

ARTNEWS

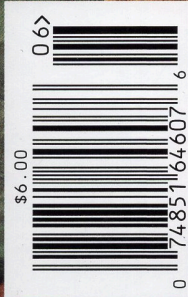
SINCE 1902

SPECIAL ISSUE: WOMEN
IN THE ART WORLD

MAURA REILLY CRUNCHES
THE NUMBERS

LINDA NOCHLIN: FEMINISM
THEN AND NOW

YOKO ONO TALKS MOMA



JUNE 2015

TAKING THE MEASURE OF SEXISM: FACTS, FIGURES, AND FIXES

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In the 45 years since Linda Nochlin provocatively asked in *ARTnews*, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" we have regularly revisited the question, wondering whether, as Nochlin argued, institutional power structures have made it "impossible for women to achieve artistic excellence, or success, on the same footing as men," or whether it is a matter of what constitutes "greatness" and how we measure it. We have assembled comparative statistics from recent years and have sought assessments from leading scholars and critics. Above all, we have asked women artists themselves to reflect on their progress and suggest what could be done to improve matters.

BY MAURA REILLY

Despite encouraging signs of women's improved status and visibility in the art world, there are still major systemic problems.

Do not misunderstand me: women artists are in a far better position today than they were 45 years ago, when Linda Nochlin wrote her landmark essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" published in the pages of this magazine. Access to "high art" education, to which women have historically been denied, is now possible for many with financial means. (According to the *New York Times*, in 2006 women represented more than 60 percent of the students in art programs in the United States.) Moreover, the institutional power structures that Nochlin argued made it "impossible for women to achieve artistic excellence, or success, on the same footing as men, no matter what the potency of their so-called talent, or genius," have been shifting.

But inequality persists. The common refrain that "women are treated equally in the art world now" needs to be challenged. The existence of a few superstars or token achievers—like Marina Abramović, Tracey Emin, and Cindy Sherman—does not mean that women artists have achieved equality. Far from it.

The more closely one examines art-world statistics, the more glaringly obvious it becomes that, despite decades of postcolonial, feminist, anti-racist, and queer activism and theorizing, the majority continues to be defined as white, Euro-American, heterosexual, privileged, and, above all, male. Sexism is still so insidiously woven into the institutional fabric, language, and logic of the mainstream art world that it often goes undetected.

The Museums

Last fall, artnet News asked 20 of the most powerful women in the art world if they felt the industry was biased and received a resounding "yes." Several were museum directors who argued that the senior management, predominantly male, had a stranglehold on the institutions, often preventing them from instituting substantive change. According to a 2014 study "The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships," conducted by the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), female art-museum directors earn substantially less than their male counterparts, and upper-level positions are most often occupied by men. The good news is that, while in 2005 women ran 32 percent of the museums in the United States, they now run 42.6 percent—albeit mainly the ones with the smallest budgets.

Discrimination against women at the top trickles down into every aspect of the art world—gallery representation, auction price differentials, press coverage, and inclusion in permanent-collection displays and solo-exhibition

programs. A glance at the past few years of special-exhibition schedules at major art institutions in the United States, for instance, especially the presentation of solo shows, reveals the continued prevalence of gender disparity. Of all the solo exhibitions since 2007 at the Whitney Museum, 29 percent went to women artists. Some statistics have improved. In the year 2000, the Guggenheim in New York had zero solo shows by women. In 2014, 14 percent of the solo exhibitions were by women (Fig. 1).

There are signs of improvement throughout France and Germany, but parity is nowhere in sight. Of all the solo exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou since 2007, only 16 percent went to women. In 1980 it was 1.1 percent, in 1990 it was 0.4 percent, and in 2000 it was 0.2 percent (Fig. 2).

In the UK the Hayward Gallery comes out with the worst mark, with only 22 percent of solo exhibitions dedicated to female artists over the past 7 years. Whitechapel Gallery is at 40 percent—thanks to its feminist director, Iwona Blazwick. Tate Modern has granted women artists solo exhibitions only 25 percent of the time since 2007 (Fig. 3). Fortunately Tate Modern's 2015 exhibition program features three solo exhibitions dedicated to female artists—Sonia Delaunay, Agnes Martin, and Marlene Dumas.

Permanent-collection displays at major art institutions are also imbalanced. Granted the opportunity to reinstall collections at museums, many curators are not daring enough to reconfigure the hegemonic narratives in ways that offer new perspectives on old stories.

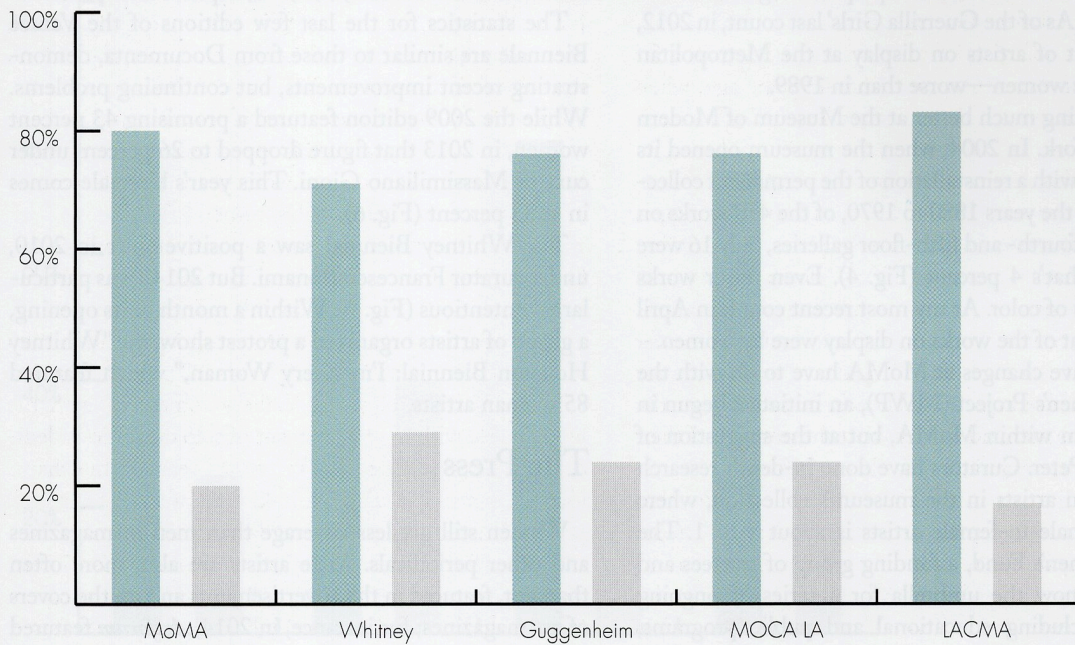
In 2009, however, the Centre Pompidou took the bold step of organizing the nearly two-year exhibition "elles@centrepompidou," in which the then head of contemporary collections, Camille Morineau, reinstalled the museum's permanent collection with only women artists. During its run, attendance to the permanent collection increased by 25 percent.

"Elles" was a particularly revolutionary gesture in the context of France. As Morineau explains, it "was a very un-French thing to do. In France, nobody counts the number of men and women in exhibitions. Very few people notice that sometimes there are no women." It took her six years to convince the then director, Alfred Pacquement, that it was a sound exhibition proposal. The show meant the Pompidou had to broaden its holdings of women artists through purchases and donations.

"Elles" was a radical gesture of affirmative action—but one that was not long-lasting. In the subsequent post-"elles" re-hang of the permanent collection, only 10 percent of the works on view are by women—exactly the same as it was pre-"elles." Moreover, the acquisition funds

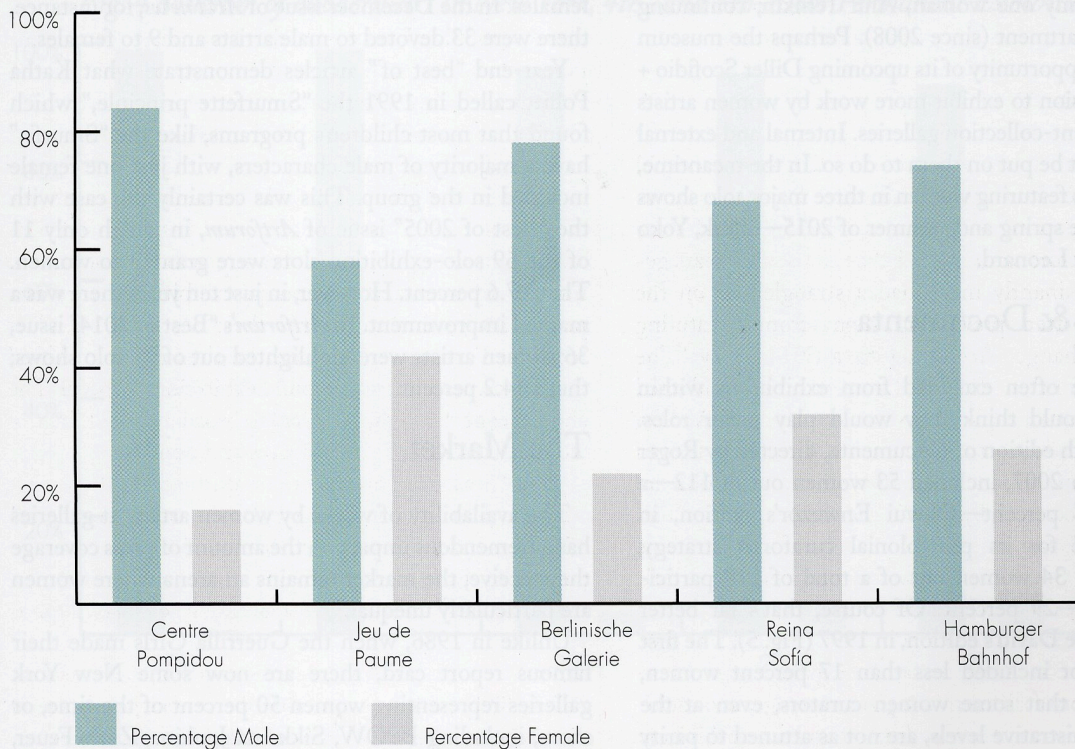
PREVIOUS SPREAD Cara Despain's 2014 poster for Micol Hebron's Gallery Tally project representing the overall percentage of women artists represented in New York and L.A. galleries.

Fig. 1 Percentages of Solo Exhibitions at American Institutions, 2007–2014



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Fig. 2 Percentages of Solo Exhibitions at French and German Institutions, 2007–2014



for women artists almost immediately dried up.

The Pompidou is not alone in perpetuating discriminatory practices. As of the Guerrilla Girls' last count, in 2012, only 4 percent of artists on display at the Metropolitan Museum were women—worse than in 1989.

It's not looking much better at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 2004, when the museum opened its new building, with a reinstallation of the permanent collection spanning the years 1880 to 1970, of the 410 works on display in the fourth- and fifth-floor galleries, only 16 were by women. That's 4 percent (Fig. 4). Even fewer works were by artists of color. At my most recent count, in April 2015, 7 percent of the works on display were by women.

Many positive changes at MoMA have to do with the MoMA Women's Project (MWP), an initiative begun in 2005, not from within MoMA, but at the suggestion of donor Sarah Peter. Curators have done in-depth research on the women artists in the museum's collection, where the ratio of male-to-female artists is about 5 to 1. The Modern Women's Fund, a funding group of trustees and collectors, is now the umbrella for a series of ongoing initiatives, including educational and public programs, targeting acquisitions of work by women artists for the collection, as well as major solo exhibitions dedicated to women artists. The aim is to reassess the traditionally masculinist canon.

One hopes that these subtle yet historic improvements in representation for women at MoMA will continue given that there has been a changing of the curatorial guard, with only one woman, Ann Temkin, continuing to head a department (since 2008). Perhaps the museum will take the opportunity of its upcoming Diller Scofidio + Renfro expansion to exhibit more work by women artists in its permanent-collection galleries. Internal and external pressure might be put on them to do so. In the meantime, the museum is featuring women in three major solo shows opening in the spring and summer of 2015—Björk, Yoko Ono, and Zoe Leonard.

Biennials & Documenta

Women are often excluded from exhibitions within which one would think they would play major roles. While the 12th edition of Documenta, directed by Roger M. Buergel in 2007, included 53 women out of 112—a promising 47 percent—Okwui Enwezor's edition, in 2002, praised for its postcolonial curatorial strategy, included only 34 women out of a total of 118 participating artists—29 percent. Of course, that's far better than Catherine David's edition, in 1997 (Fig. 5). The first female director included less than 17 percent women, reminding us that some women curators, even at the highest administrative levels, are not as attuned to parity

as one might hope. Female arts professionals are often biased in favor of males; that, too, is part of the problem.

The statistics for the last few editions of the Venice Biennale are similar to those from Documenta, demonstrating recent improvements, but continuing problems. While the 2009 edition featured a promising 43 percent women, in 2013 that figure dropped to 26 percent under curator Massimiliano Gioni. This year's biennale comes in at 33 percent (Fig. 6).

The Whitney Biennial saw a positive shift in 2010, under curator Francesco Bonami. But 2014's was particularly contentious (Fig. 7). Within a month of its opening, a group of artists organized a protest show, the "Whitney Houston Biennial: I'm Every Woman," which featured 85 woman artists.

The Press

Women still get less coverage than men in magazines and other periodicals. Male artists are also, more often than not, featured in the advertisements and on the covers of art magazines; for instance, in 2014, *Artforum* featured a female artist only once on its front cover. Consider the September 2014 issue of *Artforum*, which featured Jeff Koons on the cover: of the 73 advertisements associated with galleries in New York, only 11 promoted solo exhibitions by women—that's 15 percent.

It's worse when one compares how many articles and reviews dedicated to solo exhibitions prefer males to females. In the December issue of *ARTnews*, for instance, there were 33 devoted to male artists and 9 to females.

Year-end "best of" articles demonstrate what Katha Pollitt called in 1991 the "Smurfette principle," which found that most children's programs, like the "Smurfs," have a majority of male characters, with just one female included in the group. This was certainly the case with the "Best of 2005" issue of *Artforum*, in which only 11 of the 69 solo-exhibition slots were granted to women. That's 7.6 percent. However, in just ten years there was a marked improvement. In *Artforum*'s "Best of 2014" issue, 36 women artists were highlighted out of 95 solo shows; that's 34.2 percent.

The Market

The availability of works by women artists at galleries has a tremendous impact on the amount of press coverage they receive; the market remains an arena where women are particularly unequal.

Unlike in 1986, when the Guerrilla Girls made their famous report card, there are now some New York galleries representing women 50 percent of the time, or more, including PPOW, Sikkema Jenkins, Zach Feuer,

Fig. 3 Percentages of Solo Exhibitions at United Kingdom Institutions, 2007–2014

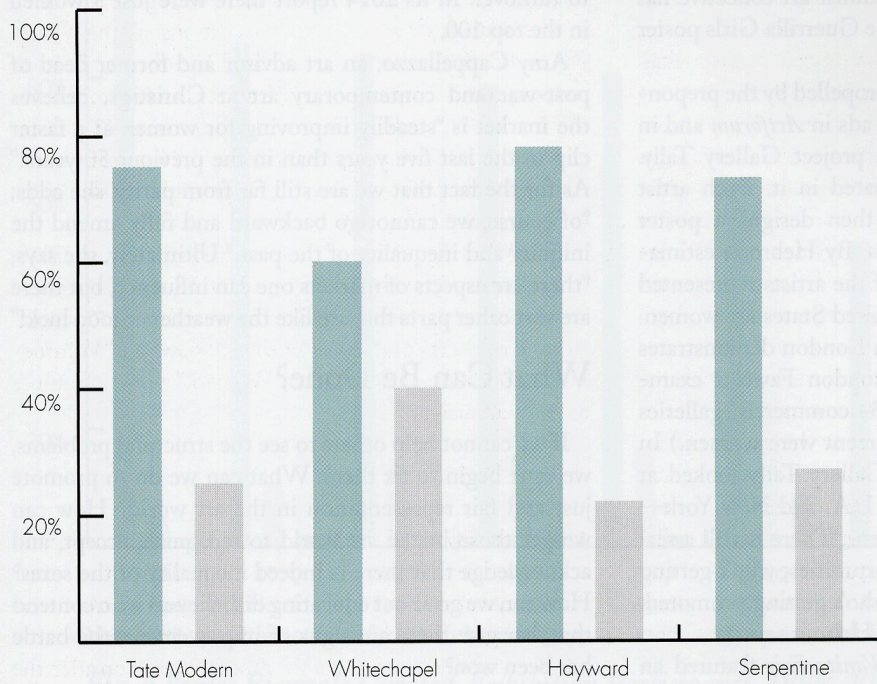
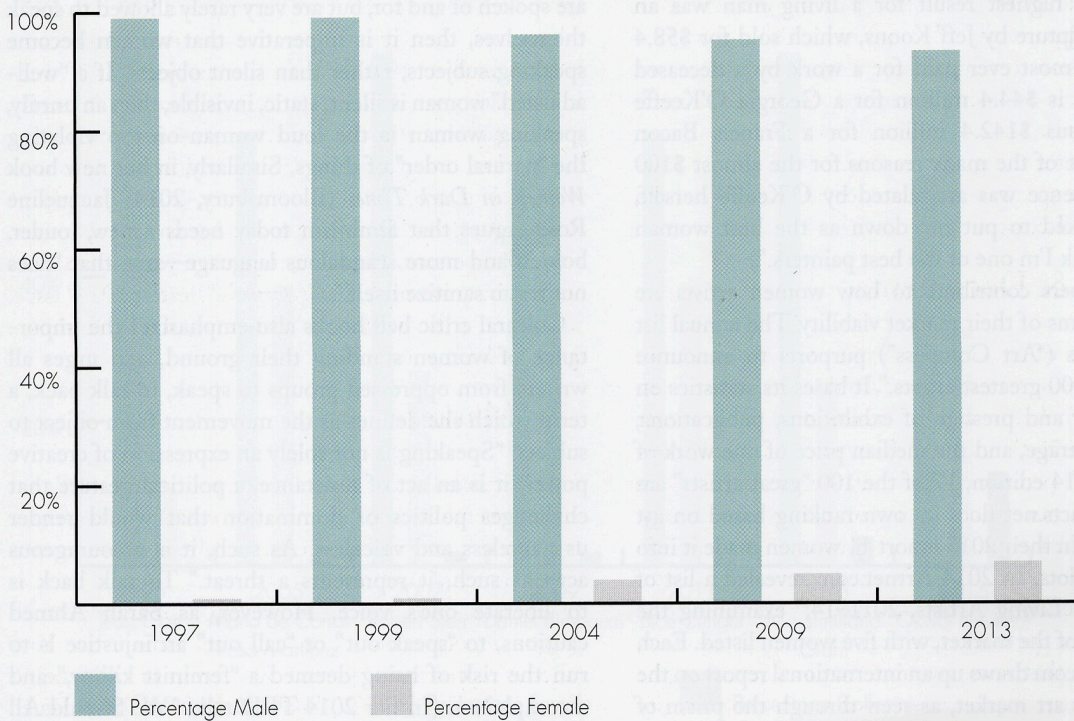


Fig. 4 Museum of Modern Art in New York, 4th- and 5th-Floor Permanent Exhibition Displays



Tracey Williams, Edward Thorp, Salon 94, and Galerie Lelong—as the Pussy Galore feminist art collective has made clear in their “update” of the Guerrilla Girls poster (Fig. 8).

In 2013, artist Micol Hebron, propelled by the preponderance of male artists in gallery ads in *Artforum* and in galleries themselves, started the project Gallery Tally. Over 1,500 artists have participated in it. Each artist calculates gallery statistics and then designs a poster showing male/female percentages. By Hebron’s estimation, approximately 30 percent of the artists represented by commercial galleries in the United States are women. (A recent audit of the galleries in London demonstrates similar figures: in 2013, East London Fawcett examined the artists represented by 134 commercial galleries in London and found that 31 percent were women.) In its report from October 2014, Gallery Tally looked at over 4,000 artists represented in L.A. and New York—of those, 32.3 percent were women. “There is still a real problem with who’s getting opportunities, who’s getting shown, who’s getting collected, who’s getting promoted, and who’s getting written about,” Hebron says.

The December 2014 issue of *Vanity Fair* featured an article titled “Prima Galleristas” (a.k.a. “The Top 14 Female Art Dealers”). What was left unsaid was how few of these “galleristas” actually support women artists. Indeed, all but one of them—Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn—represent women less than 33 percent of the time.

At auction, the highest price paid to date for a work by a living woman artist is \$7.1 million, for a Yayoi Kusama painting; the highest result for a living man was an editioned sculpture by Jeff Koons, which sold for \$58.4 million. The most ever paid for a work by a deceased woman artist is \$44.4 million for a Georgia O’Keeffe painting, versus \$142.4 million for a Francis Bacon triptych. (One of the many reasons for the almost \$100 million difference was articulated by O’Keeffe herself, “The men liked to put me down as the best woman painter. I think I’m one of the best painters.”)

Such numbers contribute to how women artists are ranked, in terms of their market viability. The annual list *Kunstkompass* (“Art Compass”) purports to announce “the world’s 100 greatest artists.” It bases its statistics on the frequency and prestige of exhibitions, publications, and press coverage, and the median price of one work of art. In the 2014 edition, 17 of the 100 “great artists” are women. *Artfacts.net* does its own ranking based on art market sales. In their 2015 report 11 women made it into the top 100 slots. In 2014 *Artnet.com* revealed a list of the “Top 100 Living Artists, 2011–14,” examining the last five years of the market, with five women listed. Each year *Artprice.com* draws up an international report on the contemporary art market, as seen through the prism of

auction sales, and presents the top 500 artists according to turnover. In its 2014 report there were just 3 women in the top 100.

Amy Cappellazzo, an art advisor and former head of post-war and contemporary art at Christie’s, believes the market is “steadily improving for women at a faster clip in the last five years than in the previous 50 years.” As for the fact that we are still far from parity, she adds, “of course, we cannot go backward and fully amend the iniquity and inequality of the past.” Ultimately, she says, “there are aspects of markets one can influence, but there are vast other parts that are like the weather—good luck!”

What Can Be Done?

If we cannot help others to see the structural problems, we can’t begin to fix them. What can we do to promote just and fair representation in the art world? How can we get those in the art world to recognize, accept, and acknowledge that there is indeed inequality of the sexes? How can we go about educating disbelievers who contend that, because there are signs of improvement, the battle has been won?

Linda Nochlin urges women to “be fearless, speak up, work together, and consistently make trouble.”

Let’s not just talk about feminism—let’s live it. Don’t wait for change to come—be proactive. Let’s call out institutions, critics, curators, collectors, and gallerists for sexist practices.

If, as feminist theorist Hélène Cixous argues, women are spoken of and for, but are very rarely allowed to speak themselves, then it is imperative that women become speaking subjects, rather than silent objects. If a “well-adjusted” woman is silent, static, invisible, then an unruly, speaking woman is the loud woman-on-top violating the “natural order” of things. Similarly, in her new book *Women in Dark Times* (Bloomsbury, 2014) Jacqueline Rose argues that feminism today needs a new, louder, bolder, and more scandalous language—one that “does not try to sanitize itself.”

Cultural critic bell hooks also emphasizes the importance of women standing their ground, and urges all writers from oppressed groups to speak, to talk back, a term which she defines as the movement from object to subject. “Speaking is not solely an expression of creative power; it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless. As such, it is a courageous act—as such, it represents a threat.” To talk back is to liberate one’s voice. However, as Sarah Ahmed cautions, to “speak out” or “call out” an injustice is to run the risk of being deemed a “feminist killjoy,” and a complainer. (In her 2014 TED talk, “We Should All

Fig. 5 Documenta Participants, Various Editions, 1959–2012 (with names of artistic directors)

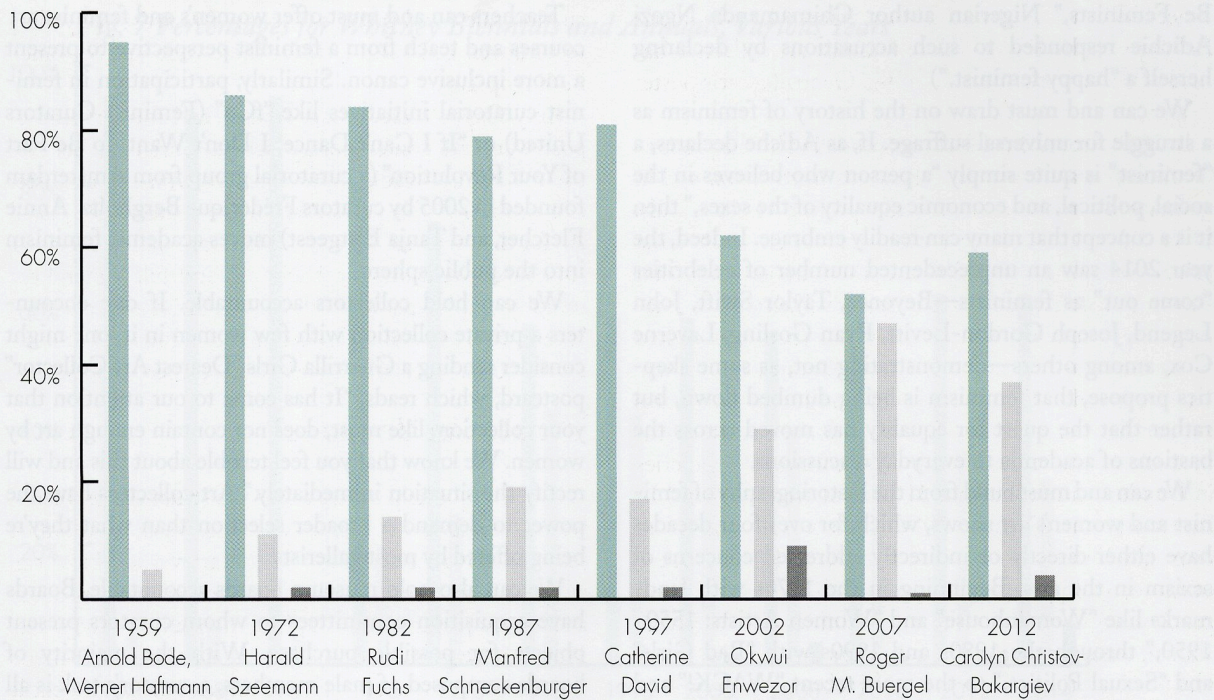
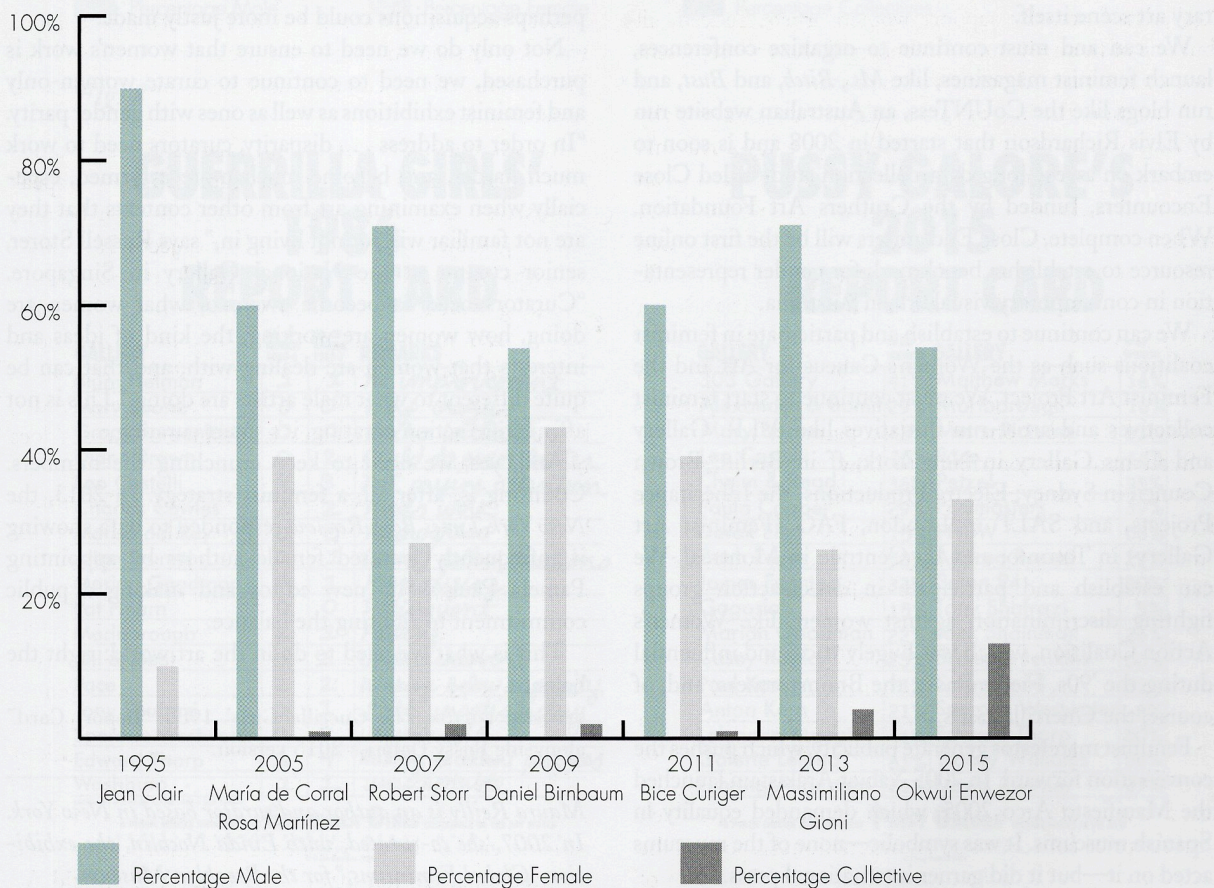


Fig. 6 Venice Biennale Curated-Exhibition Participants, 1995, 2005–15 (with names of artistic directors)



Be Feminists,” Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie responded to such accusations by declaring herself a “happy feminist.”)

We can and must draw on the history of feminism as a struggle for universal suffrage. If, as Adiche declares, a “feminist” is quite simply “a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes,” then it is a concept that many can readily embrace. Indeed, the year 2014 saw an unprecedented number of celebrities “come out” as feminists—Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, John Legend, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Ryan Gosling, Laverne Cox, among others—demonstrating not, as some skeptics propose, that feminism is being dumbed down, but rather that the quest for equality has moved across the bastions of academia to everyday discussions.

We can and must build from the historiography of feminist and women’s art shows, which for over four decades have either directly or indirectly addressed concerns of sexism in the arts. Beginning in the 1970s with landmarks like “Womanhouse” and “Women Artists: 1550–1950,” through the 1980s and 1990s with “Bad Girls” and “Sexual Politics,” to the more recent “WACK!” and “Global Feminisms,” exhibitions have functioned as curatorial correctives to the exclusion of women from the master narratives of art history, and from the contemporary art scene itself.

We can and must continue to organize conferences, launch feminist magazines, like *Ms.*, *Bitch*, and *Bust*, and run blogs like the CoUNTess, an Australian website run by Elvis Richardson that started in 2008 and is soon to embark on a year-long data-collection study titled *Close Encounters*, funded by the Cruthers Art Foundation. When complete, *Close Encounters* will be the first online resource to establish a benchmark for gender representation in contemporary visual arts in Australia.

We can continue to establish and participate in feminist coalitions such as the Women’s Caucus for Art and the Feminist Art Project. We must continue to start feminist collectives and artist-run initiatives like A.I.R. Gallery and Ceres Gallery in New York; ff in Berlin; Brown Council in Sydney; Electra Productions, the Inheritance Projects, and SALT in London; FAG (Feminist Art Gallery) in Toronto; and La Centrale in Montreal. We can establish and participate in direct-action groups fighting discrimination against women, like Women’s Action Coalition, which was hugely vocal and influential during the ’90s, Fierce Pussy, the Brainstormers, and, of course, the Guerrilla Girls.

Feminist manifestos generate publicity, which pushes the conversation forward. In 2005 Xabier Arakistain launched the *Manifiesto Arco 2005*, which demanded equality in Spanish museums. It was symbolic—none of the museums acted on it—but it did garner international press.

Teachers can and must offer women’s and feminist art courses and teach from a feminist perspective to present a more inclusive canon. Similarly, participation in feminist curatorial initiatives like “fCu” (Feminist Curators United) or “If I Can’t Dance, I Don’t Want To Be Part of Your Revolution” (a curatorial group from Amsterdam founded in 2005 by curators Frédérique Bergholtz, Annie Fletcher, and Tanja Elstgeest) moves academic feminism into the public sphere.

We can hold collectors accountable. If one encounters a private collection with few women in it, one might consider sending a Guerrilla Girls “Dearest Art Collector” postcard, which reads, “It has come to our attention that your collection, like most, does not contain enough art by women. We know that you feel terrible about this and will rectify the situation immediately.” Art collectors have the power to demand a broader selection than what they’re being offered by most gallerists.

We can also hold museum boards accountable. Boards have acquisition committees to whom curators present objects for possible purchase. With the majority of boards composed of male members, a curator’s task is all the more difficult if s/he is presenting work by a woman artist for consideration. If museum collection policies were modified to attend to gender discrepancies, then perhaps acquisitions could be more justly made.

Not only do we need to ensure that women’s work is purchased, we need to continue to curate women-only and feminist exhibitions as well as ones with gender parity. “In order to address . . . disparity, curators need to work much harder, and become much more informed, especially when examining art from other contexts that they are not familiar with or not living in,” says Russell Storer, senior curator at the National Gallery in Singapore. “Curators need to become aware of what women are doing, how women are working, the kind of ideas and interests that women are dealing with, and that can be quite different to what male artists are doing.” This is not affirmative-action curating, it’s smart curating.

And, yes, we need to keep crunching the numbers. Counting is, after all, a feminist strategy. In 2013, the *New York Times Book Review* responded to data showing it infrequently featured female authors by appointing Pamela Paul as its new editor and making a public commitment to righting the balance.

This is what we need to do in the art world: right the balance.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM The Guerrilla Girls’ 1986 “Report Card” alongside Pussy Galore’s 2015 version.

Maura Reilly is an author and curator based in New York. In 2007, she co-curated, with Linda Nochlin, the exhibition “Global Feminisms,” for the Brooklyn Museum.

Fig. 7 Percentages for Whitney Biennials and Annuals, Various Years

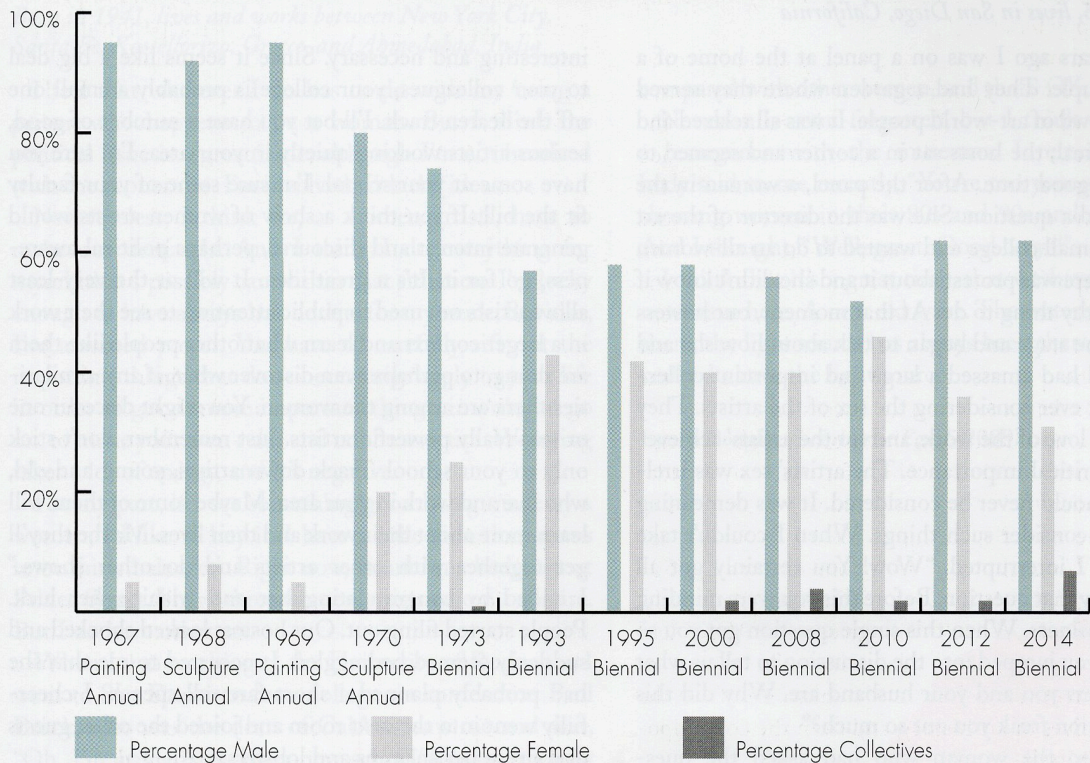


Fig. 8

GUERRILLA GIRLS' 1986 REPORT CARD

| GALLERY | NO. OF WOMEN 1985-6 | NO. OF WOMEN 1986-7 | REMARKS |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Blum Helman | 1 | 1 | No improvement |
| Mary Boone | 0 | 0 | Boys crazy |
| Grace Borgenicht | 0 | 0 | Lacks initiative |
| Diane Brown | 0 | 2 | Could do even better |
| Leo Castelli | 4 | 3 | Not paying attention |
| Charles Cowles | 2 | 2 | Needs work |
| Marisa del Rey | 0 | 0 | No progress |
| Allan Frumkin | 1 | 1 | Doesn't follow directions |
| Marian Goodman | 0 | 1 | Keep trying |
| Pat Hearn | 0 | 0 | Delinquent |
| Marlborough | 2 | 1 | Failing |
| Oil & Steel | 0 | 1 | Underachiever |
| Pace | 2 | 2 | Working below capacity |
| Tony Shafrazi | 0 | 1 | Still unsatisfactory |
| Sperone Westwater | 0 | 0 | Unforgivable |
| Edward Thorp | 1 | 4 | Making excellent progress |
| Washburn | 1 | 1 | Unacceptable |

Source: Art in America Annual 1985-6 and 1986-7

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD
532 LUGUARDIA PLACE, #237, NY, NY 10012
FEMAILBU@GIRL.GALLERY.COM

© Guerrilla Girls 1986

PUSSY GALORE'S 2015 REPORT CARD

| GALLERY | % OF WOMEN | GALLERY | % OF WOMEN |
|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| 303 Gallery | 41% | Matthew Marks | 16% |
| Alexander & Bonin | 29% | Marlborough | 16% |
| Mary Boone | 13% | Metro Pictures | 33% |
| Leo Castelli | 15% | Pace | 16% |
| Cheim & Read | 36% | Petzel | 35% |
| Paula Cooper | 29% | Postmasters | 39% |
| Derek Eller | 15% | PPOW | 53% |
| Zach Feuer | 50% | Andrea Rosen | 29% |
| James Fuentes | 33% | Salon 94 | 50% |
| Gagosian | 15% | Tony Shafrazi | 5% |
| Marian Goodman | 22% | Jack Shainman | 26% |
| Casey Kaplan | 23% | Sikkema Jenkins | 50% |
| Paul Kasmin | 11% | Sonnabend | 31% |
| Anton Kern | 21% | Sperone Westwater | 8% |
| Lehmann Maupin | 41% | Edward Thorp | 50% |
| Galerie Lelong | 61% | Tracey Williams | 58% |
| Luhring Augustine | 21% | David Zwirner | 27% |

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **PUSSY GALORE** KICKING IDIOCY IN THE ARSE

© Pussy Galore 2015

SHAHZIA SIKANDER

Born in Pakistan in 1969, lives in New York City

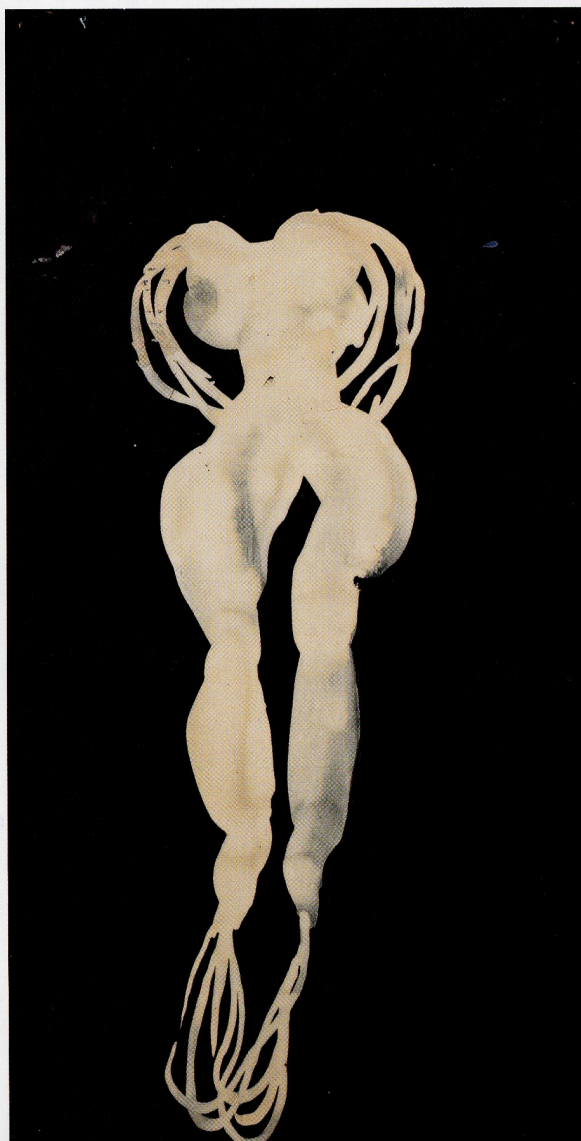
Women's personal lives are often overemphasized in documentation and critical writing surrounding their work. My art has often been read as being by the "other" as a result of representing South Asian artistic practice in New York City.

The introduction of my work to the New York scene in the 1990s spurred curiosity and met with a great reception. My exhibition at the Drawing Center and inclusion in the Whitney Biennial, both in 1997, were among the first exhibitions of contemporary miniature painting in New York. Even though people were connecting with my work in miniature painting, they were unable to fully understand and contextualize artistic production from the region. The reviews from the time bordered on being ethnographic.

For example, *New York Times* art critic Holland Cotter wrote a review of several shows of South Asian art in 1997 saying, "If you like New York City, chances are you'll like India. Midtown Manhattan at lunchtime and an Indian village on market day are surprisingly alike. Cars and bikes charge by; personal space is at a premium; the noise level is high; the sheer variety of people exhausting." He goes on to discuss the "Out of India" show at the Queens Museum, in which I participated. About its reception, Cotter wrote, "That audience is still, it is true, relatively small, but it will grow. At the moment Ms. Sikander must bear the unenviable burden of being a breakthrough figure, with work dynamic enough to capture the attention of viewers who have little direct knowledge of her sources. But there are other artists waiting in the wings to join her in an art world that is now global."

As Cotter accurately expresses, the lens shifts from the work to the individual: it became very tied to me, since there were so few South Asian artists in New York—it was as though the artist had to stand in for lack of visibility of related work. As a woman, I've often felt that readings of my work overemphasized my ethnicity. Furthermore, the complexity of my status as a transnational artist is often lost in the Pakistani-American bond that art institutions

often impose. In many of the interviews that I have been asked to participate in, interlocutors ask me more about my personal identity and relationship to Pakistan than about my artistic practice.



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Shahzia Sikander, *Untitled*, 1993.