

CHAPTER TWO

CITIZENSHIP
AND THE MUSEUM:
ON FEMINIST ACTS

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TODAY, WE ARE WITNESSING a spectacular growth of museums with staggering numbers of new museums opening and massive star architecture renovations and extensions updating existing ones. These museums have become the most important cultural signifiers of global cities, representing their global public space. At the same time, citizenship has come under pressure. The factors that shape the world have caused deep transformations reflected in a global division of labour, forced mass migrations, and increasing numbers of refugee populations. These processes are most profoundly territorialised in global cities and have given rise to political, social, and cultural struggles over global citizenship and the emergence of new and informal citizenship practices (Sassen, 2003). Yet, museum practice and critical scholarship rarely connect the global museum to global citizenship struggles.

Analytically and politically, I seek to work out why it is important to make a claim for actively connecting global citizenship, in particular its emergent practices, to the global museum, and why this is, in fact, a necessary feminist act. My argument is twofold. The first part of this essay examines the entangled origins connecting citizenship to the museum and presents a feminist analysis of their closely interrelated gendered deep structure resulting in institutional inequality and sexualised epistemology. The second part introduces the notion of the feminist act as it pertains to citizenship and considers its implications for the institution of the museum. The concluding part argues that the lessons learned from the contested historical origins can be politically useful today for the feminist act of claiming the global museum as a public arena for global citizenship struggles and its informal and new practices.

Citizenship and the museum, two fundamental Western institutions of the nation-state and of modernity, originated in the French Revolution. The museum presented a new type of public space in which citizens were afforded the opportunity to “appear” to each other as citizens (Arendt, 1988 [1958]: 198). And, the public museum provided the cultural legacy constitutive for the nation-state introducing new cultural rituals of citizenship (Duncan, 1991). My feminist analysis examines how the androcentric foundations of citizenship as developed by the French Revolution oriented the ideology of the museum. Drawing on feminist citizenship studies, feminist art history and museum studies I will show that the gendered deep structure of the modern museum is owed to the historically male status and its politico-philosophical idea of citizenship. The structural discrimination and its sexualised violence at the heart of the modern public art museum can, in fact, be traced to the exclusions inherent in the androcentric concept of citizenship. For feminists, the historical notion of citizenship therefore presents a contested category. This is significant to a critical feminist analysis of the modern museum institution and its gendered politico-philosophical underpinnings. While the first part of this essay is historico-analytical, the concluding part is politico-strategic. It is my aim to use the critical insights gained from the analysis of the historical ties between modern citizenship and the modern museum for working out possible political and cultural connections between global citizenship and the global museum today. Suggesting such a connection is not an easy thing to do. The museum institution with its legacy of sexualised and racialised epistemology is not what first comes to mind when thinking

of a global public arena for feminist acts involved in current citizenship struggles. And, in addition, today's global museum is considered a flagship promoting the values of globalisation. Yet, I argue, that precisely because of the fact that the modern museum provided for new rituals of citizenship as part of a governmental strategy, the global museum should be actively claimed today as a public arena useful to "denationalized" and "informal" citizenship practices (Sassen, 2003: 42). My argument for this feminist act of making a claim to the public space of the global museum rests on the analysis of the gendered character of citizenship relevant to a fundamental critique of the museum, and on an understanding of the global museum as "inviolable cultural right" for active citizenship practices rather than just granting it to "all citizens in a democracy" (Bennett, 1995: 8). Extreme right-wing populism, perpetual war, authoritarian neo-liberalism, and the acceleration of global capitalism put citizenship under pressure. At the same time, there arise resistant practices of citizenship effectively decoupled from the formal citizen status. Therefore, existing public infrastructures, including high visibility ones such as the global museum, have to be sought out to perform the right to "equal citizenship – that is not just a formal status, but an enabling condition" (Sassen, 2003: 43).

Revolutionary beginnings: the Louvre and its citizens

The French Revolution gave birth to citizenship and the museum, two of the most influential modern institutions introduced by the nation-state. In what follows, I examine the entangled origins of these two institutions through an account of their revolutionary beginnings. The 1789 *Declaration of the*

Rights of Man and of the Citizen defined the notion of the male citizen-subject, which predicated the nation-state citizenry envisioned as the ideal public for the revolutionary opening of the Louvre museum in 1793.

On August 26, 1789, the National Assembly of France approved the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. Arguing that the “ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments”. The National Assembly “set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man in order that this declaration [...] shall remind them continually of their rights and duties” (Declaration, 1789). The declaration is made up of a total of seventeen articles explaining the rights and duties of man and of the citizen as they concern “liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression” and “free communication of ideas and opinions”. This declaration has not only defined the citizen-subject including the rights and duties of citizenship in legal terms, but has been equally constitutive to the political imaginary relevant for substantive cultural and social practices of citizenship. In an essay published in 1989, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Declaration, citizenship scholar William Rogers Brubaker emphasises the importance of the legacy of the French Revolution as follows:

The institution and the ideology of national citizenship was first worked out during the French Revolution. The formal delimitation of the citizenry; the establishment of civil equality, entailing shared rights and shared obligations; the institutionalization of political rights;

the legal rationalization and ideological accentuation of the distinction between citizens and foreigners – the Revolution brought these developments together on a national level for the first time. (Brubaker, 1989: 30)

Women are not mentioned in the Declaration. Brubaker does take note of this and states that “[W]omen were excluded” (Brubaker, 1989: 39). Yet he does not go on to further elaborate what this exclusion – with its legal, philosophical, and political foundations resting on a sexualised epistemology – meant for the citizenship as a whole. The discriminatory and exclusionary violence inherent in its androcentric ideological orientation that turned citizenship into a battleground for women remains unexamined in his text commemorating the legacy of the French Revolution with its invention of the influential Western concept of citizenship.

“Citizenship itself, as historical research readily reveals has always been a ‘deeply gendered’ concept bound up with the exclusion of women as full citizens” (Grossman and McClain, 2009: 4). The exclusion of women was foundational to the invention and implementation of citizenship. The historical template for the citizen was man:

Slaves, wage-earners and women were initially ruled out of active citizenship because they were considered dependents, and autonomy was a prerequisite for individuality. Even when dependency was redefined, when slaves were freed and wage-earners enfranchised (in 1848) women remained unacceptable as citizens. (Wallach Scott, 2005: 37)

Women could not be citizens. The citizens could not be imagined as woman. It is important to emphasize that the notion of citizenship was firmly rooted in embodied corporeality. The body identified as male was constitutive to the so-called abstract conception of the idea of citizenship. The notion of abstraction characteristic of universal citizenship was based upon the corporeality of the male body. This embodied abstraction at the root of citizenship makes obvious the sexualised politico-philosophical violence at the heart of the idea of the citizen-subject.

Gender historian Joan Wallach Scott argues that:

...the difference of sex was not considered to be susceptible to abstraction... Whenever the revolutionaries discussed women's place in the public sphere, they inevitably used corporeal imagery to justify exclusion – the body seemed to offer undeniable, common-sense evidence of unbridgeable difference. (Wallach Scott, 2005: 37)

We see clearly that the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* excluded women on ground of their bodies. From this corporeal exclusion follows that the idea of woman was excluded from the legal status of the citizen-subject.

With the following account of the revolutionary opening of the Louvre museum we see that the situation for women becomes much more ambiguous when we consider citizenship “as a practice” relevant to establishing a “culture of citizenship” (Lister, 2003 [1997]: 15). From its inception women were at once included and excluded in the new institution of the public

art museum. Women were invited to partake as performing witnesses in the revolutionary and new rituals of citizenship in the cultural sphere. They were, in fact, very much appreciated as participants and supporters in numbers to help establish the practices necessary for establishing a culture of citizenship. At the same time, these rituals demonstrated women's exclusion from the idea and the formal status of citizen-subject, and, by extensions, which is of interest in the context here and which I will elaborate on more, from the status of artist-subject.

In 1793, the *National Assembly* decreed the Louvre, home to the royal collection, be opened as a museum to the public. The opening ceremony celebrating this revolutionary act took place on August 10, 1793 and was strategically timed to coincide with the Festival of National Unity. Museum historian Andrew McClellan emphasises “the significance of this connection” (McClellan, 1994: 95). To underline that such celebrations performed the educational function of exercising “consent” to and “participation” in the impact of revolutionary acts, McClellan quotes from Francois de Boissy d’Anglas’ *Essai sur les fetes nationales*: “...it is to return man to his natural state of purity and simplicity through an understanding and the exercise of his rights...” (McClellan, 1994: 95). We have to take note of the fact that this implicitly states that women were implicated in both consenting and participating in the public celebration of the “understanding and the exercise of his rights”:

To the extent that the Louvre embodied the Republican principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity [sic!], all citizens were encouraged to participate in the experience of communal ownership. (McClellan, 1994: 9)

The French Revolution decreed the Louvre “the property of all” and effectively nationalized the former royal collection:

The perception of collective ownership helped... to confer on the citizen ‘a national character and the demeanor of a free man’. (McClellan, 1994: 99)

The new public space of the Louvre museum gave the citizen reason to behave like “a free man”, to appear as free man so this appearance could be witnessed by others, including women. My feminist analysis shows that through the lens of citizenship and its corporeal dimension the Louvre museum becomes legible as a highly conflicted public space for women. “National unity” and “the regeneration of the people” were the two main themes celebrated on the occasion of the museum opening and the festival on August 10th, 1793 (McClellan, 1994: 96). The difference of sex, as Joan Wallach Scott reasons, “was irreducible, symbolic of a fundamental division or antagonism that could not be reconciled with the notion of an indivisible nation” (Wallach Scott, 2005: 37). Her argument clearly shows the structural sexualised violence that excluded women from national unity, and therefore, by extension, from an active status in the cultural institutions demonstrating and celebrating this unity. The revolutionary culture of citizenship included women as participants, as spectators, as much needed witnesses, in the celebratory appearance of free man and his relevance to national unity. Women, therefore, were included in the museum and its experience of communal ownership, yet their exclusion from the status as citizen-subjects made the public space opened up by the museum a conflicted territory for them.

Citizenship, as the politico-philosophical basis for the Louvre opening, produced a gendered deep structure orienting the museum institution. I argue that the structural sexualised violence of womens' exclusion from the legal status of citizen through the corporeal basis of the indivisible nation provided the politico-philosophical paradigm foundational to the Louvre as public art museum. And, most importantly, "the creation of the Louvre as the paradigmatic public art museum" set the model for future public art museums (McClellan, 2003: 5). Therefore, the legacy of the Louvre museum is highly conflicted for women.

In light of these historic beginnings, the public art museum originated as a contested, politically and epistemically violent territory for women. If we understand citizenship to have a substantive cultural dimension and the museum to perform political tasks providing ideological meanings and orientation, then we come to realise how the two institutions converged in the production of the profoundly gendered subject of the citizen. Therefore, we have to understand that inequality and discrimination in the concept of citizenship and the idea of the museum were historically foundational and systemic. The structural violence, in both legal and epistemic terms, is shared in the entangled revolutionary beginnings of citizenship and the museum.

Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen: A Feminist Act

Recent critical citizenship scholarship has drawn attention to how subjects constitute themselves as citizens, and how they transform themselves into claimants. Citizenship theorist Engin Isin has introduced the notion of *Acts of Citizenship*

to provide a new framework through which to recognize and analyse such constitutive practices otherwise excluded from formal, legal, and normative concepts of citizenship. Claim-making not only pertains to the formal status of citizenship but equally to its informal social, political, and cultural practices. “Many scholars now differentiate formal citizenship from substantive citizenship and consider the latter to be the condition of possibility of the former” (Isin, 2008: 17). With acts of citizenship pertaining to both formal and substantive citizenship and the latter making the first possible, there is an interesting temporal relation to be considered and better understood. Even if formal citizenship is not fully granted yet, substantive citizenship can already be practiced. Isin argues that acts of citizenship are neither reducible to formal or substantive citizenship, but “require a focus on those moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens – or better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due” (Isin, 2008: 18). Again, it is important to take note of the temporal dimension of the act. The moment of the act changes both the temporal order and the order given at this particular moment in time. Following Isin “the essence of an act, as distinct from conduct, practice, behaviour and habit, is that an act is a rupture in the given” (Isin, 2008: 25). Even though the absence of any reference to the gendered dimension of the deep structure of citizenship in Isin’s analysis is striking, the notion of acts are useful to historicise and theorise feminism’s relationship to citizenship. An in-depth and internationally comparative investigation of feminist acts as they relate to citizenship and the museum goes far beyond the scope of this essay and points to a necessarily

larger project of research and critical analysis.

Analytically, I am invested here in making more complex the legacy of citizenship from the French Revolution through the examination of a revolutionary feminist act. I want to suggest that the 1791 *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen* by Olympe de Gouges be understood as a feminist act. Not only did she constitute herself as citizen, she claimed all women be constituted as citizen-subjects. *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen* is particularly of interest as it is an articulation of both the claim to equality and the claim to difference. The violent exclusion of women and Woman from the concept of citizenship becomes legible through her *Declaration*:

For the most part, its articles parallel those of the Declaration of 1789, extending to women the rights of ‘Man’. Woman and Man are usually both invoked, for in her effort to produce the complete declaration de Gouges most often simply pluralized the concept of citizenship. (Wallach Scott, 1989: 9)

Yet, the feminist act of the *Declaration* shatters the ideological foundation of citizenship by going beyond simply adding women to an extended and pluralised notion of citizenship. De Gouges uses women’s corporeality to transform the very idea of citizenship. This cannot be achieved through extension, but through rupture only. De Gouges writes in her preamble, “the sex superior in beauty as in courage during childbirth, recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of woman and citizen” (Wallach Scott, 1989: 10). The feminist act her *Declaration*

performed lies in introducing the idea that “the addition of Woman also implies the need to think differently about the whole question of rights” (Wallach Scott, 1989: 11). Including Olympe de Gouge’s *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen* in the legacy of revolutionary citizenship thought opens up the perspective on difference within equality.

It is important to remember that there is more than one historical legacy from the French Revolution when thinking about women and citizenship. The concept of feminist acts allows us to recognize and value the historical legacy of radical practices by women who despite being denied the legal status of citizens went beyond and acted as if they were entitled to be citizens. They put forward claims to a different politico-philosophical concept of citizenship. Yet, have these feminist acts of citizenship entered the public museum and its legacy?

Citizenship was identified as a key category of analysis in critical and innovative museum scholarship in the 1990s. Yet, I argue here that a differentiated memory of citizenship that includes its revolutionary feminist acts has not fully become part of critical museum studies. Tony Bennett’s much-quoted *The Birth of the Museum. History, Theory, Politics* focuses on the governmental intent shaping the public institution of the museum for the nation-state citizenry. He posited that all citizens have a “cultural right” to the museum (Bennett, 1995: 8). Even though the political argument of “formal equals” is important to his critique of the museum’s socially exclusionary mechanisms he does not take into account the deep gendered structure foundational to the idea of the citizen-subject underlying such formal equality (Bennett, 1995: 104). He fails to address the conflict that, even later, when women were

“included as citizens” they still remained “excluded as women” from the museum’s collection and exhibition strategies (Voet, 1998: 29).

For a better understanding of the exclusion of feminist acts from the cultural citizenship practices I will turn to the 1991 essay “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship” by feminist art historian Carol Duncan. She uses the Louvre as her first example to introduce the relationship between citizenship and the museum:

The French Revolution created the first truly modern art museum when it designated the Louvre museum a national museum. (Duncan, 1991: 88)

She raises the question of “what fundamental purposes do museums serve in our own culture and how do they use art objects to achieve this purposes” (Duncan, 1991: 90). Her answer to this question addresses the function of the museum from an anthropological perspective and introduces the notion of the “ritual of citizenship”. Museums provide sites and architectures comparable to shrines dedicated to the experience and celebration of citizenship through “bind[ing] the community as a whole into a civic body” and through “demonstrations of the state’s commitment to the principle of equality” (Duncan, 1991: 91). Historically, as we have seen, the difference of sex constituted the reason for excluding women from the indivisibility of the civic body and for connecting equality with fraternity only. Citizenship is well understood through Duncan’s work as the pivot on which hinges the anthropological dimension of the museum and its secular ritual of belonging. Yet,

the sexualised political and epistemic violence inherent in the ideology of citizenship remains unaddressed in her analysis.

A core part of the ritual of citizenship was the invention of the “Great Artist” (Duncan, 1991: 97). Duncan uses the example of the Louvre that set the paradigm for how art museums were regarded to give evidence of political virtue, indicative of a government that provided the right things for its people. This evidence was provided through the work of great artists:

It should be obvious that the demand for Great Artists, once the type was developed as a historical category, was enormous – they were after all, the means by which, on the one hand, the state could demonstrate the highest kind of civic virtue, and on the other, citizens could know themselves to be civilized. (Duncan, 1991: 96)

Duncan’s analysis opens two inroads for a fundamental feminist critique of the museum: firstly, the category of citizenship underpinning its rituals, and secondly, the category of the Great Artist. While the latter has been comprehensively explored and led to much feminist protest and sharp accusations of the fundamental inequality in the gendered character of collection and exhibition practices, the first has so far not been fully addressed in museum studies and museum practice. How the structural exclusion of feminist acts of citizenship from the beginnings of the Louvre museum, the template for public art museums, has impacted on the gendered ritual of citizenship, has escaped critical examination. The anthropological dimension of the ritual of citizenship performed at the modern institution of the public art museum is based on a

profoundly gendered historical concept of the citizen-subject.

The global museum: public arena for citizenship struggles

The concluding section of this essay argues that the feminist lessons learned from the entangled histories of citizenship and the museum can be used politically to make a claim citizenship struggles and emergent global citizenship practices appear in the public space provided by today's global museum. Globalisation has taken command. While the modern institutions of citizenship and the museum were territorialised in the nation-state, contemporary transformations impacting on the museum and on citizenship are territorialised in the global city. I suggest that global cities can, in fact, be recognised by their museums. The global museum has to be understood as the premier cultural index of globalisation. Saskia Sassen developed an in-depth analysis of this new territory in her 2001 book *Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Sassen, 2001). She sees global cities "as strategic sites for the enactment of important transformations in multiple institutional domains" (Sassen, 2003: 60). This includes the institution of citizenship, and can include, as I argue here, the institution of the museum. Following Sassen, new and emergent practices of citizenship are most likely to be found in the global city, the site that "enables a partial reinvention of citizenship" (Sassen, 2003: 43). Yet, so far the global museum has rarely been connected to global citizenship and its emergent and new practices of citizenship ranging from "protests against police brutality and globalization to sexual-preference politics and house-squatting by anarchists" (Sassen, 2003: 44).

Given the contested entanglement of citizenship and the

museum historically, why suggest feminists actively seek to make a connection between the global museum and global citizenship struggles? My argument here is politico-strategic. Precisely because of these entangled and contested origins linking citizenship to the museum, it is a feminist act to claim the global museum as an arena for global citizenship struggles and its emergent practices. Unlike most current global arenas that connect digital publics, the museum site can be used in support of “bodies in alliance” as they appear to each other and with each other in the physical and material public space (Butler, 2015). The corporeal dimension of citizenship can be rehearsed and exercised in the museum space. While the rituals of citizenship in the art museum, as diagnosed by Duncan, were a form of “political passivity of citizenship... idealized as active art appreciation”, the new rituals I think of are expressions of political activity of citizenship and of citizenship’s “agency” (List, 2003 [1997]: 23). “To act as a citizen requires first a sense of agency, the belief that one can act; acting as a citizen, especially collectively, in turn fosters that sense of agency” (List, 2003 [1997]: 39). Feminist citizenship scholar Ruth Lister has not only identified agency as feminist objective in citizenship and its practices, she also claims “global citizenship” as:

... a possible framework for an internationalist feminist politics committed to a more just global economic order and to more inclusionary and non-discriminatory politics toward ‘outsiders’ at the borders of and inside nation-states. (Lister 2003 [1997]: 201)

Even though this remains certainly highly relevant to any

committed feminist politics, Saskia Sassen's understanding of global citizenship goes much further in transcending the nation-state. Sassen reasons that the "increased prominence of the international human-rights regime" is one of the trends of globalisation. Her argument is that this led to:

... the emergence of multiple actors, groups, and communities partly strengthened by these transformations in the state, and increasingly unwilling automatically to identify with a nation as represented by the state. (Sassen, 2003: 41)

The question is how these multiple different actors in part strengthened by the weakening of the nation-state and in part rendered precarious and vulnerable through the still powerful nation-state regimes as they cater to globalisation, can make use of the global museum and its public sphere for new transversal alliances and "informal citizenship practices [that] engender formalizations of new types of rights" (Sassen, 2003: 42). And here, Sassen's reasoning is, in fact, close to Ingin's proposition of acts of citizenship. Both authors see negotiations between formal and informal citizenship, on the level of status as well as practice. People with a formal status of citizenship can enact informal citizenship practices. At the same time people with informal status of citizenship can enact formal citizenship practices. While Ingin's notion of acts is very useful to both feminist practice and theory, he fails to address the deeply gendered dimension of citizenship. Saskia Sassen offers a much more nuanced approach pointing out that "feminist and race-critical scholarship have highlighted the failure of

gender- and race-neutral conceptions of citizenship” (Sassen, 2003: 49). These conceptions have to be taken into account for emergent citizenship practices.

In concluding I describe one such example for a feminist act at the museum exercising emergent practices of citizenship.

London, November 2015: a group of women have gathered around two tables at the Victoria & Albert Museum. They have come to the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries. It is here, in the public space of the museum that they have their English class, taught by the Women Asylum Seekers Together group, which is supported by Women for Refugee Women. Both the appearance of the tables in the Medieval and Renaissance Gallery and the women’s appearance at the tables have to be considered rare, exceptional. Such appearances cannot be taken for granted. Many of the students had never been to the museum before, and, in this case, they did not just visit the museum, but much rather actively used it to study English in public. As they had their English class conversations at the tables, they claimed their right to the museum as a public space.

These appearances were part of *More than one (Fragile) Thing at a Time* by muf architecture/art (muf, 2015). It was their contribution to the exhibition *All of This Belongs to You*. Liza Fior from muf insists on the museum to be fully understood as a public space, and to be used accordingly. Owed to her insistence the public space of the museum was made inhabitable through muf’s spatial interventions, to which the two tables and the chairs around them bear witness. Bringing new tables to the museum is not an easy thing to do. Bringing in new tables to take their place under the colonnades seemed an almost impossible thing to do. The first testing for the

English class in November 2014 used rectangular tables, red just like the chairs around them. Yet, the tables did not fit the museum's conservation requirements. So, instead of giving up, muf conceived of new tables that were curved and bent as to fit, as to not touch, not to damage, the marble of the precious colonnades. The feet of the table had to be lined with synthetic felt as to not leave unwanted marks on the floor. Muf's work is a strong reminder that it is of importance to consider tables through the lens of political thought. Hannah Arendt has illuminated that tables, which she uses as metonymically to speak about the material world humans have in common, are constitutive to supporting conversations:

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it...
(Arendt, 1988 [1958]: 52)

Were the table to disappear, Arendt reasons, the "persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated, but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible" (Arendt, 1988 [1958]: 53). Therefore, the tables installed at the Victoria and Albert museum by muf are not only enabling such relations but also make them appear in public so they can be witnessed and understood.

This example shows how emergent citizenship practices connect across multiple actors with different citizenship status. These transversal alliances across multiple actors are necessary for feminist acts as they relate to emergent citizenship practices including public awareness raising and

addressing issues of social justice, and care. Curators Corinna Gardner, Rory Hyde and Kieran Long at the Victoria and Albert museum invited muf art/architecture to be one of the teams for the *All of This Belongs to You* exhibition. Muf art/architecture in turn extended an invitation to the Women Asylum Seekers Together who are supported by the civic society group Women for Refugee Women who “work to empower women who have sought sanctuary in the UK to speak about their own experience to the media, to policy-makers and at public events” and they demand “a society in which women’s rights are respected” (Women for Refugee Women). The students and their volunteer teachers together used the museum as public space for their English class. Such substantive citizenship practices form part of a long tradition of feminist strategies to engage with the politics of citizenship. “The practices of citizenship available to women in the realm of culture and society interweave in important ways with those of the political sphere” (Benhabib 2002, quoted in Friedman, 2005: 6).

The example shows that the institution of the museum can provide enabling conditions for emerging citizenship practices and support their right to public space. Yet, it also shows, that the museum is not easily ready to do so. Feminist acts are required on many different levels, architecturally, spatially, socially, and culturally, in order to transform the global museum into an arena for active citizenship practices as they form part of global citizenship struggles. The transversal alliance and collaboration between refugees, Women Asylum Seekers Together, Women for Refugee Women, and muf art/architecture addresses the different levels of political, cultural, material and spatial work necessary. The feminist act of

More than One Fragile Thing at a Time showed that the museum belongs to all and serves as a public space in which “citizenship is partly produced by the practices of the excluded” (Sassen, 2003: 49).

The triangulation of museum, citizenship, and feminism challenges the deeply gendered legacy of the politico-philosophical underpinnings of citizenship foundational to the modern museum, and strategically claims today’s global museum as a public arena for feminist acts in support of emergent substantive citizenship practices.

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