

Women take to the streets!

Revolt

Subversion

Emancipation

Women gather, they march, demonstrate, protest and contest. Humour and gravity combine in their determined voices. They are full of dynamism and enthusiasm, they compose hymns, chanting the lyrics to the four winds. Often in joy, sometimes in tears. Women take to the streets. We hear them and we see them. Some of them are strongly feminist, even before the word existed: they demand equality, fight gender-based oppression and violence. They are shopkeepers, workers, employees, maids, housewives, teachers, journalists, prostitutes, unemployed, intellectuals or artists, who, as such and as women, engage in liberating perspectives. Now they are taking to the streets, sitting in on main squares, in front of factories, town halls and ministries, handing out pamphlets or leading unusual actions. They often refer to the past, for history helps them fight. They build networks and connections, rely on mutual help, which makes them stronger, and create common ground. They forge a balance, fragile yet passionate, between a taste for heritage and an urge for novelty, for their creativity is significant, in the slogans, on banners, signs, placards. Their male allies are sometimes very present. At other times, on the contrary, women-only gatherings are preferred.

The fact that women take over the public space to express their anger, their revolts, their cravings for justice and for rights, is subversive in itself. Streets are usually where constant traffic flows – passers-by, walkers, consumers, craftsmen or beggars. And the fact that feminists take to the streets makes the act of protesting even more subversive. Marches against sexism and violence towards women, for the right to vote and the right to have control over one's own body, for a decent job and pay, for acknowledgment and dignity; these protests shed light on situations that are usually silenced and hidden. To talk about it on the streets, to describe it and to yell, even, opens a breach: a stunning, sometimes thunderous, outbreak of silence.

Yes, women take to the streets! This exhibition is a concrete, living, embodied way to evoke their movement. It shows and gives a voice to their claims and aspirations, their expectations and demands, the strength and imagination of these moments throughout history. To take to the streets is an emancipatory act, it bears self-expression and self-confidence: a form of liberation, power and hope.