

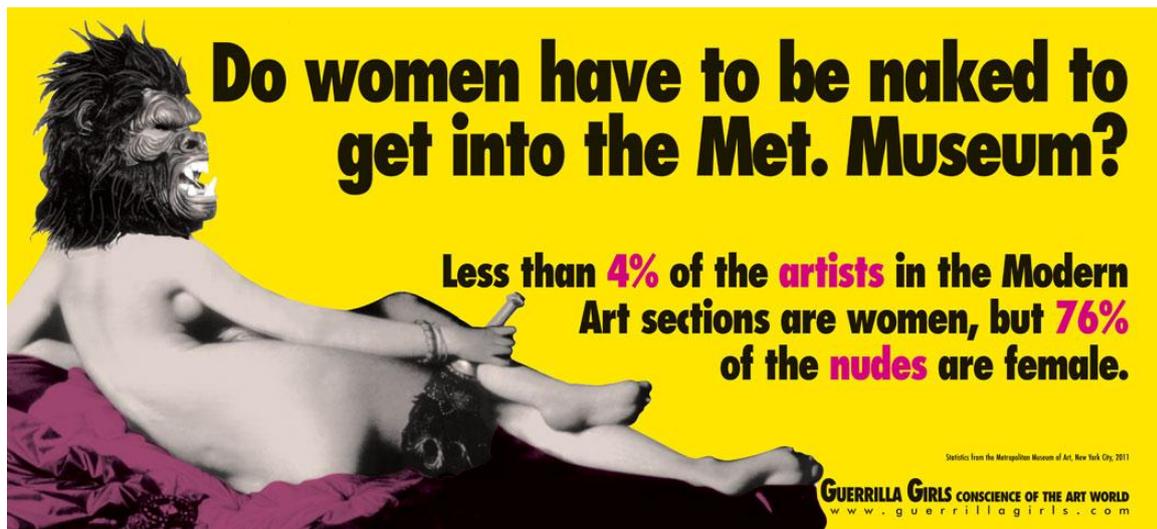
# BLOUINARTINFO

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## The Power 100 of 2015: Promoting Women Artists

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By Bridget Moriarity



The Guerilla Girls. (Guerilla Girls, courtesy guerillagirls.com)

*The bios and essays in Art+Auction's guide to notable players in the art world will be rolled out on ARTINFO through the end of December. Here, we present an essay on promoting women artists. [Click here](#) for an introduction to the entire series. [Click here](#) for previously published installments. Check back daily for new articles.*

Three decades ago, the **Guerrilla Girls**, an anonymous art collective, burst onto the scene. Wearing gorilla masks and nicknaming themselves after pioneering female figures like [Frida Kahlo](#) and Gertrude Stein, they plastered cities such as New York with posters that queried, "Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum?" Opening January 21, an exhibition at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis giving the Guerrilla Girls' graphic work its due is just the latest example that indicates many museums and curators have taken the message to heart and are in the process of consciously correcting the oversights of a male-dominated art history.

"One of the jobs we have as museums is to make sure we're looking at and considering all the most significant talents, but also there's a certain task of historical recovery of the distant or recent past," admits Jeremy Strick, director of the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, which—thanks to a gift from the **Kaleta A. Doolin** Foundation—established an acquisition fund for work by women this past summer.

Despite such efforts, modern-day stats suggest that gender parity in the arts remains aspirational. Curator **Maura Reilly** filled the June 2015 issue of *Artnews* with sobering documentation of the gender inequality that still pervades the art world. Her April 2015 count of works by women artists on display in the Museum of Modern Art, for example, added up to a mere 7 percent of the overall collection being exhibited. Progress, she contends, has been incremental at best.

There have, however, been genuine bright spots. One breakthrough this fall was the Sotheby's selling exhibition of art by women Surrealists, which ran through October 17 in New York. "Connoisseurs walk in and are blown away," says Julian Dawes, a specialist in the house's Imp/mod department, who organized the effort. "They look at the date, the subject, and the execution and know they're looking at an unbelievably important and excellently created Surrealist painting or object." Dawes concedes that he wasn't acting on principle by spotlighting work by women; rather he was following the dictates of the market after artists like [Kay Sage](#), [Dorothea Tanning](#), [Leonor Fini](#), and [Leonora Carrington](#) all produced impressive results at auction last year. "It isn't that people are interested in female artists, per se. I think people are interested in really good art, and the nice thing about these artists is that their best work is still available."

In the primary market, a similar mix of commitment to the cause and following the market can be seen at work. David Zwirner's 2015 exhibition calendar doesn't show full gender parity, but after starting the year with shows by Mamma Andersson and Diana Thater, market-endorsed women artists including Alice Neel, Lisa Yuskavage, Isa Genzken, and Yayoi Kusama turned up month after month.

At a lower price point, where most of the market takes place, the potential for some undervalued women artists is drawing attention. Gallerist Bridget Donahue, for example, debuted her eponymous New York gallery in February with work by Lynn Hershman Leeson. "I didn't set out thinking, 'I'll bring my feminist agenda and combine it with a midcareer artist overlooked in the marketplace,'" says Donahue. "Although if that strategy works out, we'll make historical precedent, and we can all buy homes," she adds with a laugh.