the fourth generation of Western-trained artists in Turkey. Though Zeid, by her own admission, was not “politically engagée,” the modern Western art in which she was trained was political, and integral to the nationalist reform of Turkey.³⁴ Western nations like the United States offered financial and political incentives to encourage the nascent country to “modernise.”³⁵ Artists with Western art training were proof of this modernisation, and the state invested in modern art to cultivate this perception of modernity.³⁶ Zeid shared her colleagues’ “enthusiasm for an art which would no longer appeal exclusively to the well-to-do bourgeoisie which, in Istanbul, displays in any case but a limited interest, in general, in the efforts of a local avant-garde.”³⁷ Zeid belonged to a generation which “gave birth to a new Republic out of the troubled years of the empire and freed Turkish art during the modernization process” and took her place “among those who have carried out the most significant transformations in the history of painting.”³⁸ Private art exhibitions like Zeid’s brought the aesthetics of European abstraction and the structure of

33. Laidi-Hanieh, *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Painter of Inner Worlds*, 58.

34. Roditi, *Dialogues on Art*, 196. In conversation with Roditi, Zeid distinguished her own lack of political conviction from the political activities of her colleagues.

35. Sarah-Neel Smith, *Metrics of Modernity: Art and Development in Post-War Turkey* (Oakland: U of California Press, 2022), 4.

36. Sarah-Neel Smith, *Metrics of Modernity: Art and Development in Post-War Turkey* (Oakland: U of California Press, 2022), 14. To Namik Ismail (the director of the State Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul and an artist of the 1914 Generation), art educations should act as a ““machine”” which will ““turn raw material [young artists] into finished products.””

37. Roditi, *Dialogues on Art*, 196.

38. Zeynep Yasa Yaman, “An Artist and Explorer Beyond Ideologies in a Globalized World,” in *Two Generations of the Rainbow* (Istanbul: Istanbul Modern, 2006), 13.

exhibitions and markets which comprised the Western art world to Turkey.³⁹ Despite the differences in their political stances, D Group historian Nurullah Berk presented this positive summary of Zeid's work:

Mme. Fahrnunissa [sic] Zeid is well known in European artistic circles since she exhibits with success in the principal artistic capitals [...] formerly possessed of a lyrical but realistic vision, [she] has now arrived at pure abstraction. She attacks large canvases with courage, composing with passion and patience surprising puzzles [...] brilliant as a stained-glass window.⁴⁰

Zeid often integrated the effects of refracted light and glass fragmentation in her kaleidoscopic abstract works. She developed this style while living in England from 1947 to 1957. The family followed Prince Zeid's diplomatic assignment to London, which placed Zeid in easy proximity to artistic communities in both London and Paris. During this period, she became especially involved with the Nouvelle École de Paris, in whose company she further developed both the form and philosophy of light and dark, fragmentation and completeness. It was also this group with which she felt the greatest affinity.

In *Painting, Politics and the Struggle for the École De Paris, 1944-1964*, art historian Natalie Adamson describes the school as

a critical concept constructed by groups involved in both the production and reception of art—by art critics and their debates upon pictorial style, cosmopolitanism, and national traditions; by curators seeking equally to define the parameters of a national school of

39. Sarah-Neel Smith, *Metrics of Modernity: Art and Development in Post-War Turkey* (Oakland: U of California Press, 2022), 53. Smith explains that “Before the 1950s, artists were the primary catalysts of nonstate exhibitions in the Turkish art world [...]. Fahrnelnissa Zeid's self-organized exhibition, which took place in the Ralli Apartment Building in Nisantasi in 1945, and Bedri Rahmi Eyuboglu and Eren Eyuboglu's self-organized show in the Narmanli Han building, were immediate precedents that served as inspiration behind Cimcoz's opening of Gallery Maya.” Gallery Maya was a hub of bourgeois taste making and the contemporary art market in mid-century Istanbul.

40. Nurullah Berk, *Modern Painting and Sculpture in Turkey*, trans. Belinda Bather (Istanbul: Turkish Press Broadcasting and Tourist Department, 1954), 17.

painters through exhibitions; and by artists engaged in debates that pitted abstraction against realism, and who sought to establish a shared set of terms[...] in the new political and artistic context of the postwar period.⁴¹

École art critic Michel Ragon stated that the “École de Paris is not a style, but the outcome of multiple confrontations, of accumulations, of experiments, the living art crucible.”⁴² As such, it is best understood through the diverse discourses which constructed it. Evidence of Zeid’s engagement with contemporary issues functions as a metric of success that transcends the artifice of retroactive constructions of canonicity. Zeid expressed confident belonging to the École, describing herself as “a painter of the ‘École de Paris’ rather than of any specifically national school.”⁴³ This statement implicitly positions both Zeid and the École as culturally plural.

The idea of abstract art as a locus of unresolved problems, of contradictions between the immediate and the eternal, the figurative and the non-representational, appears in critical texts by, for example, Roger van Gindertael, Maurice Collis, and Charles Estienne. Gindertael co-edited the abstract art periodical *Art d’aujourd’hui*. Writing for an anthology version of the periodical, published as *Témoignages pour l’art abstrait*, Gindertael articulated several common threads of discussion Nouvelle École de Paris discourses when he stated that “l’art est peut-être le seul domaine où toutes les contradictions apparentes se résolvent dans cette même aspiration de l’homme à réaliser son unité, et aussi, l’unité entre le monde et lui.”⁴⁴ Adamson explains that

41. Natalie Adamson, *Painting, Politics and the Struggle for the École De Paris, 1944-1964* (Farnham [GB]: Ashgate, 2009), 2.

42. Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, 21.

43. Roditi, *Dialogues on Art*, 198.

44. Roger van Gindertael, “R.V. Gindertael,” in *Témoignages pour l’art abstrait*, ed. Léon Degand and Julien Alvard (Boulogne: Editions de l’art d’aujourd’hui, 1952), 292.

the “contradictions” which the École sought to resolve comprised a diverse cultural community which would

represent the reconciliation of the republican universalist ideal (embracing internationalism and cosmopolitanism) with a fundamentally national culture beholden to essentialized markers of origins [...]. In the recuperation of cosmopolitanism as a positive value, the foreign-born École de Paris artist became a citizen of the world, whose hybrid ethnic origins enriched the national culture and repudiated its parochial, sectarian, and conformist tendencies. The city of Paris, where such artists lived and worked, therefore presented as a site of redemptive creativity that transcends regional or national values and promises to maintain the particularities of each individual in balance with an over-arching “universal” human culture.⁴⁵

For École artists and critics, abstraction should be “à la fois fort proches et fort différentes des précédentes.”⁴⁶ In short, abstraction ought to be both historic and futuristic, in order to become a universal artistic representation of the diverse artists which produce abstract work. Zeid’s “témoignage” delves into these same concerns, describing the philosophical and formal origins of her abstract practice. That abstract practice derives its significance from Zeid’s personal history and from the rapidly changing world of the mid-century. Crucially, she identifies the then-present (that is, the 1950s) as a period of unprecedented change whose outcome is uncertain: “Les énigmes ne se résolvent pas exactement comme il l’avait prévu, mais on peut dire cependant, qu’elles réalisent ses aspirations. Et je crois que le monde est appelé à se modifier encore plus radicalement.”⁴⁷ Abstract art is, in her view, a means of articulating the inevitable but unpredictable changes in a new age. Zeid visually articulates this intellectual

45. Adamson, *Painting, Politics and the Struggle for the École De Paris*, 9.

46. Léon Dégand, Introduction to *Témoignages pour l’art abstrait*, ed. Léon Dégand and Julien Alvard (Boulogne: Editions de l’art d’aujourd’hui, 1952), 9.

47. Fahrelnissa Zeid, “Fahrelnissa Zeid,” in *Témoignages pour l’art abstrait*, ed. Léon Dégand and Julien Alvard (Boulogne: Editions de l’art d’aujourd’hui, 1952), 280.

conflict in her painting, *Resolved Problems* (1948) (Fig. 4). The work's title recalls both Zeid's and Gindertael's comments, while the fragmented composition suggests the effect of intersecting rays of light which produce "un monde complètement nouveau, qui se prépare en nous depuis des siècles et nous luttons pour l'extérioriser."⁴⁸ *Resolved Problems* engages with these ideas formally and thematically, presenting fragmented, kaleidoscopic shards of colour which, despite their fragmentation, create a new cohesive vision.

Comparing Zeid's work with that of her Parisian colleagues further reveals her participation in the Nouvelle École's aesthetic. Like her contemporaries, Zeid experimented with geometric forms, bright colours, and repetitious forms and gestures. Along with artist's statements and critical commentary, the editors of *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait* commissioned pochoir print designs from the featured artists. The flat, bold colours of École de Paris abstraction, along with fractured semi-organic, semi-geometric shapes come to life in the full colour prints by Zeid, Cicéro Dias, Marie Raymond, and others (Figs. 5, 6, and 7). These prints are visual evidence that Zeid was right to describe herself as "a painter of the École de Paris" rather than of any more specifically national school.⁴⁹

Both Zeid's abstract works and her philosophy borrowed from Wassily Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art*.⁵⁰ Abstract art critic Charles Estienne promoted both Kandinsky and Zeid

48. Alvard, "Julien Alvard," 281.

49. Roditi, *Dialogues on Art*, 198.

50. Wassily Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, ed. and trans. Hilla Rebay (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1946), 49; Laidi-Hanieh, *Painter of Inner Worlds*, 124. In her journal writings, Zeid mused, "So why hold on to primary and infantile details, a portrait, a chair [...] it can add nothing to the spectator's mind who wants to learn, to be struck by sensations."

during their respective careers in Paris. He must have been attracted to the same philosophical approach in the two artists' practices. Like Kandinsky, who asserted that "The futility and uselessness (in art) in attempting to copy an object without a motive [...] drives the artist by a long detour from the 'literal' colouring of an object to the pure artistic aims," Zeid maintained that her work expressed an "internal necessity," beyond the concrete world of objects.⁵¹ She drew on the spiritual aspect of lyrical abstraction to inform her colourful, gestural works. More pertinent to my argument, though, is the fact that this kind of spiritually inspired artistic production directed Zeid's attention beyond the concerns of the political or public and toward "a window open from our world to other worlds," to "the divine" through "cosmic waves."⁵² Zeid disavowed political affiliation, stating in 1961:

Actually, I've never been a militant feminist and I hate to think of my paintings as expressions of a faith of this kind. They are both too personal and too impersonal to be interpreted as public statements. On the contrary, they surge within me from depths that lie far beyond peculiarities of sex, race, or religion [...]. It is as if I were but a kind of medium, capturing or transmitting the vibrations of all that is, or that is not, in the world.⁵³

As I will discuss later, this consistent alignment with abstract spiritualism and disavowal of personal or political significance made Zeid the ideal choice of woman artist for Tate. With no existing political significance or controversial viewpoints explicit in the work itself, Tate could easily construct its own politicized narrative around the artist.

51. Laidi-Hanieh, *Painter of Inner Worlds*, 153.

52. Laidi-Hanieh, 122-24.

53. Roditi, 196-7.

By highlighting these accomplishments within her lifetime, I shift the metric of the artist's success away from canonical inclusion (which as I have shown elsewhere is defined by political agendas) and toward an artist-centered discussion. Thus, I move from Sarah Wilson's affirmative feminist assertion for the Tate exhibition catalogue that Zeid "should long ago have joined France's artistic pantheon," to an alternate model which establishes Zeid as an able participant in the discourses of her artistic milieu but does not wait for inclusion into a hegemonically-derived "pantheon."⁵⁴ Zeid's unequivocal success in these roles constitutes another angle from which Tate could have fulfilled their professed aim of reintroducing the artist to the world. Rather than structure their publicity campaign to emphasize exclusion and obscurity, they might have headlined any of Zeid's successful associations with active artistic communities like the École de Paris to place her strengths, rather than her apparent difficulties, at the forefront of readers' minds. Of course, this would have undermined Tate's representation of itself in the role of saviour.

Posthumous Legacy

Though Zeid participated ably and actively in the salons of the Nouvelle École de Paris and the D Group, her unique approach to abstraction continued to defy the precise categorization of individual schools of abstract art. In a text for Zeid's monographic exhibition at Galerie Colette Allendy in 1949, critic Denys Chevalier astutely observed that

A quelque période qu'elles appartiennent les œuvres de Fahr-el-Nissa Zeid: huiles, aquarelles ou pierres, témoignent de l'esprit inventif de leur auteur et de ses facultés de renouvellement plastique. Toujours à la recherche d'une expression personnelle et authentique, l'artiste évolue sans rupture apparente avec un sens de la continuité, d'autant plus étonnant, qu'il se fait jour à travers les tentatives les plus diverses. La

54. Sarah Wilson, "Extravagant Reinventions: Fahrelnissa Zeid in Paris," *Fahrelnissa Zeid*, ed. Kerry Greenberg (London: Tate Publishing, 2017), 89.

fragmentation indéfinie des plans dans ses premières grandes compositions s'oppose, par l'esprit un peu miniaturiste qu'elle indique, à l'ambition monumentale dont fait preuve la technique et les dimensions de ses travaux.⁵⁵

Chevalier's observation is particularly prescient, given the difficulties (which I will detail in Section 2 of this thesis) which galleries have had in sensitively describing Zeid's artistic legacy. At least since 1949, both Zeid's character and her work have challenged easy categorization. Whatever the external perceptions of her life or work, though, Zeid adhered to her own instincts first and foremost. As Chevalier points out, it was Zeid's very capacity for breadth and transformation which prove constant in her work. In her later career, Zeid returned to figurative work, particularly portraiture (Fig. 8). Despite this drastic departure from the abstract works which had been so popular in Paris, Zeid retained her spiritual philosophy, describing portraiture as the natural evolution of her process:

With abstract painting, it was my unconscious which was attempting to express, to translate my interior demands, without yielding a final point. With the portrait, it is the man you have in front of you, the human being, with his thoughts, with his life [...]. One must succeed in rendering, with all its intensity, that very life you have in front of you, and this is very hard. One has to concentrate in order to come to an ascetism and to transcend oneself almost to the point of being able to touch the creator, the divine.⁵⁶

This core philosophy became the foundation of Zeid's legacy as an artist and as a teacher. During the fifteen years between her move to Jordan and her death in 1991, Zeid invited young artists to study with her at her home in Amman. These students, like Zeid, were upper class women. At her institute, Zeid taught her students to follow the same metaphysical, universal

55. Denys Chevalier, "Fahr-El-Nissa Zeid," in *Fahr-El-Nissa Zeid* (Paris: Galerie Colette Allendy, 1949), unpaginated.

56. Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, 38.

forces which informed her own abstractions.⁵⁷ Following the advice she received from her own teacher, Roger Bissière, decades earlier, she cultivated “courage and self-expression” in her students rather than specific technical skillsets.⁵⁸ Commentaries in the catalogue for the Institute’s 1981 exhibition reiterate Zeid’s perspective on abstraction.⁵⁹ The catalogue describes Majda Raad’s abstract work *Research* as “giving us the feeling of something mysterious, coming from the world of solitude and stars which she captures in her paintings.”⁶⁰ Hind Nasser’s work *Birds of the Sun* is likewise described as inspired “from a spring of visions and dreams.”⁶¹ Though most of Zeid’s students did not pursue art in the long term, the Institute’s focus on innovation and inspiration carried two of Zeid’s students, Suha Shoman and Adila Laidi-Hanieh, into careers in promoting, studying, and supporting modern art. Laidi-Hanieh’s scholarly work

57. Fahrelnissa Zeid, “Fahrelnissa Zeid,” *Témoignages pour l’art abstrait* ed. Léon Degand and Julien Alvard, (Boulogne: Éditions de l’art d’aujourd’hui, 1952), 279. Zeid described herself as a focal point for cosmic forces: “Aussi, pour en revenir à l’expression, je ne crois pas que le personnalité de l’artiste dans la mesure où elle prolonge et continue l’existence de plusieurs millions d’années, compte d’une façon exclusive. Pour moi, j’ai l’impression que je ne compte absolument pas. Je suis un moyen, je transpose les vibrations cosmiques, magnétiques qui nous régissent.”

58. Sarah A. Rogers, “The Formation of the Khalid Shoman Private Collection and the Founding of the Darat al Funun,” in *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World*, ed. Sonjia Meicher-Atassi (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2016), 172.

59. Fahrelnissa Zeid, *Fahrelnissa Zeid and Her Institute*, ed. Suha Shoman (Amman: Fahrelnissa Zeid Royal Jordanian Institute of Fine Art, 1981), unpaginated. She emphasized the rôle of the artist as a medium for the infinite and spiritual to her students in a quote for her Institute’s 1981 exhibition, which included works by Zeid and her students. She said, “To be a painter is to express the depth of your own culture and to interpret the essence of the spirit. The work of a creative artists expresses the human spirit.”

60. *Fahrelnissa Zeid and Her Institute* (Amman: Fahrelnissa Zeid Royal Jordanian Institute of Fine Art, 1981), unpaginated.

61. *Fahrelnissa Zeid and Her Institute*, unpaginated.

focuses on modern art, art exhibition, and identity in the Arab world.⁶² Most notable for this thesis, Laidi-Hanieh has also authored a comprehensive biography of Fahrelnissa Zeid which sensitively focuses on primary sources written by the artist herself. Suha Shoman, on the other hand, benefited from both the “aesthetic liberalism” and the free exchange of ideas which characterized Zeid’s art institute.⁶³ Shoman’s Darat al Funun art centre perpetuates Zeid’s influence by supporting emerging artists and providing “a hub through which artists, ideas and formal languages move throughout the [Middle East] and beyond.”⁶⁴

Exhibition catalogues from Istanbul Modern (IM) further attest to Zeid’s persistent influence. These catalogues accompany shows staged in the years since Zeid’s death and illustrate that even if she did not warrant Tate’s attention in the past, Zeid was an important artist with an influential legacy outside Western Europe. The acknowledgements section of each catalogue thanks Zeid’s daughter for donating her mother’s monumental *My Hell*, which IM’s administration considers the masterpiece of the museum’s collection. Zeynep Yasa Yaman’s essay for Istanbul Modern’s 2006 exhibition of Fahrelnissa’s work, *Two Generations of the Rainbow*, describes the “geometry, surface in space, cosmic vibrations, chaos, the order of the universe and world.”⁶⁵ This is a reading of her works which Zeid would have understood, as it

62. Besides the comprehensive biography on which I have built this section, Laidi-Hanieh has also published, in Arabic and English, works including “Arts, Identity, and Survival: Building Cultural Practices in Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 4 (2006), 28–43; “The Late Style,” in *Fahrelnissa Zeid*, ed. Kerry Greenberg, 131–150.

63. Rogers, “The Formation of the Khalid Shoman Private Collection and the Founding of the Darat al Funun,” 162.

64. Rogers, 162.

65. Yaman, “An Artist and Explorer Beyond Ideologies in a Globalized World,” in *Two Generations of the Rainbow*, 30.

reflects her own description of her practice as a “communion” with the “sum total of the infinitely varied manifestations of being.”⁶⁶ In their 2023 *Yuzen Adalar/Floating Islands* catalogue, IM places Zeid in a similar position of importance and national regard as in 2006.⁶⁷ Far from a narrative of obsolescence or oppression, these Turkish perspectives on Zeid aim to extend her existing reputation as “one of the most creative artists of her generation and epoch” to a Western art world whose “belated interest” in Zeid is at odds with the reality of the artist’s accomplishments.⁶⁸

66. Roditi, *Dialogues on Art*, 194.

67. Firuzhan Kanatli, Foreword to *Fahrelnissa & Nejad: Two Generations of the Rainbow* (Istanbul: Istanbul Modern, 2006), 9. This is not to say that IM’s exhibition literature is free from political agendas and corporate influence. Instead, IM’s political agendas support a divergent purpose from those represented in Tate’s campaign. For example, the corporate sponsorship statement (authored by the vice-president of the Eti Group of Companies) describes Zeid as representative of Turkish arts and culture which constitute “the basis for a modern and strong Turkey in the future.”

68. “Fahrelnissa Zeid at Istanbul Modern,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, June 2, 2017, <https://www.Hurriyetaidailynews.com/fahrelnissa-zeid-at-istanbul-modern-113847>.

Section 2. Contested Histories

Despite, or perhaps because of, Zeid's varied career and significant influence on the art histories in which she participated, her life is as subject to misinterpretations as it is to praise. In the 1950s French critic André Maurois, for example, was dazzled by Zeid's "toiles éclatantes," but reductively attributed the works' originality to Zeid's Middle Eastern origins, suggesting that her abstraction was a reflection of the fact that "aux artistes arabes à leurs disciples sarrasins, l'art figuratif était interdit. Pour eux, point de débat entre l'abstrait et le concret."⁶⁹ In an interview with André Parinaud, Zeid notes (perhaps with some irony), that her self-portrait had been described as "Persian, the dress is Byzantine, the face is Cretan and the eyes Oriental," though she "was not aware of this as I was painting it"; these resemblances were "explained to me later by highly educated people."⁷⁰ Whether promoting the Nouvelle École de Paris as an international group, attracting attention to the reviewer's literary skill, or simply defaulting to "impute their [Zeid's works] difference to her gender, social status, and cultural background," the predominant issue across such reviews is in reducing Zeid's multiplicities, her unique artistic perspective, and even her own explanation of her practice, to pre-existing categories.⁷¹

69. André Maurois, Introduction to *Fahr-El-Nissa Zeid*, in *Fahr-El-Nissa Zeid* (Paris: Galerie Colette Allendy, 1949), unpaginated.

70. Parinaud, *Fahr El Nissa Zeid*, 37.

71. Laidi-Hanieh, *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Painter of Inner Worlds*, 144; 166; 144.

The Problem with (Inter)Nationalistic Exhibitions

After Zeid's death in 1991, misrepresentations of her life continued. In 1992, for example, the Institut du monde arabe in Paris showed Zeid as one of their exhibition's "Trois femmes peintres." Erasing Zeid's Turkish origins, the exhibition presented the featured artists as examples of Arab culture worthy of French attention. As Turkey was not one of the IMA's fund-granting member nations, the exhibition had to emphasize Zeid's Jordanian connections rather than her Turkish origins.⁷² In 2006, Zeid's name once again served national policies, this time in Turkey when Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan spoke at the inauguration of Istanbul Modern. His speech suggested that the museum would show international visitors that Turkey was just as modern and indeed Western as its European Union neighbours.⁷³ At this time, the Turkish government sought entry into the European Union. Placing Zeid (who had European arts academy training) at the centre of Istanbul Modern's programming, the Turkish government and their new gallery would prove the nation's forward-looking, modern, and, most importantly, European character to European Union visitors and diplomats.⁷⁴ A simplified view of Zeid's cosmopolitan associations served Turkey's national agenda better than a holistic view of the artist's multi-faceted cultural associations.

In contrast to the national institutions in Turkey and France, Sarah-Neel Smith wondered whether mega-museums could use their vast resources and global influences to sensitively present Zeid's cultural, political, and artistic identities. One year before Tate's retrospective,

72. Sarah-Neel Smith, "Fahrelnissa Zeid in the Mega-Museum: Mega-museums and modern artists from the Middle East," *Ibraaz: Contemporary Visual Culture in North Africa and the Middle East*, 161 (2016): 4-5, <https://www.ibraaz.org/essays/161>.

73. Smith, *Metrics of Modernity: Art and Development in Post-War Turkey*, 155.

74. Smith, *Metrics of Modernity*, 156.

Smith observed that Fahrelnissa Zeid's popularity in globally focused arts events was growing. Zeid's multi-faceted identity and exciting, varied life experience appealed to "an international contemporary art world that celebrates her cosmopolitanism."⁷⁵ By 2016, Zeid was already well represented in biennials "where it is now *de rigueur* to feature twentieth century moderns"; it followed that Zeid would soon be enveloped in "the self-declared 'global' embrace of the mega-museum."⁷⁶ Mega-museums are highly-funded, internationally reputable institutions like Tate Modern, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, which, in recent years, increasingly seek "to account for 'global' modern and contemporary art."⁷⁷ Representation in such a mega-museum might have been the solution to problems with previous exhibitions of, and scholarship on, Zeid's work, which had reduced her "provocative elusion of straightforward attachments of national, cultural, linguistic or regional identification" to simpler identity markers which suited the exhibiting institutions' national political agendas.⁷⁸

Could the same features which make mega-museums distasteful, including their "gigantism [and] embodiment of the economic logic of neo-liberal globalization," also provide the cash and financial resources to support the exhibition of a complicated artist like Zeid?⁷⁹ With the benefit of hindsight, I can answer this question firmly in the negative. The factors which provide reputation, status, and money for mega-museums are the same factors which will

75. Smith, "Fahrelnissa Zeid in the Mega-Museum," 5.

76. Smith, 8.

77. Smith, 1.

78. Smith, 3.

79. Smith, 8.

continue to inhibit these institutions' abilities to create scholarship, educate the public, and promote exhibitions about artists who occupy nuanced identity positions. Rather than the "fundamental shift in way that the Western modern art museum has policed the borders of art history," which Smith hopefully predicted, Tate's retrospective continued the trend of reducing and obscuring Zeid's component parts and then capitalizing on those characteristics to serve strategic interests.⁸⁰

Re-claiming a Legacy: Becoming Part of Tate Modern's Narrative

Far from being truly international, Tate's condescension to apparently "resurrect" artists outside the Western canon (which they have helped to form) affirms Tate's status not as an institution which champions artists with intersecting identities, but as a pool for global wealth which the gallery attracts with its programming. As I will discuss at length in section four, Tate and its partner Deutsche Bank were willing to diversify as far as diversity was useful to their political and financial goals, but no further, and certainly not far enough to sensitively approach the intersecting identities of class and gender which Zeid's case presents. Instead, the campaign for the exhibition carefully emphasizes those facets of Zeid's identity (her gender and international origins) which are useful to the exhibition's hosts. In a quote for *The Guardian*, Frances Morris, Tate Modern's director, asserted that the museum acquired Zeid's work, *Untitled C*, "so she can now be part of our narrative."⁸¹ Though she clearly intended it as a positive feature of the show,

80. Smith, "Fahrelnissa Zeid in the Mega-Museum," 8.

81. Hannah Ellis-Peterson, "Fahrelnissa Zeid: Tate Modern resurrects artist forgotten by history," *The Guardian*, June 12, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/jun/12/fahrelnissa-zeid-tate-modern-resurrects-artist-forgotten-by-history>.

this is Morris admitting outright that the museum actively cultivated a narrative for its public through its programming.

The exhibition did indeed make Zeid and her work part of the museum's own narrative. Incorporating Zeid into the institution-wide effort to appear more progressive supported "ongoing ambitions for the gallery to be a place that champions artists, particularly women, who have been neglected by an art world still heavily skewed towards European males."⁸² To present Tate as the saviour of apparently neglected women artists, and as "an institution as critical, diverse and interestingly contradiction-ridden as much of the art it shows," the museum molded Zeid into an obscure figure requiring salvation which only Tate and its partners could provide.⁸³ Zeid was particularly useful to Tate because she not only fulfills their female artist exhibition quota, she also poses no opposition to Tate's chosen narrative.⁸⁴ Her political neutrality and aristocratic glamor leave her history open to easy manipulation. She is not allowed to be a great artist, only a great female artist. Tate's online *Art and Artists* index describes Zeid with distinctly gendered language as "The Painter Princess."⁸⁵ This title neatly encapsulates Zeid's identity as an important woman, in a gendered role, while any contradictory elements of upper-class privilege are elided into the glamorous and exciting title of "princess." The narrative strikes a

82. Ellis-Peterson, "Fahrelnissa Zeid: Tate Modern resurrects artist forgotten by history".

83. Julian Stallabrass, "The Branding of the Museum," *Art History* 37, no. 1 (2014): 157, <https://doi-org.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/10.1111/1467-8365.12060>.

84. Tate Board of Trustees, "The Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery Annual Accounts 2016-2017," Tate, https://www.tate.org.uk/documents/1269/tate_annual_accounts_2016-2017_1.pdf, 11. As of 2017, Tate Modern was meeting its diversity mandates by, among other factors, having "about half of the work on display being by women."

85. Suzy Gauntlett, "Fahrelnissa Zeid: The Painter Princess," Tate.org, June 7, 2017, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/fahrelnissa-zeid-22764/fahrelnissa-zeid-the-painter-princess>.

balance between presenting Zeid as interesting, original, and talented enough to be worth saving, but not so unique, autonomous, or influential that her own privileges, politics, or powers will interfere with her ability to be oppressed and then rescued.

Digital Marketing Campaign

In recent years, digital platforms have emerged as an essential branding and public relations opportunity. Because of digital media's wide reach and accessibility, online exhibition promotion has earned my focused attention as I revisit prior discussions of corporatization on museums. Tate set the standard for the exhibition's online point of view in the "What's On" section of their website, which hosts brief announcements for upcoming shows. Tate's announcement headline identifies Zeid as "the international female artist" and invites their audience to "rediscover one of the greatest female artists of the 20th century."⁸⁶ In another section of the website, "Art and Artists," Tate copies a Wikipedia biography in which the author quotes from Tate's "What's On" announcement, creating a self-referential loop which reiterates Tate's role in "recognizing Zeid's talent for the first time."⁸⁷ In a short documentary created by Tate for the exhibition, filmmaker Kat Mansoor includes a rare instance in the museum's campaign of Zeid speaking for herself, alongside interviews with her family and students; however, the film begins with a framing quotation from Zeid's son suggesting that "people did not take her seriously because she was a

86. "Be mesmerised by the kaleidoscopic paintings of the international female artist, Fahrelnissa Zeid," Tate, June 13, 2017, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/fahrelnissa-zeid>.

87. "Fahrelnissa Zeid 1901-1991," Tate, accessed February 14, 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/fahrelnissa-zeid-22764>. The phrase "One of the greatest female artists of the 20th century" is copied exactly from Tate's "What's On" page.

woman.”⁸⁸ Though I do not question the inclusion or accuracy of a quotation from a member of Zeid’s family, I do question the placement of the quotation, which informs the viewer’s expectations of Zeid’s marginal status for the remainder of the film and indeed the exhibition as a whole. Once again, Tate’s campaign has placed Zeid’s gender, and the resulting discrimination, ahead of her accomplishments. In this case, the films’ editors place this quotation literally ahead of footage of Zeid speaking for herself.

Even the exhibition catalogue contains traces of the marketing campaign’s rhetoric. In the first chapter, Zeid is introduced, first and foremost, as a woman who “refused to be bound by social conventions or expectations.”⁸⁹ It was, presumably, this subversion of expectation that allowed Zeid to become “one of the first modern woman painters in Turkey.”⁹⁰ Although the biographical details presented by this very exhibition catalogue indicate Zeid’s historically positive reception by artists and critics alike, the narrative of a woman succeeding in spite of her identity pervades the catalogue’s scholarship. Zeid’s high position of socioeconomic privilege is acknowledged obliquely at first, as in the claim that “despite many diplomatic obligations and social engagements in London, Zeid continued to paint.”⁹¹ The fact that it was this very status as

88. Kat Mansoor and Tate Modern, *Fahrelnissa Zeid: “She was the East and the West,”* May 31, 2017, video, 0:07-0:09, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLec_T5LLBA.

89. Frances Morris, Franziska Kunz and Zeina Arida, Directors Foreword to *Fahrelnissa Zeid*, ed. Kerry Greenberg (London: Tate Publishing, 2017), 7.

90. Morris, Kunz, and Arida, *Fahrelnissa Zeid*, 7.

91. Kerry Greenberg, “The Evolution of an Artist,” in *Fahrelnissa Zeid*, ed. Kerry Greenberg (London: Tate Publishing, 2017), 21.

wealthy socialite and diplomat's wife which facilitated Zeid's participation in the world of modern art is apparently not important to the author.

Elsewhere, this position is addressed more explicitly but still defines Zeid as fundamentally other because of her gender. Sarah Wilson's chapter for the catalogue asserts that Zeid's "success, her excess, her social position and her stylistic variations [...] assaulted the male bastions of Parisian art criticism."⁹² This quotation genders the qualities which it ascribes to Zeid, suggesting that her work and life are distinctly feminine and even frivolous (or "excessive") in contrast to the masculinized image of a fort for the old guard of the art world. In the same paragraph which intends to elicit sympathy for a woman brought so low that she must cook her own food for the first time, the author also describes, without apparent awareness of irony, the balm of the refuge which the family enjoyed at their holiday property on Ischia.⁹³ Despite the incongruity between the image of a downtrodden housewife and a Mediterranean vacation property, Wilson appears to view Zeid as marginalized. In another section of her exhibition catalogue chapter, Wilson states that "[Zeid] should long ago have joined France's artistic pantheon."⁹⁴ In doing so, she tacitly reiterates Western art canons as the metric of an artist's success, while also not clarifying how Wilson defines France's pantheon or its inclusionary parameters. While I believe she writes with genuine feminist intent, the context of the essay as a product of an institution prevents Wilson from drawing any conclusions which would undermine that institution's image even if she wished to. Here, as in the other promotional

92. Sarah Wilson, "Extravagant Reinventions: Fahrelnissa Zeid in Paris," in *Fahrelnissa Zeid*, ed. Kerry Greenberg (London: Tate Publishing, 2017), 89.

93. Greenberg, "The Evolution of an Artist," 24.

94. Wilson, "Extravagant Reinventions," 89.

materials, all aspects of Zeid's life are subsumed by the narrative of salvation, lest the reality of Zeid's success or privilege interfere with the Tate's efforts.

Online newspaper announcements for the exhibition follow Tate's lead in foregrounding the museum's benevolence above Zeid's accomplishments. The headline "Reclaiming the Legacy of a Forgotten Artist" from *The Standard* reduces everything Tate needs the public to know down to the essentials, while emphasizing Tate's role in uncovering this information. The article foregrounds Tate's "work to broaden the canon of art history, which is notoriously neglectful of women" before asking, "who was Zeid and why does she matter?"⁹⁵ Everything Tate needs the public to know about Zeid and their role in recovering her can be summarized with a few pithy, reductive phrases, such as "She was a princess;" "She lived all over the world;" "She didn't cook her first meal until she was 57;" "She set up an art school for women."⁹⁶ The title of this article, "Reclaiming the Legacy of a Forgotten Artist," also reiterates Zeid's apparent position as an oppressed figure, and Tate's role in "reclaiming" Zeid's legacy. While the article frames "reclaiming the legacy" in uncritical terms, the phrase basically summarizes my own argument: that Tate is reframing Zeid's life for their own purposes. The author must not have noticed the irony in describing Zeid as "all but forgotten" and suffering "obscurity in Europe" while simultaneously characterizing the artist her as the glamorous, capital-hopping wife of a diplomat who actively established her own legacy by teaching artists of the next generation.

95. Jessie Thompson, "Fahrelnissa Zeid: Reclaiming the Legacy of a Forgotten Artist," *The Standard*, June 12, 2017, <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/fahrelnissa-zeid-at-tate-modern-reclaiming-the-legacy-of-a-forgotten-artist-a3564071.html>.

96. Thompson, "Reclaiming the Legacy of a Forgotten Artist".

Similar articles appear in *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, who describe the show as “part of a series of Tate exhibitions exploring neglected or forgotten artists- many of them women,” and Zeid as “resurrect[ed]” by Tate.⁹⁷ In the short form, accelerated world of social media, Tate’s Instagram intermingles the museum’s pursuit of feminist justice, audience interest, and financial support in a few short lines: “Happy International Women's Day! To celebrate, we're excited to announce that tickets for Fahrelnissa #Zeid at Tate Modern are now on sale. Link in bio!”⁹⁸ This narrative is a limited interpretation of the facts. Considered in conversation with the primary sources of Zeid’s life, and her own assertion that her practice transcends identity factors like “sex, race, or religion,” Tate’s insistence on presenting Zeid to their public through this dynamic of salvation from feminine irrelevance attracts criticism.⁹⁹

The rhetoric found in these articles is reinforced by various visual strategies that are best exemplified by *The Guardian*’s promotional header image (Fig. 9), which places an anonymous viewer with their back turned to the camera between the reader of the article and Zeid’s artwork. I read this anonymous viewer, who appears to be a white woman, as a representation of the exhibition’s potential audience, which the article hopes to attract. This synecdochical viewer, with her lack of the specific characteristics, emotions, or identifiers which a facial view could provide, stands in for the “general public” which Deutsche Bank identifies as its target

97. Karen Wright, “Fahrelnissa Zeid, Tate Modern, London, review: She never stopped making art during her long and eventful life,” *The Independent*, June 14, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/reviews/fahrelnissa-zeid-review-tate-modern-london-a7786631.html>; Ellis-Peterson, “Fahrelnissa Zeid: Tate Modern resurrects artist forgotten by history”.

98. Tate Modern, “Happy International Women's Day! ...” Instagram, image post with text caption, March 18, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BRYbhNsBXkl/>.

99. Roditi, *Dialogues on Art*, 197.

audience.¹⁰⁰ As Chin Tao Wu points out, though, there is no such thing as a “general public” in terms of social and economic categories. The art gallery-going public in the Western world is typically more affluent and highly educated than the visitors of other museums, which makes them an ideal marketing demographic for a bank seeking custom and investment.¹⁰¹ However, by referring to a homogenized, general public in their marketing rhetoric, this marketing allows Tate Modern and Deutsche Bank to present their exhibitions as purely philanthropic ventures. With this additional context in mind, *The Guardian*’s image is even more significant. The effect of this composition is that Deutsche Bank and Tate’s message of progressive benevolence, and its intended recipients, are literally foregrounded ahead of Zeid’s work. The painting behind the figure is an oil on canvas painted while Zeid was working among the École de Paris. The painting is a focal point for her participation in this group, yet despite its monumentality, Zeid’s mid-century masterpiece becomes little more than a backdrop to the exhibition campaign. Sarah-Neel Smith points out that critics of mega-museums recognize reclamation narratives as efforts “to shore up the authority of the centre.”¹⁰² In Tate’s efforts to “rediscover” Zeid, their exhibition promotion has solidified her exclusion.

To further counter Tate’s contention that the museum is the first to “[reveal] Zeid as an important figure,” I will contrast these British sources with some Turkish publicity and

100. “Concept: ArtWorks,” db.com, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180213151021/http://art.db.com/en/concept.html>.

101. Chin Tao Wu, *Privatising culture: Corporate art intervention since the 1980s* (London: Verso, 2002), 131.

102. Smith, “Fahrelnissa Zeid in the Mega-Museum,” 8.

exhibitions catalogues.¹⁰³ Istanbul Modern (IM) staged a Zeid solo exhibition concurrently with Tate's and Deutsche Bank's, the publicity for which is notably less sensational. IM's promotional materials suggest that even if she did not warrant Tate's attention in the past, Zeid was an important artist with an influential legacy outside Western Europe. Though IM's exhibition literature is, like Tate's, informed by political agendas and corporate influence, these agendas support a divergent purpose from those represented in Tate's campaign. For example, the corporate sponsorship statement describes Zeid as representative of Turkish arts and culture which constitute "the basis for a modern and strong Turkey in the future."¹⁰⁴ IM's goal of perpetuating Zeid's already elevated status as a national hero, illuminates the extent of Tate's manipulation of the same set of facts which we see presented differently in IM's materials. Comparing announcement headlines for IM's and Tate's concurrent 2017 Zeid shows, the museums' varied approaches are apparent. IM's reads simply, "Fahrelnissa Zeid: A Selection from the Istanbul Modern Collection."¹⁰⁵ Tate, asserting its status as global mega-museum and proponent of women artists, incorporates both aims into a single headline: "Be mesmerised by the kaleidoscopic paintings of the international female artist, Fahrelnissa Zeid."¹⁰⁶ Even in these

103. "Press Release: Fahrelnissa Zeid," Tate.org, June 12, 2017, <https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/fahrelnissa-zeid>.

104. Firuzhan Kanatli, Foreword to *Fahrelnissa & Nejad: Two Generations of the Rainbow* (Istanbul: Istanbul Modern, 2006), 9.

105. "Fahrelnissa Zeid: A selection from the Istanbul Modern Collection," Istanbulmodern.org, May 30, 2017, <https://www.istanbulmodern.org/en/exhibitions/past/fahrelnissa-zeid>.

106. "Be mesmerised by the kaleidoscopic paintings of the international female artist, Fahrelnissa Zeid," Tate, 13 June 2017, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/fahrelnissa-zeid>.

concise announcements, Tate's version of Zeid's history seems burdened with qualifications, while IM's presents Zeid as a significant force.¹⁰⁷ I would argue that Tate's "belated interest" in Zeid comes less from a true desire to understand Zeid's work and more from a desire to enforce their position as the institution which decides which artists are worthy of "global" notice.¹⁰⁸

As Tate's exhibition was a collaborative sponsorship series with Deutsche Bank, the company's online platforms reinforced the same story which I have already shown in British sources. In the "On View" section of their arts periodical, *ArtMag*, Deutsche Bank's uncredited author announces the same retrospective which was also shown at Tate. The article claims that Zeid "was virtually forgotten for a long time."¹⁰⁹ The March 2018 issue of *ArtMag* contains a dedicated press section which compiles and translates critical exhibition reviews from German and Turkish media.¹¹⁰ The various quotations collected for this article include many familiar points about Zeid's kaleidoscopic abstractions, rediscovery from obscurity, and triumph over her position as woman.¹¹¹ Though some reviewers appreciated the "mosaic-like range of colors,

107. Ellis-Peterson, "Fahrelnissa Zeid: Tate Modern resurrects artist forgotten by history".

108. "Fahrelnissa Zeid at Istanbul Modern," *Hürriyet Daily News*, June 2, 2017, <https://www.Hurriyetdailynews.com/fahrelnissa-zeid-at-istanbul-modern-113847>.

109. "Cosmopolitan Abstractions: Fahrelnissa Zeid at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle," *ArtMag*, January 27, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210802035107/https://db-artmag.de/en/101/on-view/cosmopolitan-abstractions-fahrelnissa-zeid-at-the-deutsche-bank-/>.

110. "A Bridge Between Modernism and the Orient - Fahrelnissa Zeid at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle," *ArtMag*, March 9, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210507132526/https://www.db-artmag.de/en/103>.

111. "A Bridge Between Modernism and the Orient - Fahrelnissa Zeid at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle," The March issue of *ArtMag* quotes Elke Linda Buchholz's review for *Film + Kunst*, which emphasizes that Zeid "detached herself completely from the fixed traditions and role models of her origins." For *Kunstzeitung*, *ArtMag* quotes Ingo Arend who states that "In this wonderful retrospective, you can discover one of the most fascinating Modernist female artists."

which are akin to an animated landscape of the soul” in Zeid’s work, Deutsche Bank’s trademark progressive rhetoric dominates the press reviews.¹¹² Deutsche Bank re-affirms the same narrative which was initially issued by exhibition publicity by re-producing it for their own readers as if the story of Deutsche Bank and Tate’s salvation of Zeid was produced entirely independently. Quoting Chloe Stead’s review for the contemporary art magazine *Frieze*, for example, *ArtMag* uses an apparently independent source to support their claims that Zeid is a remarkable yet forgotten woman: “It seems extraordinary that an artist of such singular vision, who enjoyed significant success in her lifetime, should have been all but forgotten following her death.”¹¹³ Stead’s review for *Frieze* is included as evidence of the show’s positive reception and the reality of Deutsche Bank and Tate Modern’s narrative of resurrection; however, *ArtMag* fails to disclose the fact that Deutsche Bank is also a long-term financial supporter of *Frieze*.¹¹⁴ In short, Deutsche Bank’s magazine promoted an exhibition they sponsored, using a positive review from a source they also sponsor. This quotation reveals the depth of the incestuous positive publicity cycle, beyond the repetition of near-identical rhetoric.

Across these marketing media, one consistent narrative emerges: that Tate and Deutsche Bank’s collaboration “finally” credits Zeid “as a woman who set new standards in a male-

112. “A Bridge Between Modernism and the Orient - Fahrelnissa Zeid at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle.” The art editor for *Berliner Morgenpost* appears to appreciate the formal complexity and spiritual impact with which Zeid imbued her work.

113. “A Bridge Between Modernism and the Orient - Fahrelnissa Zeid at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle.”

114. “Raising Diverse Voices in the Art World with Frieze,” db.com, May 21, 2024, https://www.db.com/news/detail/20240521-raising-diverse-voices-in-the-art-world-with-frieze?language_id=1. As Deutsche Bank explain in this announcement of a new collaborative curation fellowship program, DB and Frieze have been financially partnered for 21 years, as of 2024.

dominated art world.”¹¹⁵ Read together, these sources attract criticism not only because they reiterate a reductive view of Zeid’s legacy, but also because each source follows the same rhetorical template. Such marked similarities cast doubt on the objectivity of each source, since it is unlikely that truly independent research by each author would produce near-identical viewpoints in each of their works. All these reviews and announcements are products of Tate’s brand and the “publicity machine” which, as Julian Stallabrass points out,

places regular positive stories in the press, and has the ability to kill hostile stories. British newspapers are full of PR ‘stories’ placed by powerful branded art institutions, particularly Tate, the National Gallery and the British Museum. They are generally the regular victims of PR agencies which pass publicity off as news, since they increasingly lack the time, resources or will to check facts or offer opposing views.¹¹⁶

Museum messages across media platforms must remain as consistent as Tate’s custom-designed visual advertising identity.¹¹⁷

115. “Cosmopolitan Abstractions: Fahrelnissa Zeid at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle,” *ArtMag*, January 27, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210802035107/https://db-artmag.de/en/101/on-view/cosmopolitan-abstractions-fahrelnissa-zeid-at-the-deutsche-bank/>.

116. Julian Stallabrass, “The Branding of the Museum,” *Art History* 37, no.1 (2014): 153, <https://doi-org.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/10.1111/1467-8365.12060>.

117. Stallabrass, “The Branding of the Museum,” 150. The design and marketing firm Wolf Ollins, created Tate’s visual brand identity as part of their ongoing efforts to refine, capitalize upon, and market their institutional identity.

Section 3. Causes and Consequences of Misrepresentation

In *Fortunes of Feminism*, philosopher and critical theorist Nancy Fraser outlines the historical relationship between feminist efforts and criticisms of capitalism, where women's liberation "began life as an insurrectionary force which challenged male domination in state-organized capitalist societies of the postwar era."¹¹⁸ Critiques of "capitalism's androcentrism"¹¹⁹ were central to the mainstream feminist agenda until a shift in the movement displaced this integrated critique of patriarchy and capitalism as facets of the same structural oppression in favor of a cultural politics removed from anti-capitalism. This shift rendered mainstream feminism compliant with, rather than in opposition to, the "neoliberalizing forces" of the 1980s and beyond.¹²⁰ Popular feminist efforts abandoned critical theory to focus on representational injustices against women, namely "nonrecognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational sensational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions)."¹²¹ While these issues of nonrecognition are legitimate manifestations of patriarchal capitalist society, it is essential to critique the socio-economic structure alongside its symptoms or else the system is maintained. Besides its dissonance with the historical realities of Zeid's career, Tate's campaign narrative espouses an affirmational approach to an issue of gendered nonrecognition, consistent with a rhetoric of neoliberal

118. Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2013), 1.

119. Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism*, 1.

120. Fraser, 5.

121. Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition?" 71.

feminism.¹²² Although affirmational equity is rooted in genuine attempts to achieve social justice, especially in the context of the second wave feminist movement, this type of equity works within, rather than against, hegemony, and is therefore vulnerable to appropriation and exploitation by hegemonic institutions. The subsequent section will explain the origins and shortcomings of affirmational, representational social justice efforts and point out the specific appeal of this rhetoric to the architects of the Tate retrospective.

In “Women Artists Versus Feminist Artists: Definitions by Ideology, Rhetoric or Mere Habit,” Malin Hedlin-Hayden examines the risks of strategic essentialism as a feminist strategy in art history.¹²³ Strategic essentialism emerged in the era of second-wave feminism and intended to counter the representational injustices which I have explained, via Fraser, above. While the target of neoliberal women’s liberation was, as Fraser describes, representational (rather than distributive) issues of patriarchy, one proposed solution was strategic essentialism. Strategic essentialism aims to unify a minority group who differ individually in pursuit of a collectivity that can instigate change. In a feminist context, this means putting aside the diverse experiences

122. Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition?” 87.

123. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in *Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 13. Hedlin- Hayden adapts the terms “strategic essentialism” and “othering” from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak posits a “strategic use of positive essentialism” as a discursive tool through which marginal subjects can create “the ‘consciousness’ of class or collectivity within a social field of exploitation and domination” (14). Spivak’s definition, developed in the context of the historiography of colonial India, is too situationally specific to allow a direct application of her definition to my case study. Hedlin-Hayden re-defines strategic essentialism as she relates it to representation of women in art exhibitions, divorcing the term from the specificities of colonized subjectivity in order to extend the term to encompass women in general as a subjugated group. Since Fahrelnissa Zeid is a woman represented in an art exhibition, and not a colonized subject, I emulate Hedlin-Hayden’s definition and application of strategic essentialism in my own discussion.

of women to emphasize their common identity as women in the hope of bolstering the collective status of the group.¹²⁴ As Hedlin-Hayden points out, though, if this artificial homogeneity is retained for too long or employed injudiciously, “then the essentialist biased discrimination that feminist practices seek to undo is actually maintained and (re)-activated.”¹²⁵ Hedlin-Hayden views strategic essentialism as a once-useful methodology which has outlived its usefulness. She does not focus on the material motives for museums to employ this strategy in their exhibition scholarship, and this is where my case study builds on her work. Tate’s marketing of Fahrelnissa Zeid places the artist into this outsider category of woman artist. Creating this group and eliding the particularities of Zeid’s career into the category of outsider allows Tate to maintain its powerful position as arbiter of the qualifications for belonging to the mainstream. Overlooking the nuances of Zeid’s intersecting identities, Tate’s campaign relegates Zeid, as the exceptional other, “to a site that is always already separated as such: a site of their own, which is a site on the fringe.”¹²⁶ Hedlin-Hayden is rightly skeptical of the binary separation which is created when scholars and galleries over-emphasize artists’ gender and cultural identities.

124. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak?” *Can the subaltern speak?: reflections on the history of an idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 34-5. Spivak warns that the continued construction of a subjugated collective Other contributes to the “persistent constitution of the Other as the Self’s shadow.” Even when intellectuals writing about this Other do so with the intention of exposing inequity, such efforts “merely report on the non-represented subject and analyze (without analyzing) the workings of (the unnamed Subject irreducibly presupposed by) power and desire.” Of course, Zeid is not literally unnamed in Tate’s campaign, but the reduction and manipulation of her character emphasize her as a female subject, an Other, more than it emphasizes Zeid’s unique personal qualities and accomplishments.

125. Malin Hedlin-Hayden, “Women Artists versus Feminist Artists: Definitions by Ideology, Rhetoric or Mere Habit,” in *Feminisms is Still our Name*, ed. Malin Hedlin Hayden and Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 59.

126. Hedlin-Hayden, 65.

What began as a strategy for a wide structural critique of intertwined patriarchy and capitalism was dismantled by a new “spirit of capitalism” in the age of rising neoliberalism which claimed to account for feminist demands by incorporating the rhetoric of equal opportunity for women within the existing capitalist hegemony.¹²⁷ In short, second wave feminism was a critique which, as Boltanski and Chiapello point out, saw “some of the values it had mobilized to oppose the form taken by the accumulation process being placed at the service of accumulation.”¹²⁸ This is why Tate’s feminism is problematic. It appropriates the rhetoric of feminism in service of a neoliberal politics which is ultimately defined by the need to make money, and which only deigns to include outsiders when that inclusion is beneficial to the gatekeeping institution. As Catherine Rottenberg observes, such exploitation of gender identity reflects British “Neoliberalism’s ongoing and relentless conversion of all aspects of our world into ‘specks’ of capital, including human beings themselves.”¹²⁹ Within such a world, Zeid’s life is no longer her own, but a product used to intervene in the market as an attractive advertisement which will generate profit and publicity for its presenters.

Material Stakes in Exhibitions and Historiography

Material stakes are the basis of the misrepresentative historiography in the collaborative Tate Modern and Deutsche Bank retrospective. Nancy Fraser’s framework of paradigms of feminist justice is an invaluable methodology in my understanding (and application) of sociopolitical

127. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London; New York: Verso, 2007).

128. Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 29.

129. Catherine Rottenberg, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7.

critique to my case study. She presents two modes of injustice: distributive, “rooted in the political-economic structure of society;” and recognitive, “rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication.”¹³⁰ The Tate/Deutsche Bank exhibition of Zeid’s work, with its accompanying promotional media, purports to redress recognitive injustice. In this case, that recognitive injustice, as they present it, is Zeid’s ostensible exclusion from sites of cultural representation and interpretation like art history, male-dominated art canons, and the Western art world in general.

Dismantling recognitive injustices requires a discursive restructuring of power relationships and an integration of, rather than an emphasis on, strictly defined identity categories.¹³¹ Instead of attempting such a transformation, Tate’s campaign espouses an affirmational approach to an issue of gendered nonrecognition, consistent with a rhetoric of neoliberal feminism.¹³² As a result, rather than resolving the recognitive injustice against Zeid, Tate’s campaign reiterates it by misrepresenting the artist. In other words, their putative attempt to reconcile recognitive injustice seeks to reallocate attention to an exceptional member of an existing identity group in pursuit of neoliberal multiculturalism. Affirmational solutions to injustice are harmonious with neoliberalism, because such remedies require no reallocation of power or disruption of institutional structures. Instead, it relies on improvement in individual cases to serve as markers of systemic success. Unfortunately, as Fraser points out, even well-intentioned efforts of resolution through affirmation fail to account for intersecting identities and

130. Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition?” 70-71. Distributive injustice is less applicable here, as Zeid was financially privileged. It is her posthumous representation (an issue of recognitive justice) which concerns me here.

131. Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition?” 70-71.

132. Fraser, 87.

can “take the form of calling attention to, if not performatively creating, the putative specificity of some group, and then of affirming the value of that specificity.”¹³³ Affirmative efforts to address recognitive injustice, when used in isolation, reify rather than destabilize group differences which underpin inequity. This is why affirmative recognition, unlike transformative efforts to address inequality, can be leveraged in support of existing power structures.

Tate and Deutsche Bank avoid a critique of the capitalist/patriarchal structure in which they are implicated and performatively seek to affirm the legitimacy of women within the existing structure. The issue which exhibition materials identify—that is, Zeid being “rendered invisible via the authoritative representational sensational, communicative, and interpretative practices” of the art world—may be based in genuine trends of historical attitudes toward women artists, but the museum’s proposed solution to this issue is, at best, unproductive.¹³⁴ Tate focuses on one identity marker, woman, to attach Zeid to an acknowledged, differentiated marginalized group, and then seeks to rectify that marginalization (caused by systemic sexism) through their affirmation of one representative of that marginalized group. This kind of performative inclusion is not a viable means of achieving equity for two reasons. First, “the essentialist biased discrimination that feminist practices seek to undo is actually maintained and (re)-activated” by relegating exceptional women to a separate category “of being other to a dominant norm.”¹³⁵ Second, affirmational approaches to feminism preclude genuine equity by working within, rather than against, the structural limitations of patriarchy and capitalism. Without seeking to transform

133. Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition?” 74.

134. Fraser, 74.

135. Hedlin-Hayden, “Women Artists versus Feminist Artists,” 59; Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*, 5.

or deconstruct the intertwined social and economic structures which create gender discrimination, affirmative neoliberal feminism can be incorporated into those same structures.¹³⁶

136. Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, xv. The authors explain that partial critiques of capitalist structures which only criticize one aspect of systemic inequality will “eventually [be] proved open to assimilation [under capitalism].”

Section 4. Financial and Cultural Stakeholders in Tate

To understand why the Tate selected Zeid as a featured artist in the International Arts Partnership, and why they chose to present her career as they did, I interrogate Tate's position as representative of external influences which inform its publicity campaigns, general image, and quotidian activities. Deutsche Bank and the British state, because of their financial and cultural investments in Tate, function as "stakeholders" in the museum's operation. The stakeholders want to maintain the structures of cultural and financial capital from which they derive political power, cultural reputation, and money. These institutions also manipulate their publics by "present[ing] themselves as sharing a humanist value system with museums and galleries, cloaking their particular interests with a universal moral veneer."¹³⁷ For the Zeid retrospective, the "moral veneer" which investors aimed to exploit comprised the affirmational diversity rhetoric which the show's marketing promoted. While financial and political stakeholders like Deutsche Bank and the British government have the potential to support original exhibitions and scholarship, the strings attached to corporate and state assets place Tate under the pressures of "the expansionist logic of the global capital that drives their [the government, Deutsche Bank, and Tate's] activities."¹³⁸

As a non-profit operating under direct government supervision, the Tate must suit its programming to the political agendas outlined by state directors: namely, the Secretary of State for Culture, Sport, and Media. In *The expediency of culture: uses of culture in the global era*,

137. Wu, *Privatising culture*, 125.

138. Smith, "Fahrelnissa Zeid in the Mega-Museum," 1.

George Yúdice summarizes the issue of sociopolitics in cultural in terms of economic exchange.

In the British context of the 2000s and 2010s,

[t]he notion of culture has mutated enough, however, to meet the requirements of the bottom line. Artistic trends such as multiculturalism that emphasize social justice (perhaps understood no more broadly than equal visual representation in public spheres) and initiatives to promote sociopolitical and economic utility have been fused into the notion of what I call the “cultural economy” and what Blair’s New Labourite rhetoric dubbed the “creative economy.” Also marketed at home and to the world as ‘Cool Britannia,’ this creative economy includes both a sociopolitical agenda [...] as well as an economic agenda.¹³⁹

Before Tony Blair’s New Labour administration, and long before the Conservative administration under which the Fahrelnissa Zeid retrospective took place, Britain had been evolving toward an art and culture policy in which the government cut back on public arts funding and exploited artistic initiatives in service of a low-investment, high-reward “cultural economy.” The ideologies which scaffold the “cultural economy” are rooted in the British neoliberalism which began with Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s and continued well into the years of the Deutsche Bank/ Tate Modern International Arts Partnership in the 2010s. Under Thatcher’s administration, there emerged an “ideological project [...] [that] rested on accommodating a radical commitment to market values.”¹⁴⁰ Thatcher first withdrew funding from the national arts funding agency, the Arts Council of Great Britain, which had functioned relatively free of party politics and private influences and instead offered tax incentives to

139. George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 16.

140. Helen McCarthy, “‘I Don’t Know How She Does It!’: Feminism, Family and Work in ‘Neoliberal’ Britain,” in *The Neoliberal Age?: Britain since the 1970s*, ed. Aled Davies, Ben Jackson, and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite (London: UCL Press, 2021), 136, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1smjwgq>.14.

encourage private corporate funding.¹⁴¹ Neoliberal policy sought to “desacralize institutions that had formerly been protected from the forces of private market competition.”¹⁴² Relying on a rhetoric of individual growth and responsibility, neoliberal administrations encouraged museums which had once enjoyed complete funding from national arts agencies to become self-sufficient enterprises, reliant on internal revenues and private wealth for 70 percent of their operating costs.¹⁴³

In the 2000s, Blair’s New Labour administration built on this precedent by not only encouraging private funding for the British arts, but developing policies which could extract a political return on any government investment, thereby turning arts institutions into “an instrument of social inclusiveness” which “provide ‘value for money,’ while state funding is justified with the notion that the arts increase economic competitiveness and inspire the creative economy.”¹⁴⁴ This ideology affects the internal affairs of non-profits like the Tate as well as their relationship with the state and with funding institutions. Mapping the details of the Zeid exhibition onto Yúdice’s framework, Zeid embodies “artistic trends [...] that emphasize social justice,” while the retrospective is the “initiative to promote sociopolitical and economic

141. Victoria D. Alexander, “Enterprise Culture and the Arts: Neoliberal Values and British Art Institutions,” in *Art and the Challenge of Markets*, vol. 1, ed. Victoria D. Alexander et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 71-2.

142. Stephanie Lee Mudge, “What Is Neo-Liberalism?” *Socio-Economic Review* 6, no. 4 (2008): 704, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwn016>.

143. “Governance,” Tate, accessed 14 February 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/governance>.

144. Victoria D. Alexander and Anne E. Bowler, “Art at the Crossroads: The Arts in Society and the Sociology of Art.” *Poetics* 43, (2014): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2014.02.003>.

utility.”¹⁴⁵ Tate serves as the “network of arts administrators who produce and distribute the producers of art and culture, who in turn deliver communities or consumers.”¹⁴⁶ In 2017, Theresa May replaced Tony Blair, but the policies which facilitated instrumentalization of culture remained.

Institutional Governance

A 2017 announcement that Tate had appointed Maria Balshaw as Tate’s general director was also a public announcement of Tate’s new socially engaged and progressive direction. Balshaw’s status as a woman, “champion” of woman artists, and curator of Black contemporary art foregrounds the gallery’s efforts to produce a “bold and challenging,”¹⁴⁷ though ostensibly apolitical, program for Tate. Citing Balshaw’s resilience as Tate’s director in the midst of “the Borough Market terror attack, a snap general election, the Grenfell Tower fire and the Finsbury Park mosque attack,” *The Guardian* and Tate suggest that Balshaw’s appointment marked a new era in which the gallery will “absolutely need to be speaking to the whole of our society.”¹⁴⁸ What exactly the museum had to say to society, and why, will be the subject of this section.

Despite the obvious manipulation of current events in these announcements to promote Tate and its programming, Balshaw insists that “It’s not about taking positions left or right

145. Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, 16.

146. Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, 13.

147. “Maria Balshaw Appointed New Tate Director,” Tate.org, 17 January 2017, <https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/maria-balshaw-appointed-new-director-tate>

148. Hannah Azieb Pool, “Maria Balshaw: The first woman at the top of the Tate,” *The Guardian*, 7 July 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/jul/07/maria-balshaw-fresh-slate-tate-modern-african-american-new-director-exhibitions-society>.

politically, but about holding a space where things that are at issue in our world can be explored, because that's what artists do."¹⁴⁹ Of course, the construction of a museum funded by state and corporate money as an apolitical space is inherently contradictory, especially given the clear political bent of the announcements discussed above. Chin Tao Wu observes that it is precisely this public perception of fine art as above the machinations of politics which makes art galleries the ideal hosts and vectors for political and corporate agendas.¹⁵⁰ As a national, semi-public museum, Tate occupies a precarious role as a focal point for social, political, and cultural agendas. In *Museum Diplomacy*, Sarah E. K. Smith and Sascha Priewe observe that while museums "sit at the intersection of state and civil society and function as educational institutions, facilitating research as well as public learning," such institutions also "advance hegemonic values through the stories and objects they display."¹⁵¹ Tate receives tens of millions in Grant in Aid from the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, which means Tate's use of those funds is subject to direct oversight from the Secretary for Culture, Media, and Sport.¹⁵²

In the management agreement between the British government and Tate, the Secretary of State for Culture, Sport, and Media outlines specific "priorities" for the museum, including "to

149. Pool, "Maria Balshaw: The first woman at the top of the Tate."

150. Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 134.

151. Sarah E. K. Smith and Sascha Priewe, "Introduction to *Museum Diplomacy: How Cultural Institutions Shape Global Engagement*," ed. Sarah E. K. Smith and Sascha Priewe (Blue Ridge Summit: American Alliance of Museums, 2023), 3. See this entire volume for in-depth case studies of global museums as sites of political ideology and cultural diplomacy.

152. Tate Board of Trustees, "The Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery Annual Accounts 2016-2017," 20, https://www.tate.org.uk/documents/1269/tate_annual_accounts_2016-2017_1.pdf. For the 2016-17 period, Tate received £40,251,000 in federal grant in aid funding, but their total income from sponsorship, in-house business like merchandise sales, and other private fundraising comprised £122,044,000.

ensure that free entry to the permanent collections of the Tate will continue to be made available,” “to pursue commercial and philanthropic approaches to generating revenue,” “to take a strategic approach to partnership working,” and “helping us [the British government] to boost tourism, education and business.”¹⁵³ This agreement establishes the political and the economic stakes of Tate’s cooperation with the government, which not only demands that the museum justify and finance its own existence, but also that it must represent the state’s interests to Tate’s international audience. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair articulated this agenda in a speech at Tate Modern in 2007, stating that “When 1m [sic] people a day look at the Tate website, many of them from abroad, we are conducting diplomacy in a new way.”¹⁵⁴

The Tate Board of Trustees budget and performance reports respond to demands set by the British government. In 2017, the museum was expected to “welcome broad and diverse audiences; promote digital growth and engagement; develop and nurture UK and global partnerships; and develop the people and culture of Tate.”¹⁵⁵ At this time, the “people and culture” which Tate wished to develop included “diverse artists and voices” intended to broaden the appeal of Tate’s programming and the reach of Britain’s cultural reputation.¹⁵⁶ As the Board of Trustees annual report for 2016-17 states,

153. “Tate Management Agreement 2016-2020,” Tate, 1, https://www.tate.org.uk/documents/872/signed_management_agreement_2017_ewY03TX.pdf

154. Tony Blair, “Speech at Tate Modern,” *The Guardian*, March 6, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/mar/06/politicsandthearts.uk1>.

155. Tate Board of Trustees, “Annual Accounts 2016-2017,” 6.

156. Tate Board of Trustees, 14. This international work comprises curatorial fellowships, artwork lending, and professional development symposia like “Tate Intensive: Making Tomorrow’s Art Museum.” The Board of Trustees characterizes these museum-sector collaborators, like its sponsorships, as “partners.”

This year, an audience framework has been developed that will allow Tate to target specific audiences through its programming, activities and marketing. The programme and Collection displays have been determined with a view to representing diverse artists and voices. The new Tate Modern opened with a commitment to a fairer representation of female artists.¹⁵⁷

This would be an admirable goal if that were the true and only intent of the new program. To disseminate this agenda, the report outlines an expansion of the museum's online presence, which "contributed to the growth of organic traffic to the website and increase in visitors using mobile devices. Visits to the website increased by 17% year on year to 15 million. The responsive templates have increased mobile traffic by 47% and have also led to an increase in sales of ticketing and membership via mobile devices."¹⁵⁸ In short, Tate's goal of expanding its reach through digital platforms directly supports its goal of representing "diverse voices"—in this case, Zeid. This is an explicit statement of Tate's political agenda regarding women artists. Zeid becomes an example of what Catherine Rottenberg would criticize as the "individual woman's success becom[ing] a feminist success, which can then be attributed to the [...] enlightened political order as well as to its moral and political superiority."¹⁵⁹ The Board of Trustees believe that appearing to promote overlooked women will make the museum more popular, and they leverage digital marketing to facilitate this goal. In as many words, Tate states that the Zeid show, among others, "contributed in different ways to Tate's wider objectives," objectives which evidence suggests are motivated by economic and political concerns.¹⁶⁰

157. Tate Board of Trustees, 11.

158. Tate Board of Trustees, 13.

159. Rottenberg, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism*, 56.

160. Tate Board of Trustees, "Annual Accounts 2016-2017," 8.

A generous interpretation of these priorities might allow that the Board of Trustees simply wished to widen the reach of their programming across demographics. While the Board of Trustees' interest in promoting diversity is admirable, the entanglement of this goal with the priorities of the corporate sponsor for this exhibition casts doubt on the sincerity of such progressive aspirations. The Trustees Annual Account suggests that "Diversity in the programme and in the Collection helps in its own right to attract and appeal to different audiences."¹⁶¹ To support dissemination of the new program, the Trustees' report also explains that

Alongside the work on Tate's audiences [...]. Tate's marketing team unveiled a refreshed brand to coincide with the opening of the new Tate Modern. This maintained Tate's distinctive visual presence, but simplified it, making for clearer communication with visitors and prospective audiences. Media and advertising for exhibitions and other offers are more distinctive, with campaigns carrying clear links to Tate's vision of championing the role of art in society.¹⁶²

This quotation contains several key points about Tate's promotional activities. First, it proves that Tate identifies and targets specific demographics. Second, it establishes that Tate uses dedicated marketing professionals to enable the museum to reach their specific targets.¹⁶³ Finally, it explains that diversity is a tool in both the museum's programming and marketing. Tate uses diversity in its exhibitions to reach and retain new audiences. As soon as diversity becomes a means of self-promotion for the museum, the sincerity of the diversity rhetoric in their marketing is undermined.

161. Tate Board of Trustees, 11.

162. Tate Board of Trustees, 10.

163. Tate Board of Trustees, "The Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery Annual Accounts 2016-2017," 10. For example, Microsoft's sponsorship of Tate's IK Prize included "public relations, digital and paid media, influencer activity, social media and advertising" for the Prize and its recipients.

Corporate Takeover

Tate's semi-public status aligns them, by necessity, with the priorities of the British government, but a more disturbing, because more financially potent, association is their program of corporate sponsorship. Tate is beholden to numerous corporate sponsors, but the International Arts Partnership which the Zeid retrospective concluded was the specific project of Deutsche Bank. As I have explained in the previous section, the legacy of neoliberal policy and the resulting necessity of corporate intervention in museums is a grey area between corporate influence and institutional governance. Tate must attract corporate sponsors and represent these corporations' interests, which informs the museum's choice of programming and the marketing which advertises exhibitions alongside sponsored branding. Tate's website promises sponsors a "range of sector-leading partnership benefits, creating unique opportunities for your [corporations'] people and clients," including "brand and values alignment" and "ED&I [equity, diversity, and inclusion] activations" designed to provide sponsors with the tools to "present themselves as sharing a humanist value system with museums and galleries."¹⁶⁴ All of these offerings benefit both Tate and its sponsors' reputations by situating Tate as a bastion of progressive and socially concerned initiatives from which corporations can profit. At the same time, Tate receives financial support from the sponsor which enables further marketing of the partnerships. Evidently, Tate views itself as a marketable brand and describes itself with the language of corporate image-making and self-promotion.

164. "Corporate Support: Partnership," Tate. org, accessed February 14, 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/corporate-support/partnership>; Wu, *Privatising culture: Corporate art intervention since the 1980s*, 125.

Advertising sponsorship opportunities as a “partnership” implies the mutual influence of the museum and the sponsor on the selection of exhibitions.¹⁶⁵ Chin Tao Wu’s observation in 2002 that Tate’s institutional literature was re-orienting toward “Business jargon, which would otherwise have been reserved for the commercial world [...] as if a public art gallery such as the Tate could itself be considered as a corporate enterprise,” holds true through 2017.¹⁶⁶ The advent of online platforms as disseminators of museum agendas has only exacerbated the use of business and marketing terminology. External pressure to maintain a cohesive and “influential” brand identity subordinates Tate’s artistic programming to the demands of that brand identity and those who have financially and culturally invested in it. For the Zeid retrospective, Tate ceded control of their image and programming to Deutsche Bank, which overstepped the role of funder and achieved the status of equal contributor who provided the “impetus” for “special partnership[s] and long-term collaboration[s].”¹⁶⁷

Victoria Alexander explains these eroding boundaries between corporate, state, and public cultural interests in British art institutions through sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of autonomous versus heteronomous fields of production.¹⁶⁸ According to Bourdieu:

165. “Corporate Support: Partnership,” Tate.org. Tate’s “Corporate Support” page featured a section entitled “Sponsorship” in the 2017 version of the website, which was replaced by “Partnership” in the 2025 version. The URL was changed from <http://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/corporate-support/sponsorship> in 2017 to <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/corporate-support/partnership> in the present day.

166. Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 110.

167. Kerry Greenberg and Vassilis Oikonomopoulos, Acknowledgements in *Fahrelnissa Zeid* (London: Tate Publishing, 2017), 8.

168. Alexander, “Enterprise Culture and the Arts: Neoliberal Values and British Art Institutions,” 70.

The specificity of the literary and artistic field is defined by the fact that the more autonomous it is, i.e. the more completely it fulfils its own logic as a field, the more it [the literary and artistic] tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization; but also that, whatever its degree of independence, it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit [...]. The literary or artistic field is at all times the site of a struggle between the two principles of hierarchization: the heteronomous principle, favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically (eg. “bourgeois art”) and the autonomous principle (eg. “art for art’s sake”), which those of its advocates who are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with degree of independence from the economy [...]. The state of the power relations in this struggle depends on the overall degree of autonomy possessed by the field.¹⁶⁹

Following Alexander’s interpretation of Bourdieu’s theory, Bourdieu means that certain art forms and cultural productions are defined by their resistance to existing hegemonies. These are the most autonomous fields of cultural production.¹⁷⁰ Other fields are defined not in opposition to outside fields, but by “interpenetration” of those fields.¹⁷¹ Applying this theory to British cultural institutions, Alexander clarifies that artistic communities and cultural institutions like galleries previously constituted an autonomous field which prioritized artistic initiatives. However, neoliberal policy in Britain left galleries and museums open to “penetration by the business world,” thereby rendering the arts in Britain a heteronomous field “interpenetrated by the commercial realm and [...] constrained by commercial logics.”¹⁷² Like the commercial field, the field of cultural production can also be interpolated by the state and its interests.¹⁷³ When this

169. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed,” (1983) in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 40.

170. Alexander, “Enterprise Culture and the Arts,” 70.

171. Alexander, 70.

172. Alexander, 67-8.

173. Alexander, 71.

occurs, forces in the field of cultural production—including artists and galleries—lose autonomy, and with autonomy, their authenticity and discursive power.

Both the museum's funding sources and its function as a cultural institution are infiltrated by corporate interests which compromise its autonomy. In archived versions of Tate's website from 2017-18, as well as on their sponsorship promotion pages today, their marketing characterizes corporate funding as "partnership" rather than advertising or sponsorship. To manage the corporate structure of the museum, the Board of Trustees is peopled with business and finance experts. These executives often occupy roles of cultural and political significance concurrently in "labyrinthine [...] corporate and social networks."¹⁷⁴ In 2002, Wu observed that "by promoting these 'enterprise men' to formal positions within public museums [...] the Conservative government was not only maneuvering to take over the running the country's cultural institutions but also furthers its advocacy of the 'enterprise culture' in a strident and ideological way."¹⁷⁵ In 2017, the intersection of enterprise ideology with culture is best exemplified by the appointment of Lord Brown of Madingley, former CEO of British Petroleum, as Chairman of Tate's Board of Trustees. Although Lord Brown stepped down as CEO of British Petroleum to take up his position at Tate, the company continued its sponsorship of Tate during Brown's tenure at the museum.¹⁷⁶ Executives in the museum embody the ideology and practices of the highest socioeconomic spheres of British society. In his role as a member of the House of

174. Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 109.

175. Wu, 110.

176. "Corporate Support: BP," Tate.org, accessed November 22, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180117054247/http://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/corporate-support/sponsorship/bp>.

Lords, Chairman of Tate's Board of Trustees, and as a corporate executive, Lord Brown exemplifies the deep compromise of autonomy in the cultural field. As Wu Chin Tao explains, within the highest levels of arts funding,

senior corporate executives play a very significant role in arts sponsorship, and indeed corporate arts intervention in general. Such people, an elite within an elite, occupying the uppermost echelon of corporations, are in a position of great power and influence. Despite the pressing demands of their jobs (and frequently of other directorships), they also manage to serve on a bewildering list of charities and non-profit-making cultural institutions.¹⁷⁷

Because of the frequent cross-appointment of such powerful individuals in multiple sectors of public life, it becomes very easy for corporate interests to find refuge and reputational salvation within the walls of the gallery, museum, or theatre. What's more, this cross-appointment is intentional. The British government treats the arts as a business which must be managed as such in order to turn a profit. As Tony Blair explained in his speech at Tate Modern in 2007, "A new breed of entrepreneurial leaders in the arts world has shown that art of the highest quality is compatible with sound financial discipline. Indeed, the public subsidy produces a return."¹⁷⁸

Despite their well-documented crimes, corporations float on a buffer of positive reputation provided by arts philanthropy.¹⁷⁹ These benevolent efforts are in turn facilitated by the infiltration of their own members into the boards of arts institutions. British Petroleum's sponsorship of Tate, for example, began in 1990, and was still listed as a key partnership on Tate's website in 2017 during the Zeid retrospective.¹⁸⁰ During the three decades of the

177. Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 126.

178. Blair, "Speech at Tate Modern," *The Guardian*, March 6, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/mar/06/politicsandthearts.uk1>.

179. I discuss the specific crimes of Deutsche Bank and British Petroleum in detail here, but Tate has also accepted sponsorships from automotive, insurance, finance, tobacco, and pharmaceutical companies in the past.

partnership, BP was responsible for humanitarian and ecological disasters like the Deepwater Horizon Explosion in 2010.¹⁸¹ These companies' partnerships with Tate survived such crises because, for corporate executives in arts governance, the issue with corrupt corporate money is not the unethical origins of the funding. Instead, as Tate director Maria Balshaw explains in her comment on BP sponsoring the British Museum, "the issue the [British Museum] faces in taking BP's money is that the public has moved to a position where they think it is inappropriate."¹⁸² In other words, corporate corruption is only a problem when the public becomes too well informed to accept the "mutual elevation of brands" between Tate and its corporate sponsors.¹⁸³ Tate chooses exhibitions which can further their aims of diversifying their programming, while corporations like Deutsche Bank and British Petroleum can conceal the unsavoury realities of their businesses behind a "worldwide commitment to art" and "co-operation[s]," which allow "young generations the chance to be inspired."¹⁸⁴ As I will discuss in the next section, the infrastructure and tradition of corporate influence established by the British Petroleum

180. Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 129; "Corporate Support: BP," Tate.org.

181. "Deepwater Horizon oil spill settlements: Where the money went," US Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, accessed 14 February 2025, <https://www.noaa.gov/explainers/deepwater-horizon-oil-spill-settlements-where-money-went>. British Petroleum was one of several owning/operating companies responsible for the oil rig whose malfunction caused the Deepwater disaster.

182. Rachel Cooke, "Tate director Maria Balshaw: 'I still come into work feeling terrified,'" *The Guardian*, June 2, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/article/2024/jun/02/tate-director-maria-balshaw-gathering-of-strangers-museums-matter-interview>.

183. Stallabrass, "The Branding of the Museum," 154.

184. "Corporate Support: Deutsche Bank," Tate.org, January 17, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180117053441/http://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/corporate-support/sponsorship/deutsche-bank>; "Corporate Support: BP," Tate.org.

sponsorship continued to develop with Deutsche Bank's collaborative contributions to the Fahrelnissa Zeid retrospective.

Deutsche Bank's Strategy

Deutsche Bank, as headline sponsor for the Fahrelnissa Zeid exhibition, is not explicitly entangled in Tate's governance. However, Deutsche Bank maintains a series of dedicated exhibitions at their KunstHalle, where the Zeid retrospective was also exhibited. The KunstHalle,¹⁸⁵ along with Deutsche Bank's in-house *ArtMag* periodical, showcases the bank's permanent contemporary art collection alongside temporary exhibitions to offer "employees, clients and the general public access to contemporary art."¹⁸⁶ More importantly, this initiative demonstrates the potential of the arts as a corporate marketing strategy. By hosting the exhibition in their own dedicated space and authoring their own publications on their exhibitions, Deutsche Bank transcends the limits of a typical sponsor and further blurs the lines between the arts and corporate marketing. In their investment services and cultural initiatives alike, Deutsche Bank

185. "Palais Populaire," Deutsche Bank, accessed 18 February 2025, https://palaispopulaire.db.com/aboutus/architecture?language_id=1. Deutsche Bank's Kunsthalle has occupied several buildings, but leading up to 2017, the company was renovating the historic Prinzessinnenpalais in Berlin as its permanent gallery site. The Palais Populaire, as it was dubbed, lends its historic façade along with a sense of grandeur and aristocratic permanence to the company's collections. Yet, as DB points out, the space has also evolved over the centuries to reflect contemporary society. This sense of simultaneous permanence and evolution may contribute to DB's marketing rhetoric, which seeks to present the company as both a reliable investment, and a platform for the constant forward progress of commerce.

186. "Concept: ArtWorks," db.org, accessed February 14, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180213151021/http://art.db.com/en/concept.html>

uses diversity as proof that their employees, arts audiences, and customers are “one global team.”¹⁸⁷

For Deutsche Bank, the four-year collaboration which produced the Zeid retrospective at Tate was just one step in a decades-long effort to capitalize on arts and culture. Deutsche Bank had plenty of experience leveraging the rhetoric of diversity (in their art collection, gallery, magazine, curatorial fellowships, and talent prizes) to build their reputation as a caring, globally engaged business.¹⁸⁸ This inclusive image facilitated expansion of their arts programming and their investment portfolio across international borders.¹⁸⁹ In pursuit of an “enlightened corporate image,” Deutsche Bank’s arts initiatives allowed the company to promote their self-serving agendas without alerting their public to the fact that such political agendas exist.¹⁹⁰ Deutsche Bank’s art program motto, “Art Works,” cleverly suggests that arts have material utility without specifying who benefits from that work, except in the vaguest terms. Their program website asserts that art “opens up new perspectives [...], cross-links and develops Deutsche Bank’s activities and strengthens the company’s cultural diversity.”¹⁹¹ By speaking in such generally benign terms about how arts initiatives benefit the company, the monetary functions of the

187. “Products and Services,” db.org, accessed 14 February 2025, https://www.db.com/what-we-do/products-and-services/dws?language_id=1&kid=dws.redirect-en.shortcut.

188. “Products and Services,” db.org. Deutsche Bank’s website explains the company’s forty-year commitment to “global art activities,” including exhibitions, artists’ talks, contemporary art awards, art criticism, and scholarship.

189. “Products and Services,” db.org.

190. Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 134.

191. “Concept: ArtWorks,” db.org.

corporate arts program are disassociated from overt marketing and reputational revision by re-association with general social and cultural benefits.

Deutsche Bank conceals its manipulation of the public behind the idea of “‘art for art’s sake’ in bourgeois culture,” in which “art, by its very nature, resides above the sordid world of politics and commerce” where Deutsche Bank’s entrepreneurial activities take place.¹⁹² Leading up to the International Arts Partnership series which the Zeid exhibition concluded, Deutsche Bank had several looming legal settlements which were products of “the sordid world of politics and commerce” from which they needed to distract clients and potential customers.¹⁹³ 2017 heralded the conclusion of two major legal proceedings against Deutsche Bank. The company was ordered to pay a combined seven billion dollars for its dealings in defective mortgages, lying to investors, and ultimately causing the loss of thousands of homes during the 2008 financial crisis.¹⁹⁴ Also in January of 2017, Deutsche Bank executives were found guilty of laundering 10 billion dollars for Russian oligarchs between 2011 and 2015.¹⁹⁵ In both cases, Deutsche Bank’s

192. Wu, 134.

193. Wu, 131. Art museum publics are a valuable audience for corporations, which is (besides the covering up questionable deeds) a reason for their particular attention to arts sponsorship. Museum goers are generally well educated and upper middle class and thus a more lucrative demographic than other sectors. This is one reason why arts and culture donations, rather than humanitarian or social assistance, are such a priority for large corporations. The highly educated, upper-middle-class milieu of the art museum is a more important audience to market to than the poor, who are less educated and less likely to attend arts institutions. In short, Deutsche Bank prioritizes its reputational damage control and marketing budget for audiences which contain the demographic that might use their wealth management services.

194. “Deutsche Bank Agrees to Pay \$7.2 Billion for Misleading Investors in its Sale of Residential Mortgage-Backed Securities,” US Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs,” January 17, 2017, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/deutsche-bank-agrees-pay-72-billion-misleading-investors-its-sale-residential-mortgage-backed>.

195. Thomas Landon Jr. “Deutsche Bank Fined in Plan to Help Russians Launder \$10 Billion,” *New York Times*, January 30, 2017,

crimes and the proceedings surrounding them had been underway for years before the International Arts Partnership, from which I conclude that the company had been anticipating a difficult period for their public relations and planned the International Arts Partnership accordingly. Deutsche Bank can easily afford to pay off fines for their criminal activity, but they rely on cultural remedies to repair their reputation after scandal.

Taking on a greater level of creative control than a typical corporate sponsor, Deutsche Bank hosted the Zeid retrospective at their Kunsthalle and featured promotional and scholarly articles about the show in their periodical *ArtMag*. As Victoria Alexander has observed, a typical corporate sponsorship arrangement does not prevent undesirable exhibitions from happening. Instead, sponsors pour resources into shows that particularly suit them, and which the arts institution (in this case, Tate Modern), already has the expertise to create.¹⁹⁶ This was the basis of the arrangement for the 2017 collaboration. As Deutsche Bank's Global Head of Art explained in an interview for *Artribune*, "Since the 90's, Deutsche Bank has continuously been developing into an international bank. Thus, the focus for expanding our collection [...] has consequently become more international in the last few years."¹⁹⁷ Kerry Greenberg, the head curator for Tate's contributions to the Zeid retrospective, already had experience curating global artists for biennials and encouraging engagement with global art as Head of International Collection

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/30/business/dealbook/deutsche-bank-fined-for-helping-russians-laundry-10-billion.html>.

196. Victoria D. Alexander, *Museums and Money: The Impact of Funding on Exhibitions, Scholarship, and Management* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996,) 10.

197. Franziska Kunz, "Interview with Franziska Kunz, Global Head of Art, Deutsche Bank AG," by Maria Pia Masella, *Elizabexibauer.com*., accessed October 27, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20221210090326/https://elizabexibauer.com/interview-franziska-kunz-global-head-art-deutsche-bank-ag/>.

Exhibitions and founder of the Africa Acquisitions Committee at Tate.¹⁹⁸ Combined with Tate Modern's influence as an "arts brand," Greenberg's expertise made Tate the perfect venue for a series of international arts exhibitions which promoted both Tate's and Deutsche Bank's identities as contemporary, global, progressive institutions. However, while Greenberg has left Tate since the Zeid retrospective, she has continued to work with Deutsche Bank, replacing Okwui Enwezor as the African arts specialist on Deutsche Bank's Global Arts Advisory Council. Since 2017, Deutsche Bank seems to have eliminated the middleman of the museum in their arts initiatives. This points to a future in which Deutsche Bank and companies like it could effectively assume sole control over not just the financial, but the creative, scholarly, and public education functions which used to belong to the museum.

198. "The Struggle of Memory: Deutsche Bank Collection," *ArtMag*, June 11, 2023, <https://art.db.com/artmag/the-struggle-of-memory-deutsche-bank-collection>.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that Tate Modern and its stakeholders selected Fahrelnissa Zeid, the “international female artist,” for their institutional collections, canons, and scholarship because of her utility to their attendance, political, and financial goals. Therefore, both the institution and the canon it represents cannot be relied upon or held up as legitimate arbiters of artistic merit or producers of accurate and nuanced histories. Ideally, I would argue for the complete disentanglement of corporate and political interests from art institutions (and art histories and exhibitions). Institutional histories do not operate on or fully recognize artists’ personal histories and merits; therefore, the natural response is to redirect art historical efforts away from institutionally dictated canons and corporate-sponsored exhibitions.

Unfortunately, given the financial exigencies imposed on universities, museums, and other institutions of scholarly and artistic production, as well as the wide cultural influence of mega-museums like Tate, any argument for a utopian divestment of corporate or other ill-gotten private wealth is just that: idealistic. Tate Modern is truthful when it justifies its acceptance of sponsorship in support of a “world-renowned programme with artistic ambition and cultural inclusivity at the heart of everything we do, as well as to maintain free access to the national collection, plus care for, study and grow this collection.”¹⁹⁹ Such a programme requires significant financial support. It is difficult to imagine any entity with sufficient capital to finance a museum as massive as Tate which would not also expect returns on its investment. Equally unlikely is the possibility of such a solvent entity earning all its wealth from purely ethical and sustainable business practices. While Tate has succumbed to public pressure to divest from egregiously objectionable companies like

¹⁹⁹. “About Us,” Tate.org, accessed February 14, 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/corporate-support/partnership>.

British Petroleum and the Sackler family pharmaceutical company,²⁰⁰ they have retained and established sponsorships with financial corporations like Bank of America, automotive companies like BMW, and insurance brokers like Lockton.²⁰¹ While these companies, like Deutsche Bank, are not as overtly offensive as the environmental and public health crises caused, respectively, by BP and the Sacklers, I have demonstrated in this thesis that even the apparent lesser evils of corporate sponsorship influence Tate's exhibitions and art histories negatively. Alexander reminds us that, when it comes to sponsorship, there is no such thing as a free lunch.²⁰² If Tate's admirable mission of preserving and displaying the nation's art for the public is to continue, then corporate influence on exhibition content is inevitable. I have also shown that, despite Tate cutting ties with certain sponsors, it is impossible for the arts to re-establish autonomy when the very infrastructure of culture, including exhibition, curation, and scholarship, is increasingly subject to exclusive control by companies like Deutsche Bank.

Writing in 2002, Wu noted that, "Without being made more accountable to the public interest, corporate America and Britain can never transform its pursuit of power and wealth into anything more than a public relations display, whatever temporary impact this may have on the art world."²⁰³ If there is a simple or immediate solution to the impasse between ethical imperative and financial necessity in corporate arts sponsorships, it has not emerged in the 23

200. "Tate Rejects Sackler Money Over Opioid Crisis Connection," *Frieze News Desk*, March 22, 2019, <https://www.frieze.com/article/tate-rejects-sackler-money-over-opioid-crisis-connection>.

201. "About Us," Tate, accessed February 14, 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/corporate-support/partnership>.

202. Alexander, "Enterprise Culture and the Arts: Neoliberal Values and British Art Institutions," 85.

203. Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 303.

years since Wu conducted her own study of corporate wealth in British galleries. Such a solution is beyond the scope and even the intent of this thesis. Instead, I have attempted to expose the avenues through which corporate and state bodies exert influence on, and appropriate the traditional roles of, museums. Using research to create awareness of these corporate and political influences, especially their ethical implications, is one step toward creating the public accountability (and, by extension, justice) for which Wu advocates.

Uncovering the motives which inform the public-facing exhibitions and promotion produced at Tate also opens space to critically examine the narratives the museum and its partners produce. I have established that Tate and Deutsche Bank used marketing and scholarship for their joint Zeid retrospective to manipulate their audiences' perception of the artist's life. Across multiple forms of media, institutional marketing teams established and then reiterated the idea that Zeid was "all but forgotten," suffering from obscurity, and a victim of exclusion from Western art canons. Through primary source research and a review of the artist's interviews and personal writings, I countered Tate's contention that Zeid was forgotten by art history. By standards of Western art canons or by measures of personal success, Zeid holds her own as an artist "used to doing what she wants when she wants," and a force "powerfully effective, decisive and irrepressible when it comes to organizing, controlling, and making [the] events and conditions around her beautiful."²⁰⁴ In short, the documents which construct Zeid's history prove the unsuitability of Tate's narrative of obscurity.

Tate's inaccurate history identifies Zeid as an exceptional outsider who they graciously admit to their institutional canon as proof of the museum's acceptance of outsiders. Relying on

204. Yaman, "An Artist and Explorer Beyond Ideologies in a Globalized World," in *Two Generations of the Rainbow*, 30.

critical theory from Nancy Fraser, Luc Boltanski, and Eve Chiapello, I explained the material motives for Tate to employ the outdated and ineffectual feminist rhetoric of strategic essentialism. Neoliberal strategies of affirmational and individual, rather than transformative, social justice are useful to hegemonic institutions like Tate, the British state, and Deutsche Bank because such strategies allow apparent efforts toward equity to take place within existing structures of power. Building on Victoria Alexander's application of Pierre Bourdieu's fields of cultural autonomy and heteronomy, I explained the infiltration of commerce and politics into the formerly autonomous field of arts and culture in Britain. This infiltration forced Tate to espouse neoliberal and affirmational rhetoric in their scholarship in order to avoid criticizing stakeholders' political and economic positions. In identifying the causes of historiographic and promotional manipulation in the Tate Modern/Deutsche Bank retrospective, I have re-examined Zeid's history to provide evidence contrary to the institutional history which Tate and Deutsche Bank produced. In the process, I have attempted to present a more complete understanding of the artist's career.

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Figures



Figure 1. Fahrelnissa Zeid, *My Hell*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 205 x 528 cm. Istanbul Museum of Modern Art Collection, Eczacıbaşı Group Donation (Istanbul, Turkey) © Raad bin Zeid © Istanbul Museum of Modern Art.

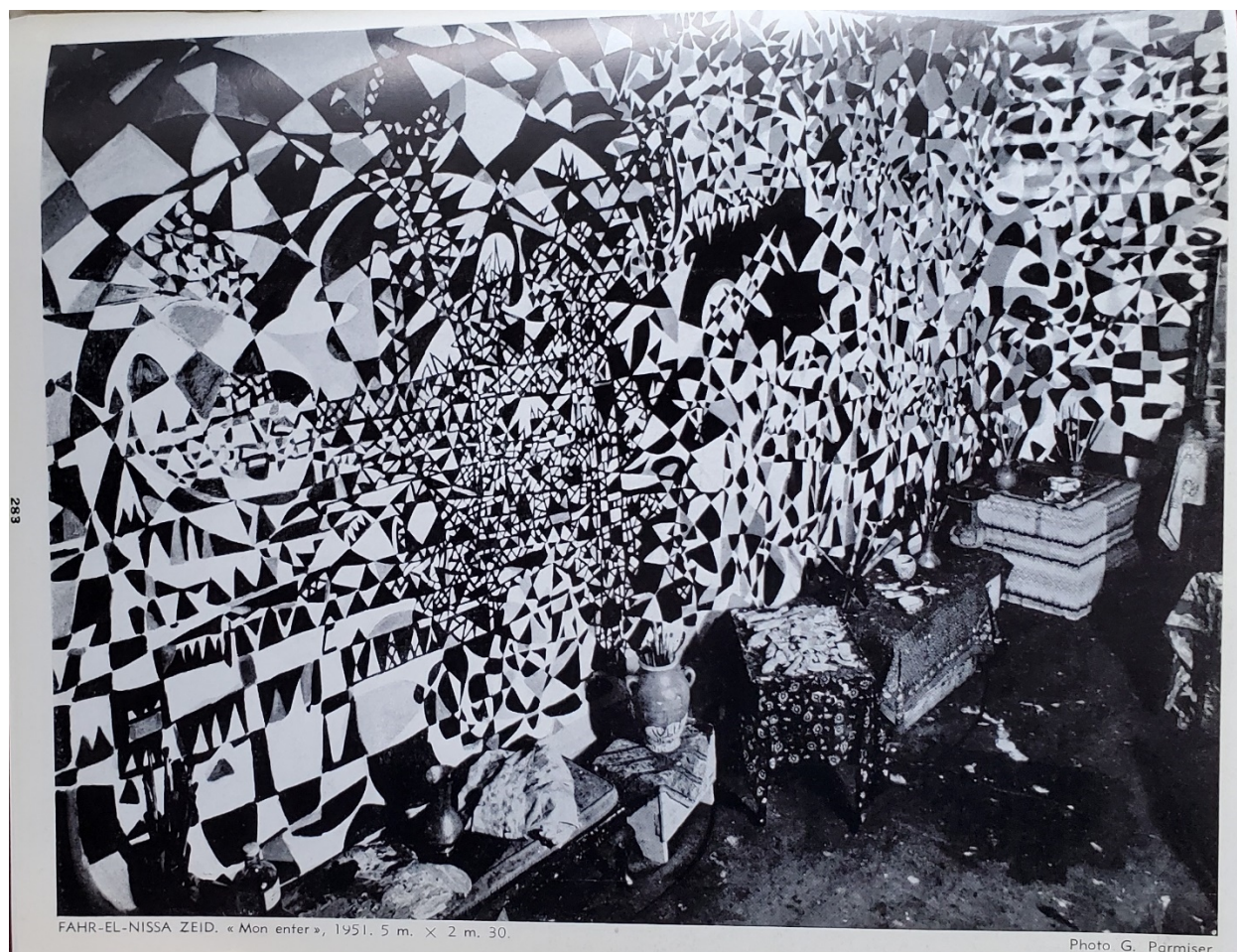


Fig. 2. *My Hell* in progress at Fahrelnissa Zeid's studio in Paris.



Figure 3. Zeid with her work *Towards a Sky* (1953), exhibited for the eighth Salon des réalités nouvelles at the Musée de l'art moderne de la ville de Paris.



Figure 4. Fahrelnissa Zeid, *Resolved Problems* (1948). Oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm. Istanbul Modern Collection, Eczacıbaşı Group Donation, Raad bin Zeid Collection.



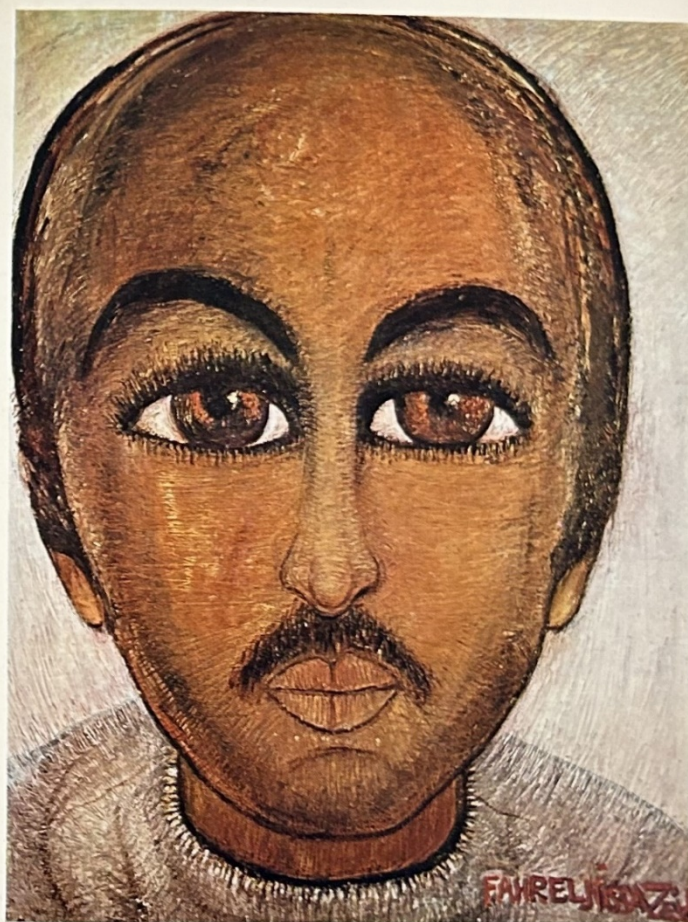
Figure 5. Original pochoir print designed by Fahrelnissa Zeid, printed by Atelier Renson – Cité Riverin, Paris. Plate number XXIV in *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait*, ed. Léon Degand and Julien Alvard (Boulogne: Éditions de l'art d'aujourd'hui, 1952).



Figure 6. Original pochoir print designed by Cicéro Dias, printed by Renson – Cité Riverin, Paris. Plate number X in *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait*.



Figure 7. Original pochoir print designed by Marie Raymond, printed by Atelier Renson – Cité Riverin, Paris. Plate number XXV in *Témoignages pour l'art abstrait*.

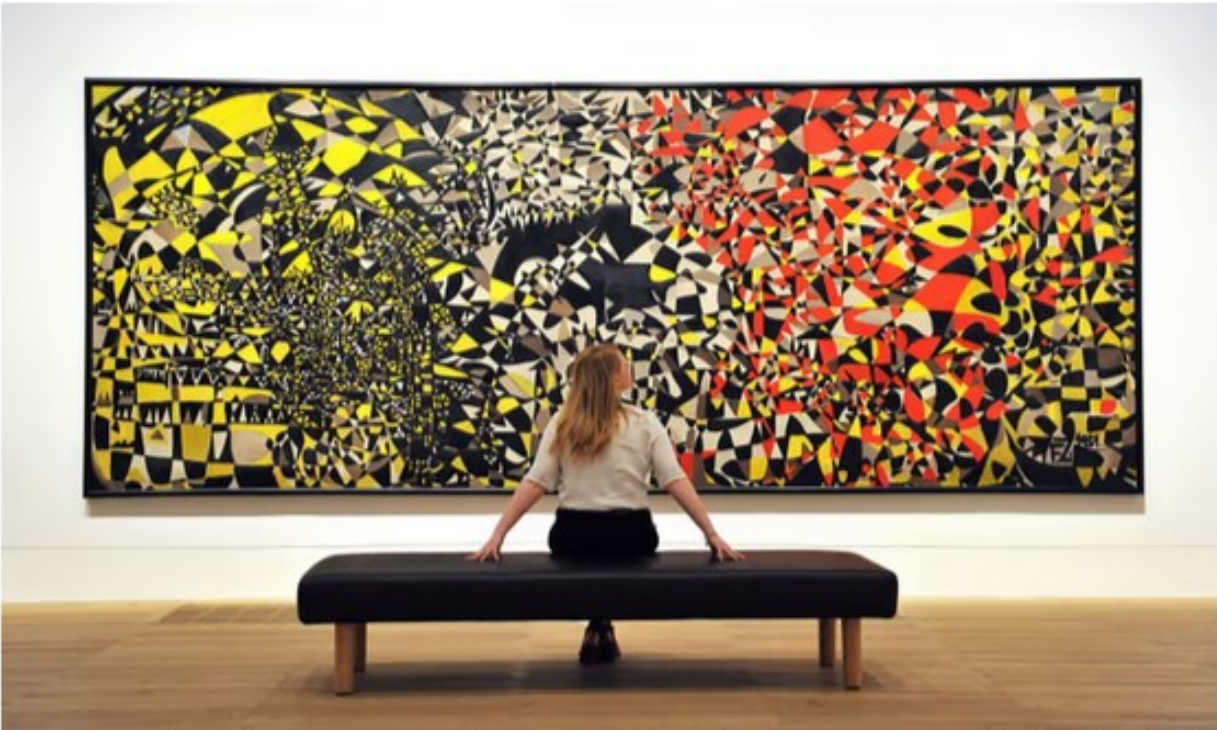


Emir Zeid

Figure 8. Portrait of Emir Zeid, Fahrelnissa's husband, 1967. Photo: André Gontard, in *Fahrelnissa Zeid: Portraits et peintures abstraites*. Paris: Galerie Katia Granoff, 1972.

Fahrelnissa Zeid: Tate Modern resurrects artist forgotten by history

Painter had illustrious global career during her lifetime - now retrospective hopes to restore her former fame



📷 Fahrelnissa Zeid's five-metre canvas at Tate Modern. Photograph: Nick Ansell/PA

She was an artist of such “force and originality”, says [Tate Modern](#), that it is astonishing that Fahrelnissa Zeid should have been practically forgotten.

Figure 9. *The Guardian*'s header image for their announcement of the Fahrelnissa Zeid retrospective exhibition.