

The Status of Women in International Art Bodies

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“Global Feminists adopt global causes and start movements which seek to dismantle what they argue are the currently predominant structures of global patriarchy. Global Feminism is also known as Transnational Feminism, World Feminism and International Feminism.”- *Wikipedia*.

1960 has been termed as the year of the great feminist revolution in art. There have been not one but many parallel movements that have created this revolution in Art. Feminism as a movement arrived long before its art sister. Hence by the time the artists picked it up there were already a lot of differing types of perceptions in the space.

It is difficult to identify and pinpoint the exact birth of a female movement in Art, which developed into the feminist art movement, as we know it now. However, somewhere around the mid-20th Century a lot of mindboggling questions and answers found their mark, like the essay, ‘*Why are there no Great Female Artists*’ published in 1971 by Linda Nochlin or the exhibition: ‘*Women Artists of America*’, 1707-1964, curated by William H. Gerdtz, as also the Feminist Art Programme that was started by Judy Chicago in 1971, at Cal State Fresno, in addition to the Woman House California, where the first few sparks that ignited a raging fire in the minds of women artists which later snowballed into a movement that is constantly fighting for the equality and concerns that a female artist goes through. The global context is very important since we look at the prism of global context in order to find solutions in the local context. In the discussion of Post- Third World aesthetic practices, Ella Shohat states that, "the central problem becomes one of tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization, in which hegemonic tendencies are simultaneously indigenized within a complex disjunctive global cultural economy."¹ It is parallels that are moving in the same directions across countries, boundaries and landscapes. There is a need to understand and stand with this sisterhood on this common platform. Although most of our struggles are on a different level / scale most solutions for women empowerment are common, as the praxis of the feminist artist is ever evaluating.

I. IMPACT OF GENDER REPRESENTATION IN MUSEUMS AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES GLOBALLY

It is an important aspect to study the status of women in International bodies of Art whether it is museums or international publications or exhibition. This study shows the impact that women empowerment has made, and the places where there is still possibility for improvement. The variant factors under this topic can be seen from the classification table below: -

¹ Feminist Genealogies, Colonial /legacies, Democratic Futures, Ella Shohat pg. 189

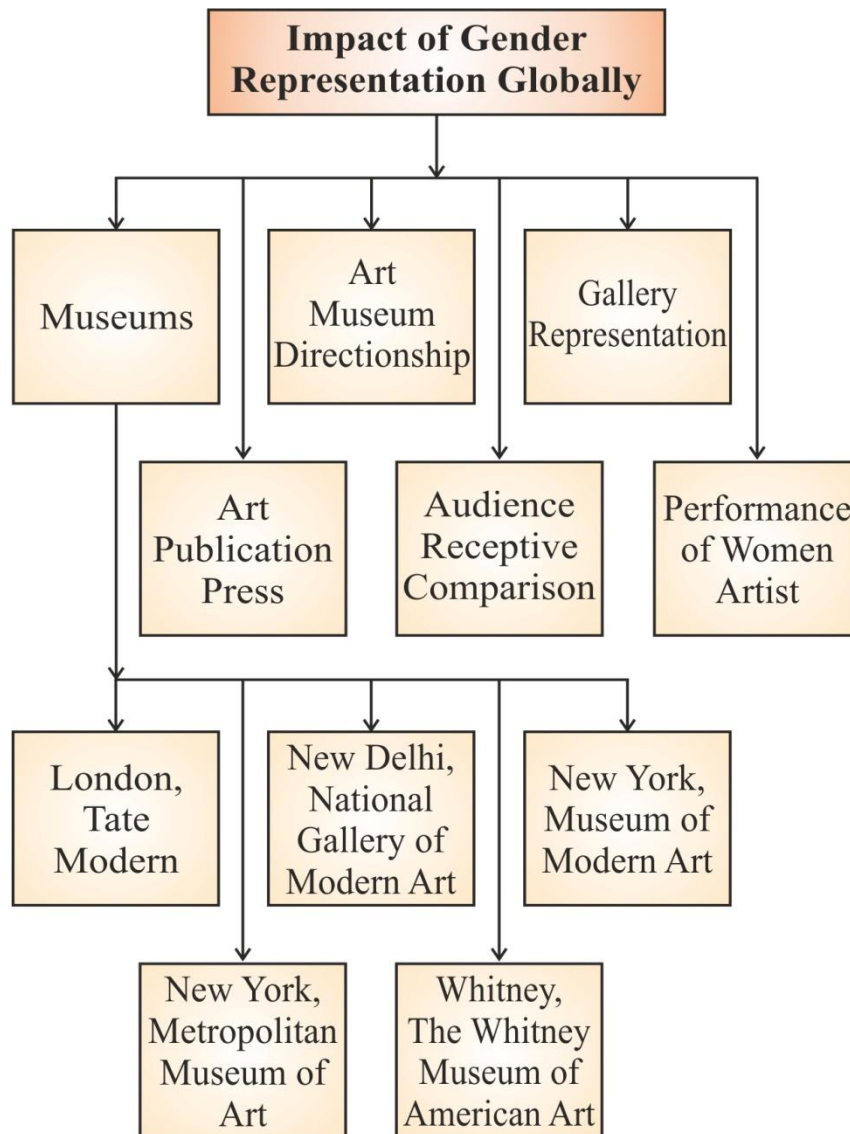


Figure 1.2: Impact of Gender Representation Globally

II. MUSEUMS

There are times when a question remains unanswered: it itself becomes an answer. When I first thought of collecting this data, I felt that most international museums would be very open to answering the simple questions put forth by me. Why should I have not felt like this? Is it not close to five decades since the great feminist movement took place in 1960 and is it not a year after 2016 was declared as the Year of the Women?

I picked the most basic five questions for the museums to answer. However, they went unanswered. When the museums cannot or choose not to answer these questions will they really bother to maintain gender parity? A study of the Acquisition/Exhibition Policy in the following International Museums is given:

a) London, Tate Modern

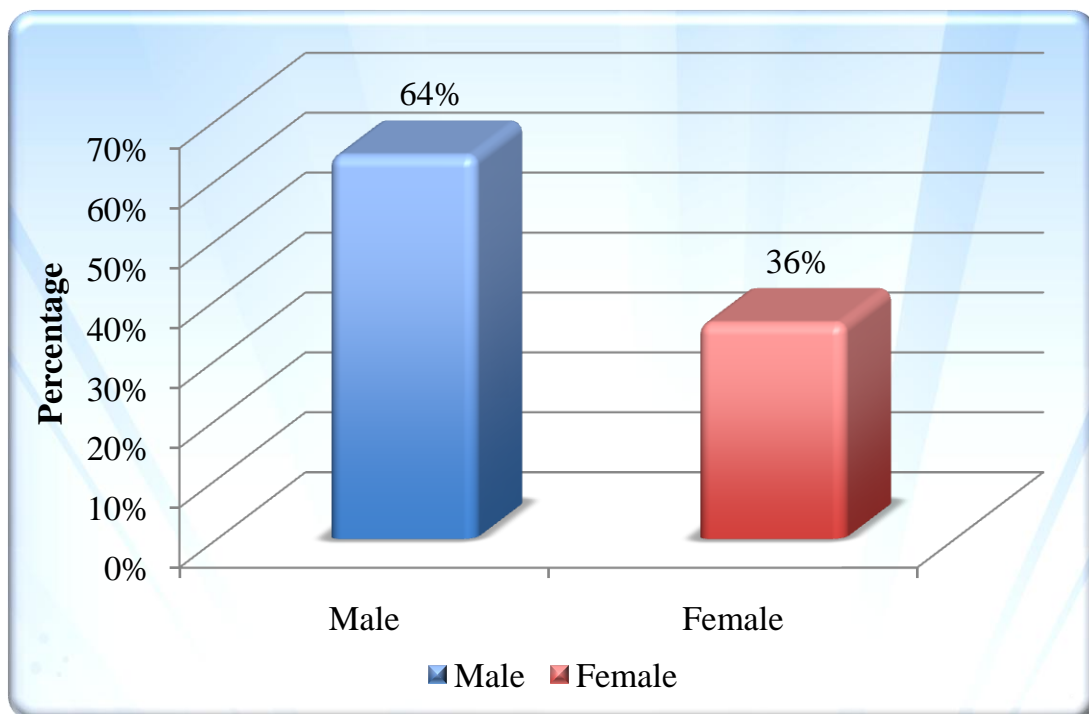
The vision of the Tate as specified in its annual report states, 'Tate is a champion of art and its value to society. It believes that an understanding of the visual can enrich all our lives and that artists make a special contribution to the community. Tate therefore has the ambition to make us all aware of the significance of the visual in contemporary life and how artists help us to see and interpret the world.'²

The first grant allocation for official purposes in 1946, was 2000 GBP, which was enhanced to 6,250 GBP by 1980. In 1992-93 Tate purchased works to the tune of 2.2 million GBP. Last year the official purchase was for 2 million GBP.

² <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/113372>

As per the Tate report 2016-17 under the chapter head of 'Championing Art and Artists' it specifies that, 'Tate is committed to showing more art by women.' It further mentions that the current display has around 36% works by female artists. This according to Tate is with the aim of redressing the imbalance. The remaining 64% of the current display is by male artists. Yes, indeed, in comparison to an initial 5%, 36% is a big shift but is it truly balanced? Further the number mentioned reflects the number of works, not the number of artists. Since there have been rooms which have been given over entirely to the works of single artists, like Rebecca Horn, Ana Lupas, Louise Nevelson and Phylida Barlow, the number of female works have increased in ratio.

Tate seems to have woken up to Gender Representation this year since many works from female artists were procured. Starting from Joan Carlile, to American artist Roni Horn, to Mary Martin to artists who have never been represented in Tate, like Helen Marten, Magalo Reus, Catherine Story, Sue Arrowsmith and Grace Palilthorpe, some have found their way into the prestigious collection of Tate. Living up to its vision Tate is one of the museums that has lived up to its commitment to gender parity.

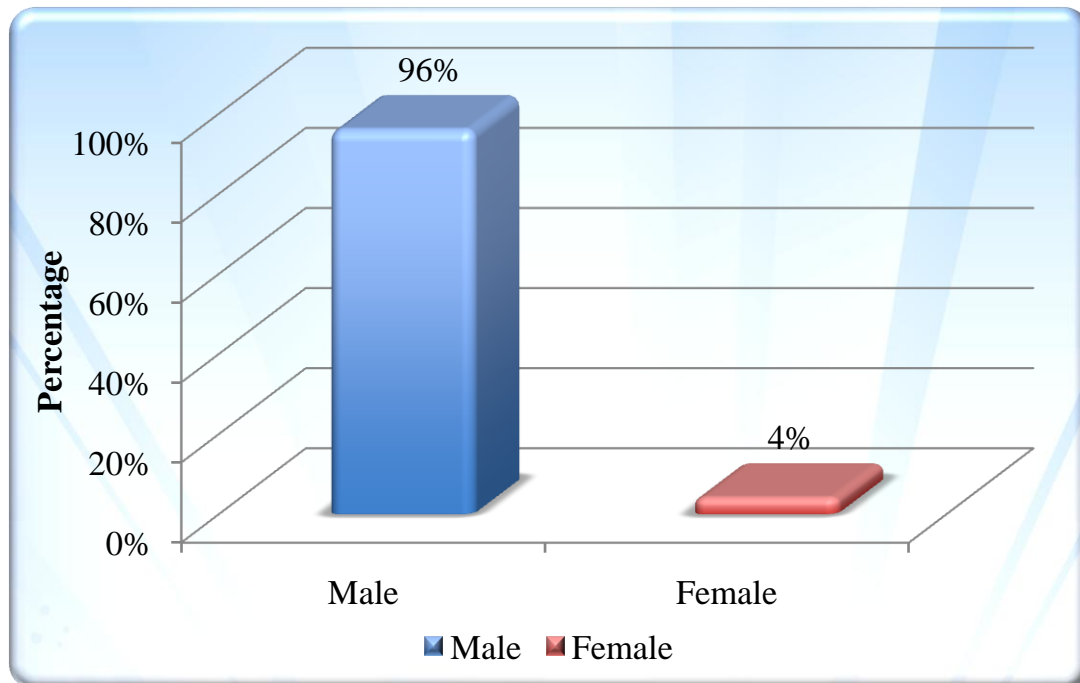


Source: <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/113372>

Graph 1.1: Tate Report 2016-17

b) New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art

As per the Director's note in the 'Recent Acquisitions, A Selection:2012-2014', by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 'One of the many considerations in acquiring a new work of art is whether the acquisition fills a notable gap in our collection.' However how successful the Met has been in this endeavour is not difficult to ascertain as per the facts of the Guerrilla girls. Four percent of artists in the Modern Art section are women in comparison to 76% of the female nudes on display. Even after this gap, Met has not taken any corrective steps.



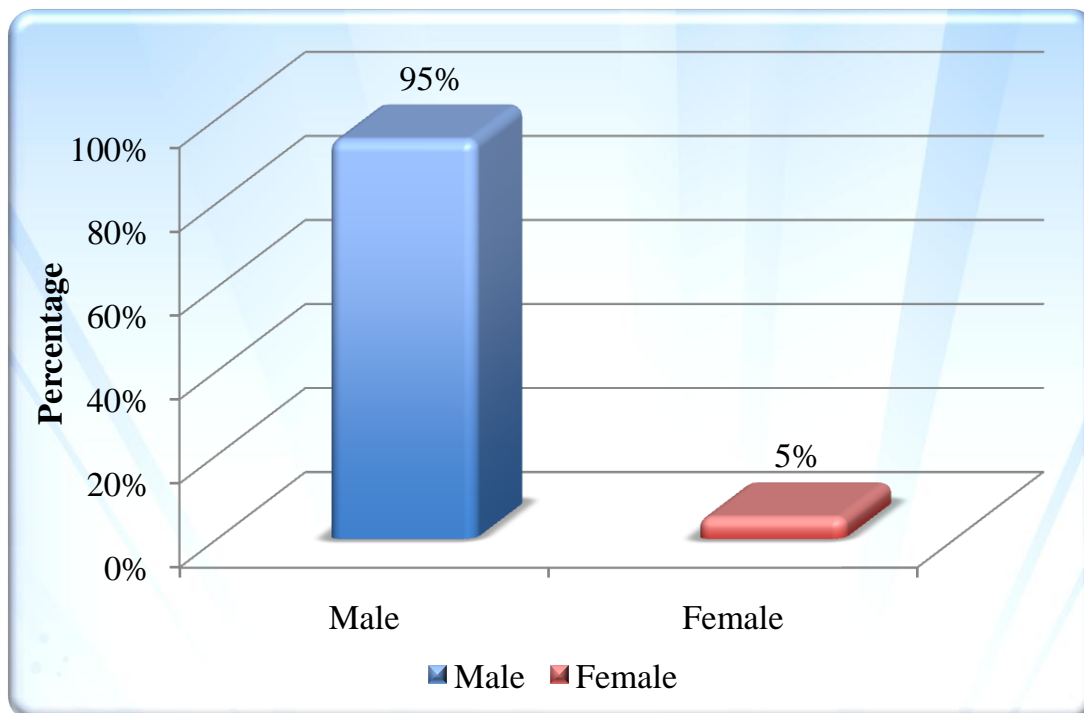
Source: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/Recent_Acquisitions_A_Selection_2012_2014

Graph 1.2: New York Metropolitan Museum of Art 2014

c) New York Museum of Modern Art

The Museum of Modern Art is known as the Garden of Eden for contemporary art. Then how is it that this Eden garden has time and again forgotten her Eve.

Jerry Saltz in his famous review, 'Where are All the Women?' states that in its reopening in November 2004 there were 415 works on display where 20 of them, which is less than 5%, were by women. Yet again in 2006 there were 399 objects. However even now the works by women artists were still at the same number of 5 % with only 19 works by women artists. Is MoMA insensitive to gender parity, or are they simply ignorant?

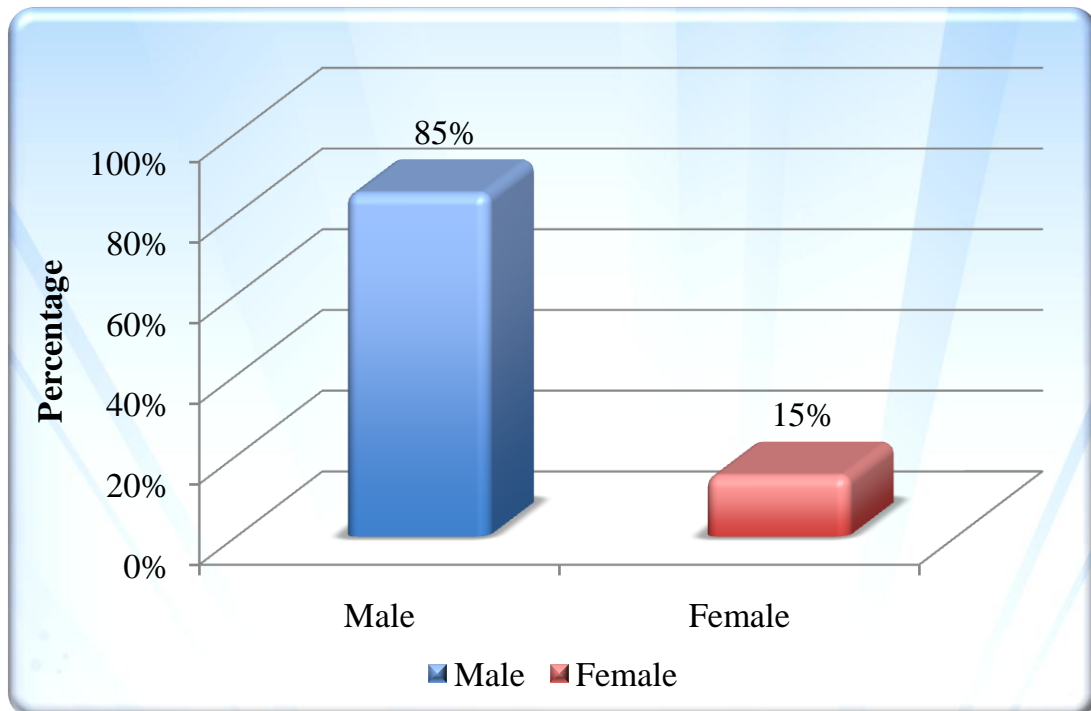


Source: <https://nymag.com/arts/art/features/40979/>

Graph 1.3: Museum of Modern art (MoMA)

d) Whitney The Whitney Museum of American Art

The ratio here is women 15 % and Men 85%. It seems that most museums even if they acquire artworks from female artists save it for the day they shall have an all-women's show, coinciding with International Women's Day celebrations, what about the other days, what happens on the other 364 days of the year?

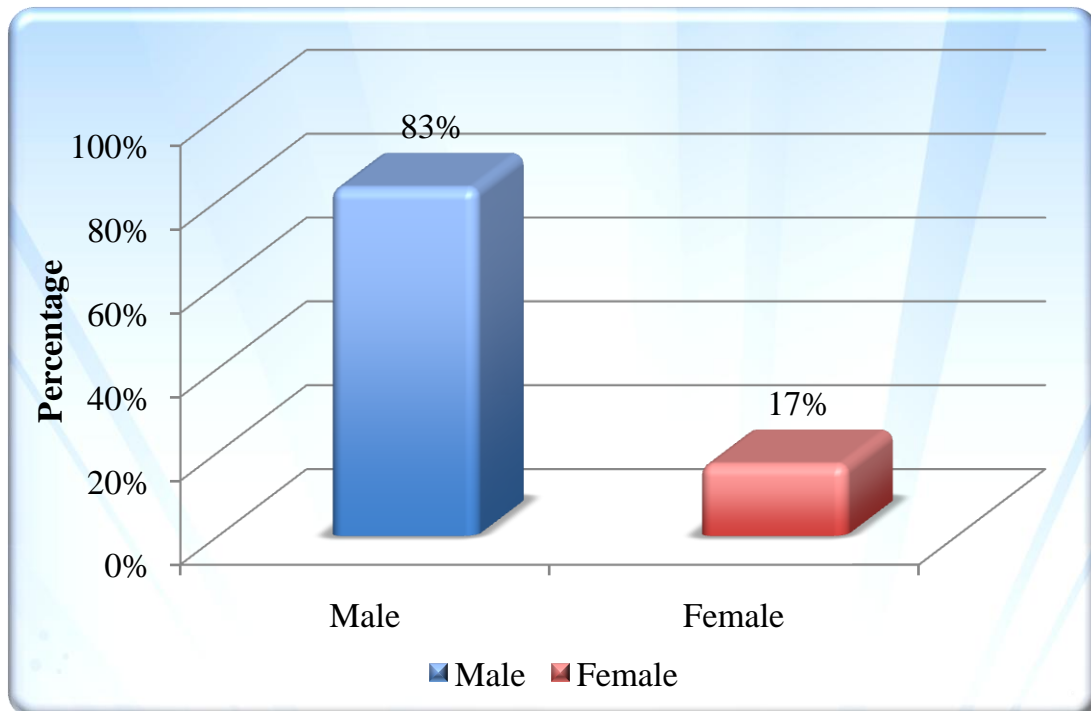


Source: <https://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/taking-the-measure-of-sexism-facts-figures-and-fixes/>

Graph 1.4: The Whitney Museum of American Art

e) New Delhi, National Gallery of Modern Art

The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) has more than 1,4000 works. Some of the oldest preserved works date back to 1857. With an area of 12,000 square meters of exhibition space it is one of the largest modern art museums. The current collection has 15% women artists. However, the magnitude of the works from this small number is impressive with the likes of Amrita Shergill (98 works), Arpita Singh, Nalini Malani, Anjolie Ela Menon, Aparna Caur, Rekha Rodwitty, Anju Dodia, Jayashree Chakravarty, Dayanita Singh and others.



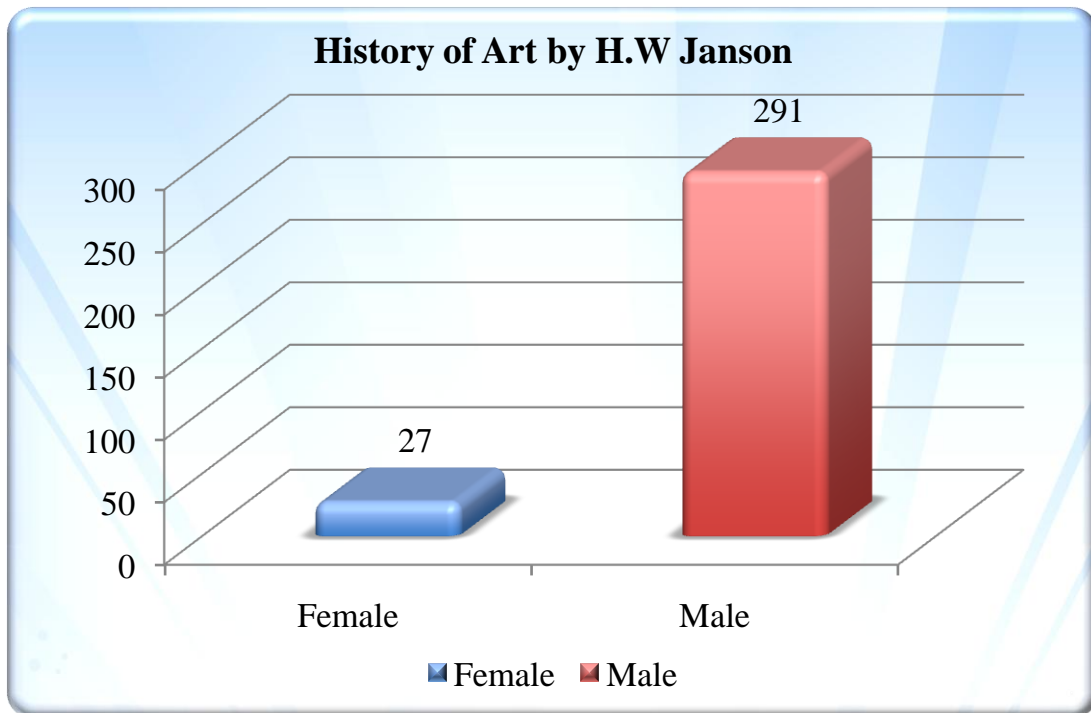
Source: <https://www.ngmaindia.gov.in/collections.asp>
Graph 1.5: National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA)

Why do all the women artists find themselves, in the basement or in the warehouse of the museums? As per surveys done by various organizations worldwide, women artists in U.S make up for around 3-5% of permanent collections. In Australia it is around 34 %. In Europe it once again ranges between 3-5%. In India it is between 10-15 %.

1.3.2 Art Publications and the Press

Gender disparity is not just limited to museums. The roots of this inequality are spread across all sectors, whether it is the private galleries, print media or other such institutions or organizations.

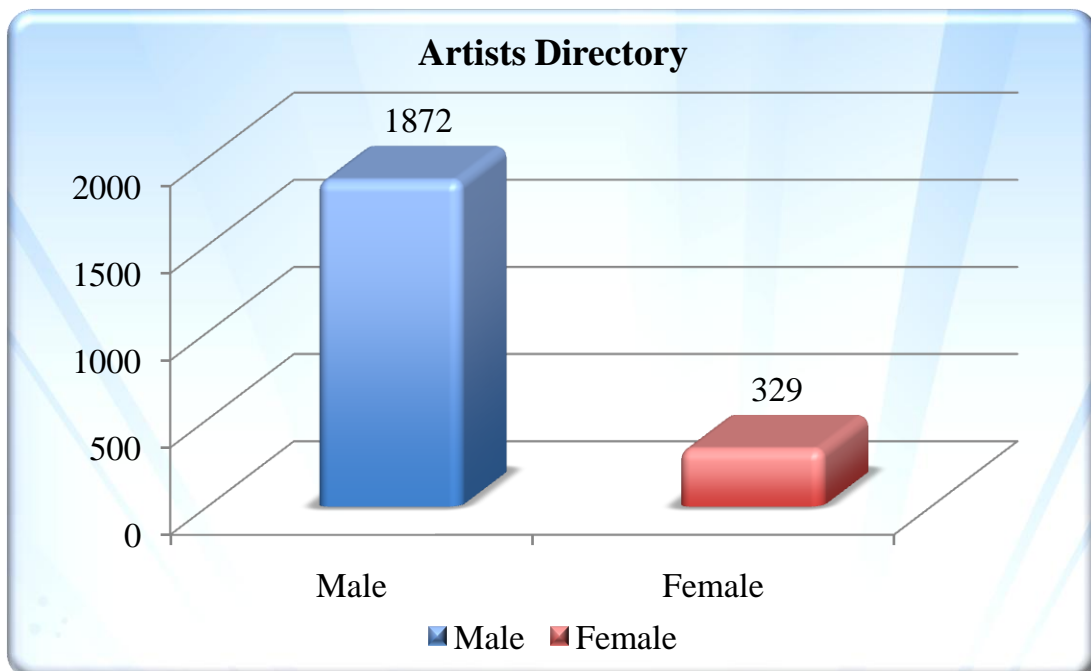
The *Dictionary of Women Artists* has been printed in two volumes, Volume I printed in 1997 has 585 women artists listed which of course is Europe and America-centric, since it almost ignores women artists of colour, except for one or two artists like Amrita Shergill. However, the book edited by Delia Gaze has taken on the herculean task of producing these two volumes. However noble this project may seem in the context of gender equality, the book includes only the Western tradition in Art. Further, it also excludes women born after 1945, going by this calculation, as the book was printed in 1997, practicing woman artists needed to be at least 52 years of age to qualify the basic parameters to be included in it. The book is based on historicity and not contemporary data sensibilities thus rendering it futile to recognize female artists working in the contemporary scenario. However, in comparison to the current edition of *History of Art* by H.W Janson, which has only 27 women artists, out of 318 artists the dictionary of women artists at least remains a record of many such artists who would not have been recognized had the book not been published.



Source: <https://nmwa.org/advocate/get-facts>

Graph 1.6: Gender representation in Publications

The Lalit Kala Akademi, the apex institute of contemporary Art in India, published its first, second and third edition of *Artists' Directory* in the year 1961, 1981 2006 respectively. The *Artists' Directory* printed in 2006 has 329 women artists listed out of approximately 1800 artists.



Source: Josi, J. (2006). *Artists directory, 2006*. New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi

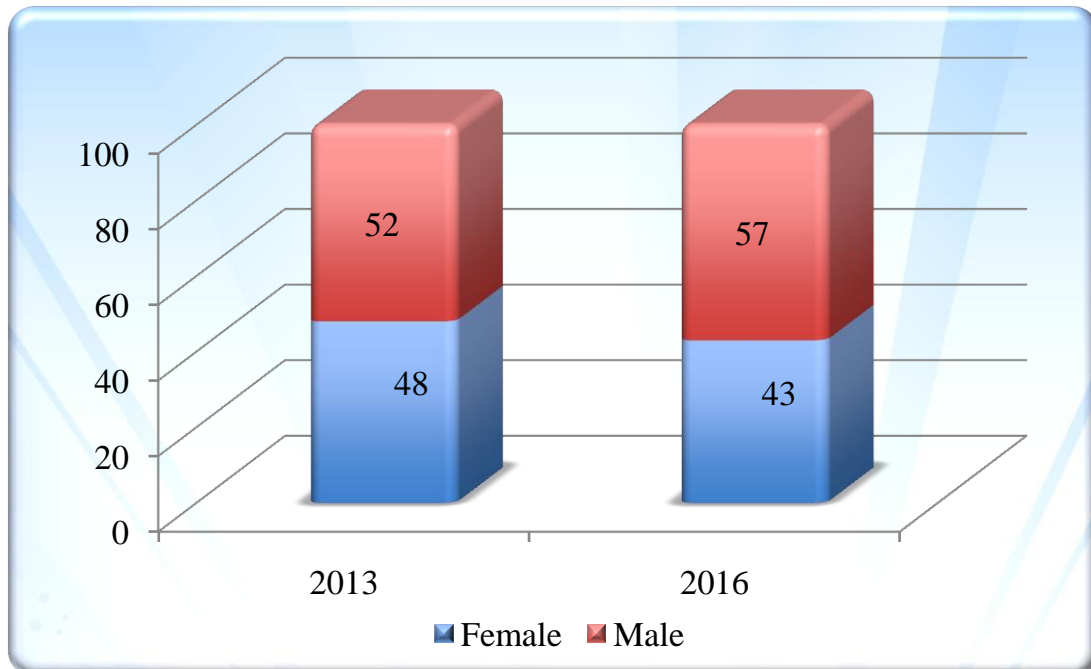
Graph 1.7: Artists Directory (India) Published by Lalit Kala Akademi 2006

It is pertinent to mention that the female artists also end up getting less coverage in magazines and other art journals, Art forums September 2014 issue promoted 11 advertisements of women's shows out of 73 advertisements. ART News' December 2014 issue has 17 reviews of men's solo shows in comparison to four women's solo shows.

1.3.3 Art Museum Directorship

Gender Disparity is not limited just to the artists but also to the directors of museums as per the 2016 report of AAMD (Association of Art Museum Directors) and the NCAR (National Center for Arts Research) in 2016 revealed the following facts and findings:

- Female directors earned 75 cents for every dollar earned by male directors.
- The percentage of women directors was inversely proportionate to the total budget of the museums. The higher the budget the lower the possibility of a women director.



Source: <https://www.aamd.org/our-members/from-the-field/gender-gap-report-2017>

Graph 1.8: Gender Representation in Art Museum Directorship

1.3.4 Gallery Representation

At a glance most galleries worldwide shy away from showcasing young female artists. If they do represent a female artist she needs to be active in the field for more than 25 years. She should be in her mid-40s, should be free from all family commitments, and preferably single. Most galleries feel women artists are bad bets due to the fact that maternity or child care breaks are unacceptable in the art field.

1.3.5 The Performance of Women Artists on the International Art Scene

Well, you would say it's very different from the earlier days. There are more and more women artists who are making their mark on the international Art scene. Women are finally making their mark. Approximately 47 years have passed since Linda Nochlin wrote her essay which was published in *Art News*, 'Why have there been no Great Women Artists?' Just a small insight into the facts and figures across the world will answer this question. To give a basic status of the international art market I would place the following statistics and happenings:

- The 12th edition of Documents included 53 women out of 112—a promising 47 percent which has been directed by Roger M. Buerger a male curator in 2007, in 2002, included 34 women out of a total of 118 participating artists—29 percent which was directed by Okwui Enwezor's, and the first female director Catherine David in 1997, included less than 17 percent women, standing as a reminder to us that some women curators, even at the highest administrative levels, are not as attuned to gender equality.
- A protest show organized by a group of artists, the "Whitney Houston Biennial: I'm Every Women," featured 85 woman artists in 2014.
- The women artists make up 28 percent of Polish museum collections compared to a European average of 22 percent.
- In 2009, the Centre Pompidou organized the exhibition "elles@ centrepompidou," in which Camille Morineau head of contemporary collections, installed the museum's permanent collection with only women artists. The attendance to the permanent collection went up by 25 percent.

- v. The MoMA Women’s Project (MWP), an initiative begun in 2005, was not at the suggestion of donor Sarah Peter and not from within MoMA.
- vi. 2014 a monumental gift of 43 works by female artists was gifted to ICA Boston by political activist, philanthropist and collector Barbara Lee, with an additional donation comprising 20 works by 12 female artists valued at \$42 million later.
- vii. The Lalit Kala Akademi, India; organized the first Triennale India in the year 1968. More than 50 countries had participated in this mega event since then. The Akademi let mounted 11 Triennale exhibitions so far, and has presented 90 awards to national and international artists at these events of which 13 % have been won by women artists. From 1958-68 approximately 9% artworks procured during the time were than Women artists. Currently, the art collection consists of 100 women’s works, where the total collection of the Akademi currently is 3680 artworks, since 1954.

1.3.6 Audiences Receptive Comparison

The exhibitions that are women centric receive high audience response at a time when the footfalls of most museums are falling due to various reasons. An all women’s show acts as an audience booster. In addition, there are a number of female artists who have been a welcomed choice for the audience.

Yayoi Kusama and her polka dots attracted 3,000 visitors daily as per the Art Newspaper’s Museum Attendance Report in early 2017, Louise Bourgeois’s show had 4,600 visitors, in South America, the footfall for Frida Kahlo’s exhibition at Sao Paulo’s Instituto Tomie Ohtake was 6,000 and to top it all, was Patricia Piccinne, Australian Sculptor at 8,300 visitors daily. In comparison to 5,000 visitors a day for the French Impressionist show put up by London’s Royal Academy of Arts, which is the institute’s fourth most popular exhibition as per the data collected in the last 20 years. The Art Newspaper’s museum attendance report in early 2017 is as follows: -

Table 1.1: Art Newspaper’s Museum Attendance Report in early 2017

Sr. No.	Artist	Visitors daily
1	Yajoi Kusama	3000
2	Louise Bourgeois	4600
3	Frida Kahlo	6000
4	Patricia Piccinne	8300
5	Fresh Impressionist	5000

Source: <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/tan-2016-museum-report-911219>

1.3.7 Ratio of Solo Exhibitions

As per the data collected from different sources solo exhibitions of women artists in comparison to their male artists in international galleries have been low except for the White Chapel, London, which is proactive in gender equality platform however, even they came up to 40% only. Guggenheim’s New York Museums’ rate was 14% in 2014. Centre Pompidou, Paris was as low as 0.2 % in the year 2000. Hayward Gallery, London, has been 22 % in the past 7 years, and Tate Modern, London, only 25% in 2015. These museums have been giving the major chunk of the share to male artists the details are as follows.

Table 1.2: Solo Exhibitions by Women Artists

Sr. No.	Artist	Visitors daily
1	Guggenheim, New York	14% in 2014
2	Centre Pompidou, Paris	0.2% in 2000
3	Hayward Gallery, London	22% in past 7 yrs
4	White Chapel, London	40%
5	Tate Modern, London	25% in 2015

Source: <https://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/taking-the-measure-of-sexism-facts-figures-and-fixes/>

The concept of Global Feminism is a very vast subject since creating a common ground on which all the women of the world can be identified notwithstanding their ethnic origin, their countries, the ideologies, their mythology, their upbringing and their society, is next to impossible. However, what has been achieved through the following chapter is a brief introduction to the few important movements of feminism that have been identified by scholars.

The United Nations Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 1967(CEDAW) Vienna Declaration

The United Nations in its General Assembly on 7th November 1967 adopted the convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in which it states that, "Considering that discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and of society, prevents their participation, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries and is an obstacle to the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity,..."³

In keeping with the above mentioned statement many preventive methods were listed which were supposed to give women equal rights in Socio-economic and other spheres like education, the right to choose a life partner etc.

A number of international organizations are working towards the upliftment and empowerment of women today. However, what we see has not been gained in a day. The struggle for equal rights for women has been a long battle for women, which gave birth to the feminist movement, which swept the world with its cry for equality and fight against injustice. The feminist movement of the west spoke strongly against gender stereotyping.

Dr. Gayatri Mathur. "The Status of Women in International Art Bodies." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(09), 2021, pp. 54-63.

³ <http://www.un-documents.net/a22r2263.htm>