

Initial Meeting Notes – Gibson Girl Microsite

Creative Director: Emily Bielski

Designer: Rachel N.

Subject of the microsite is on illustrations, so images are important! Viewers should be able to see what the text is talking about.

However, the site isn't just about viewing the pictures—it is about providing context about how American culture impacted the origin of the illustrations, and in turn how the illustrations impacted how the feminine ideal was visualized. Don't lose the text—it shouldn't just feel like images with captions

The information is concise enough that using one page with scrolling format can work, broken down into different sections. This condenses the information into one place, so viewers don't have to skip around to disjointed small pages.

If there were to be a separate page, it would be to a gallery of images for viewers to scroll through and appreciate more—something clean and simple, perhaps with just a white or black background. Should be clear and easy to click back to main page.

Colors:

Keep it minimal—black, white, neutral greys—maybe a tasteful accent color if you think that is a strong direction. Should compliment the artwork, which is all pen and ink drawings.

Copy:

Headings can be serif to reflect the era from which the Gibson Girl originated
Body copy can be serif or sans serif – the important thing is making the text visually cohesive with the images and maintaining an elegant tone

Content:

Make sure cultural context is not lost! As aforementioned, the Gibson Girl represented a composite of American women, and I want to emphasize that it originated in what society saw in feminine values at the time, and how those values were reflected visually.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gibson_Girl

Below is some key parts of the Wikipedia page which I think can be included. If you find it lacking or short, you can definitely use more from the page if needed.

(Overview)

The **Gibson Girl** was the personification of [the feminine ideal of physical attractiveness](#) as portrayed by the pen-and-ink illustrations of artist [Charles Dana Gibson](#) during a 20-year period that spanned the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States and Canada.^[1] The artist saw his creation as representing the composite of "thousands of American girls."

The Gibson Girl Image:

The Gibson Girl image that appeared in the 1890s combined elements of older American images of contemporary female beauty, such as the "fragile lady" and the "voluptuous woman". From the "fragile lady" she took the basic slender lines, and a sense of respectability. From the "voluptuous woman" she took a large bust and hips, but was not vulgar or lewd,^[2] as previous images of women with large busts and hips had been depicted. From this combination emerged the Gibson Girl, who was tall and slender, yet with ample bosom, hips and buttocks. She had an exaggerated S-curve torso shape achieved by wearing a [swan-bill corset](#). Images of her epitomized the late 19th- and early 20th-century Western preoccupation with youthful features and ephemeral beauty. Her neck was thin and her hair piled high upon her head in the contemporary [bouffant](#), [pompadour](#), and [chignon](#) ("waterfall of curls") fashions. The statuesque, narrow-waisted ideal feminine figure was portrayed as being at ease and stylish.

Conflict of New and Traditional Values:

Taking part in the [suffrage](#) movement was something more associated with the [New Woman](#), another cultural image of women that emerged around the same time as the Gibson Girl. As a more popular version of the New Woman, the Gibson Girl both undermined and sanctioned women's desires for progressive sociopolitical change.^[4] The New Woman was the more disconcerting of the two images at the time as she was seen as an example of change and disruption within the old patterns of social order, asking for the right to equal educational and work opportunities as well as progressive reform, sexual freedom and [suffrage](#). Whilst the Gibson Girl took on many characteristics of the New Woman, she did so without involving herself in politics and thus did not appear to contemporaries at the time to be usurping traditionally masculine roles as the New Woman was deemed to. She therefore managed to stay within the boundaries of feminine roles without too much transgression.

It is argued that the Gibson Girl was the first national beauty standard for American women. The artist believed that the Gibson Girl represented the beauty of American women:

"I'll tell you how I got what you have called the 'Gibson Girl.' I saw her on the streets, I saw her at the theatres, I saw her in the churches. I saw her everywhere and doing everything. I saw her idling on Fifth Avenue and at work behind the counters of the stores ... I haven't really created a distinctive type, the nation made the type ... There isn't any 'Gibson Girl,' but there are many thousands of American girls, and for that let us all thank God.^[6]