My dissertation examines the illuminated luxury editions of the *Mikraot Gedolot* *Kehilot Moshe,* (1724, Amsterdam). This case study uncovers a gendered query: might the anonymous artist of these hand drawn miniature initials be a Jewish woman? Decentering an assumed male artist, this project provides evidence of ways Jewish women of early modern Amsterdam gained access to art making, and the worlds of Jewish ritual and scholarship. This research challenges contemporary thought on early modern gender roles in European art societies and religious life.

The case study begins with art historical methodologies. Studying the artist’s hand, use of pigments, training, and socio economics reveals the artist's references to a specifically Jewish visual culture in the Netherlands. A rendering of Ashkenazi Jewish women emerges. This art historical methodology propels a study into Jewish archival material on Ashkenazi women. My research brings to light unpublished archives that reveal women's active participation in local *beit din, chevra kadisha* and crafts related to Jewish death-rites, operations of the Ashkenazi *shul*, the *mikva,* and the subjects of Jewish women within art. This is novel because Seventeenth and eighteenth-century Ashkenazi women in Amsterdam is a topic that has received almost no scholarly attention. They are a particularly understudied subject as Ashkenazy women are minorities, thrice- over: a minority in the larger Christian society; a minority in civic male-lead society; and a minority from the more established Sephardic society.

Along with uncovering material on Jewish women, my dissertation is significant for women’s historiography in three ways. First, it is significant that this work demands a shift in gendered language. Through my research, the unidentified artist can no longer be assigned the assumed pronoun, “he.” Rather, to reflect a more accurate history on the gender of the artist, the artist is given the singular non gender specific pronoun, “they.” Second, demonstrating the mushroom-effect of supporting women’s studies, my novel project on Ashkenazi women in Amsterdam is possible due to the pioneering work of Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld’s study of the companion Sephardi women’s history. Third, while one of the luxury editions was known, the second was discovered by me, a woman art historian.

As a project by men, the seventeenth and eighteenth century Amsterdam Ashkenazi archive is exclusive to the accounting for women’s activities and traits that men feel are worthy enough to be recorded into remembrance. This project affirms the silence around “well-behaved women seldom make history.” While often taken out of context as a rallying-cry and permission for women to misbehave, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich wrote this to convey that historiography is gendered in assumptions of what is deserving for men to write down and disseminate as academic history. This is a reminder to historians to conduct their research without making speculations, while also listening to the silence, and looking at the spaces where the artist did not sign their name.