

ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

1593 – c.1653

One of the greatest painters of the Italian Baroque

“A brilliant painter whose work deserves to stand beside Caravaggio, Rubens and Velázquez.”



Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting, c.1638–39
Oil on canvas
Royal Collection Trust



AT A GLANCE

Nationality:	Italian
Movement:	Baroque
Speciality:	History painting
Active:	Rome • Florence • Venice • Naples • London
Career:	Over 40 years
International reputation:	Yes



HER CONTEMPORARIES

Caravaggio	1571–1610
Peter Paul Rubens	1577–1640
Anthony van Dyck	1599–1641
Diego Velázquez	1599–1660
Nicolas Poussin	1594–1665

Artemisia was not an outsider—she belonged to the central generation of the Baroque.

MASTERPIECES: SIX PAINTINGS THAT SHOW HER GENIUS



Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting, c.1638–39
Oil on canvas
Royal Collection Trust
A powerful statement of identity and artistic purpose.



Judith Slaying Holofernes, 1612–13
Oil on canvas
Uffizi Galleries, Florence
A dramatic portrayal of courage and divine justice.



Judith and Her Maidservant, 1625
Oil on canvas
Detroit Institute of Arts, USA
Tension and suspense rendered with theatrical intensity.



Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy, c.1620–1625
Oil on canvas
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, USA
A moving expression of spiritual rapture and inner torment.



Susanna and the Elders, 1610
Oil on canvas
Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden, Germany
An early masterpiece revealing her extraordinary talent at just seventeen.



Penitent Magdalene, c.1625
Oil on canvas
Seville Cathedral, Spain
A moving exploration of repentance and inner reflection.

TIMELINE

- 1593** Born in Rome
- 1611** Assault and subsequent trial
- 1616** First woman admitted to Florence's Accademia del Disegno
- 1620s** International commissions
- 1638** Travels to London
- c.1653** Dies in Naples



THE ARTIST

Born in Rome in 1593, Artemisia Gentileschi trained in the workshop of her father, Orazio Gentileschi. From an early age she demonstrated exceptional talent in the most prestigious branch of painting—history painting.

During a career spanning more than forty years she worked in Rome, Florence, Venice, Naples and London, attracting wealthy patrons, royal commissions and international recognition.

Unlike most women of her time, Artemisia earned her living as an independent professional artist. She established a thriving workshop and became one of Europe's most respected painters.



A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

Worked for the Medici Court	Admitted to the Accademia del Disegno in Florence	Managed her own workshop	Received royal commissions	Financially independent	Celebrated across Europe during her lifetime
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HER ART

Artemisia specialised in biblical and historical scenes filled with psychological intensity. Her paintings combine dramatic light, powerful storytelling and remarkable technical skill.

Rather than portraying passive heroines, she painted women as intelligent, determined and courageous individuals.



LOOKING BEYOND THE MYTH

For centuries Artemisia's rape and subsequent trial overshadowed discussion of her paintings. Those events were important and undoubtedly shaped her life. However, reducing her achievement to a single traumatic episode does exactly what art history should avoid.

We do not define Van Gogh solely by mental illness or Caravaggio solely by violence. Artemisia deserves the same generosity. She belongs in history because she was a great painter.



WHY HISTORY OVERLOOKED HER

- Art history focused increasingly on a narrow canon of celebrated masters.
- Social expectations limited women's opportunities to build lasting artistic legacies.
- Many important works remained in private collections or were misattributed.
- Some paintings were lost through war, inheritance and changing tastes.
- Only recent scholarship has restored many overlooked artists to the story of European art.

History did not deliberately erase Artemisia. Rather, changing priorities, incomplete scholarship and social constraints gradually pushed her into the background.



WHY HER WORK MATTERS

- One of the finest history painters of the Baroque.
- Expanded opportunities for later women artists.
- Extraordinary psychological realism.
- Technical brilliance recognised across Europe.
- Continues to inspire artists and historians today.



DID YOU KNOW?

Artemisia was one of the first women in Europe to earn an international reputation purely through the quality of her paintings.



WHERE TO SEE HER WORK

- Uffizi Galleries, Florence
- National Gallery, London
- Royal Collection Trust, UK
- Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, USA
- Detroit Institute of Arts, USA
- Seville Cathedral, Spain
- Schloss Weissenstein, Germany



CONTEMPORARIES FOR CONTEXT

Caravaggio	(1571–1610)
Peter Paul Rubens	(1577–1640)
Anthony van Dyck	(1599–1641)
Diego Velázquez	(1599–1660)
Nicolas Poussin	(1594–1665)

Artemisia belonged to the heart of the Baroque world.

“My illustrious lordship, I'll show you what a woman can do.”

— ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI



FORGOTTEN WOMEN ARTISTS IS NOT ABOUT REWRITING HISTORY. IT IS ABOUT COMPLETING IT.

