Kate Pankhurst

FANTASTICALLY GREAT WOMEN

ARTISTS and their STORIES

BLOOMSBURY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

First published 2022 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland
www.bloomsbury.com

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
and the Diana Logo are registered trademarks of
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

9781526615343

Copyright © 2022 Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
Text Copyright © Kate Pankhurst
with contributions from Kate Paice
Illustrations Copyright © Kate Pankhurst

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

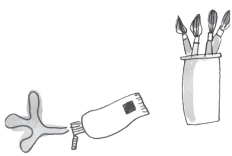
The moral rights of the author and illustrator have
been asserted.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be
reproduced in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic
or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or
information storage and retrieval systems – without the prior
permission in writing of the publishers.

FSC
www.fsc.org
MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C171272

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CRO 4YY

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



For fantastically
great Luna.

Contents

Women in Art 1

Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun 5

Frida Kahlo 28

Amrita Sher-Gil 48

KÄTHE KOLLWITZ 67

DAME LAURA KNIGHT 86

Emily Kame Kngwarreye 110

Faith Ringgold 131

PEGGY GUGGENHEIM 149

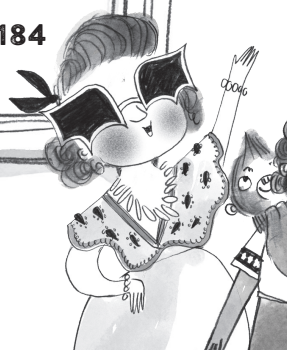
The Exhibition of Exceptional Artists 170

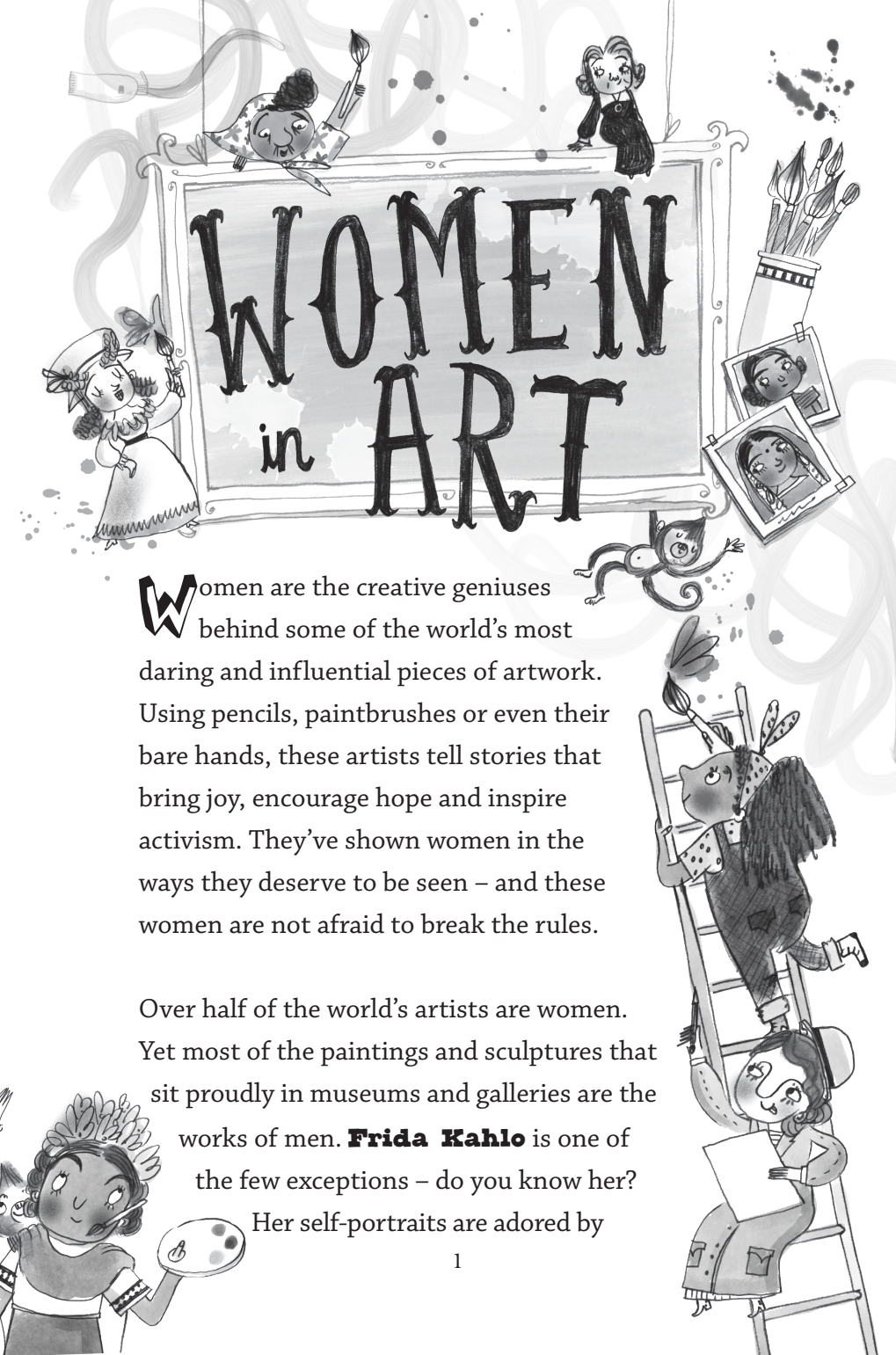
GLOSSARY 172

Further reading 176

Thank yous! 178

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 184





WOMEN in ART

Women are the creative geniuses behind some of the world's most daring and influential pieces of artwork. Using pencils, paintbrushes or even their bare hands, these artists tell stories that bring joy, encourage hope and inspire activism. They've shown women in the ways they deserve to be seen – and these women are not afraid to break the rules.

Over half of the world's artists are women. Yet most of the paintings and sculptures that sit proudly in museums and galleries are the works of men. **Frida Kahlo** is one of the few exceptions – do you know her? Her self-portraits are adored by

people everywhere, and she's considered to be one of the greatest painters of the works – and rightly so. However, people are much less likely to have come across **Emily Kame Kngwarreye**, who didn't discover painting until she was in her eighties, but went on to be the first Aboriginal woman to hold a solo show in Australia.

There are exceptional women artists all over the world – so why doesn't everyone know their names? For centuries, there were rules that stopped women from working as artists. They weren't allowed to become artist's **apprentices**, so they couldn't get proper training. Even if women learned the skills themselves, many artists' guilds, (which are a bit like exclusive clubs), wouldn't accept them as members, meaning they didn't have a licence to work legally.

There were also strict instructions about what women were allowed to show in their work. But many women rebelled. In the 1700s, **Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun** turned heads when she painted women … smiling. Critics were horrified! But Élisabeth soon became one of the most sought after portrait artists of the time, and a favourite of Queen Marie Antoinette of France.

A century later, **DAME LAURA KNIGHT** caused a stir when she pictured herself painting a naked woman. Laura didn't care, she wanted to show that women had the right to paint whatever they were inspired by.

These kinds of rules are based on old-fashioned stereotypes about women and how they should behave. The kind that say that women should stay at home and look after their children, rather than pursue a career. This lifestyle would never have suited **Amrita Sher-Gil**. Bold and rebellious, she spent her life travelling and meeting people, and had lots of boyfriends and girlfriends. She challenged the accepted artistic style of her native India and created one of her own.

Women have also used art as a form of protest. **KÄTHE KOLLWITZ** risked her life by creating art that showed the destruction of war. When the Second World War began in 1939, the Nazi Party burned lots of her work.

In the USA, **Faith Ringgold** created enormous, powerful paintings that challenged racism and **segregation**. Both women hoped their art would inspire change.

But there are still barriers in women's way. Most of the world's galleries are run by men, and women are often not given the same exhibition space and opportunities that men are.

Luckily, there are women who are determined to change that. **PEGGY GUGGENHEIM** created one of the most important collections of modern art in history, and hosted the first all-female modern art show in 1943, featuring a few of the women you'll find in the following pages. This book tells the stories of some of the most talented female artists the world has ever seen. They lived at different times and came from many different countries and backgrounds, but they have a few things in common ...

They were imaginative, strong-minded and fearless. They never gave up on their dreams.

And not only did they change people's ideas of what makes powerful art, they transformed people's beliefs about what women can do.

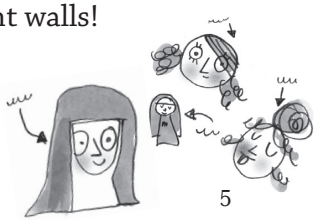
Prepare to be inspired!

ÉLISABETH LOUISE VIGÉE LE BRUN

The ARTIST WHO changed the FACE of PORTRAITURE

Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun was born in Paris, France, in **1755**. Her father, Louis Vigée, was an **artist**, and Élisabeth shared his creative flare. As a child, she loved to draw and paint, and she imagined painting people's portraits when she grew up, just like her father.

When Élisabeth was **six**, she was sent to a school run by nuns, called a convent. She was always getting in **trouble** for drawing faces on her schoolbooks, her classmates' books and even the convent walls!



Élisabeth's teachers might have found her continuous drawing frustrating, but her father always encouraged it. When she was **eight**, she did a little sketch of a man, and her father told her it was **brilliant**.

She never forgot what her father said, and kept the drawing **all her life**.