

Research Paper No.2

Representation of Female Artists in Britain in 2016



The following report was commissioned by the Freelands Foundation. The intention of the report is to provide up-to-date data on the representation of women in the art world, in order to sustain and provoke a critical awareness of gender parity in the art world.

Research compiled by
Charlotte Bonham-Carter



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Are female artists still under-represented in Britain?

Charlotte Bonham-Carter

Introduction

This report follows on from a report published by the Freelands Foundation that provided an objective data set in relation to the representation of female artists in 2014/15. That report found that although female art and design graduates outnumber men, men outnumber women in the majority of activities that signify the development of an artist's career, such as having a solo exhibition at a national museum in London, or at a large-scale gallery outside London. The report concluded that despite the many advances made by women in the art world over the years, a gender imbalance persists, particularly at, and beyond, the mid-career stage.

In response to the findings of that report, the Foundation established the annual Freelands Award to enable a regional arts organisation to present an exhibition that would include significant new work, by a mid-career female artist who may not yet have received the acclaim or public recognition that her work deserves. While the findings of the 2014/15 report were essential in guiding the Foundation's intervention, in the form of the Award, they were also important as a reliable, publically-available evidence base for the arts community to draw and reflect upon during decision-making processes. We found that tracking the situation through the collection of objective data was an important action, in order to keep the issue of representation at the forefront of discussions about cultural programming and production.

In fact, the report published by the Freelands Foundation in 2016, was itself an update and expansion of data initially gathered by the East London Fawcett (ELF) in 2012/2013. (1) When the ELF published its report, which highlighted in stark terms the extensive gender imbalance that persists in the art world, debates about gender equality, diversity, access and inclusion in the cultural

(1) East London Fawcett (ELF) is a campaign group for equality between men and women. In 2012/13, ELF launched the Great East London Art Audit, a yearlong campaign to assess the representation of women in London's art world. More information about that study can be found at <https://elartaudit.wordpress.com/>.

sector were reignited. Clearly, public awareness and discussion of these issues are the first steps towards action and improvement.

This report, which tracks the representation of female artists in Britain in 2016, shows some progress from the situation in 2014/15, and again from the ELF's findings in 2012/13. We are pleased to see improvement, but progress is not parity and key statistics, such as the representation of women in major not-for-profit galleries in London remain inexplicably unequal – just 30% of solo shows at London's major institutions were by female artists in 2016. ⁽²⁾

In this report, we also gathered some new data, including information about the UK's most popular public artworks created since 2000 (just 13% were by women) and recently listed – war public art sculptures (just 17% were by women). In addition, we gathered new data on the representation of women in the commercial sector. Our findings sadly confirm previous conclusions that women are still woefully under-represented in the commercial art world. We found that just 29% of artists represented by London's major galleries were women, and just 3% of auction lots in the top ten highest-grossing sales of each of the Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales in 2016 were by female artists. We conclude that although there have been some improvements, the fact remains that despite women outnumbering men in art school, women are under-represented in all of the metrics we used to measure career achievement.

Beyond the scope of this study, there have been some promising signs of a changing landscape, including two high profile appointments of female arts professionals at the Tate – Frances Morris as Director of Tate Modern and Maria Balshaw as Director of Tate – and pronouncements that the institution would like to make efforts to redress the under-representation of female artists in the art world. These are all encouraging developments and we hope that the commercial art sector will follow suit.

(2) In this report, 'major institutions' are defined as organisations in receipt of over £1 million ACE/DCMS funding.

The Freelands Foundation will continue its efforts to take action against gender imbalance through the Freelands Award, and to promote awareness of gender parity issues in the art world through the publication of this data.

Are female artists still under-represented in Britain?

Summary

Summary

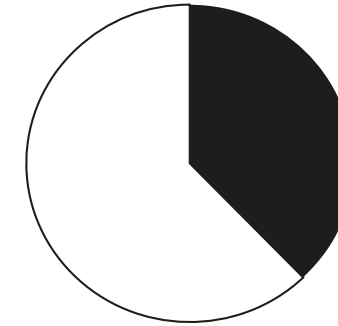
The simple answer to this report's enquiry is yes – female artists are still under-represented in the art world, despite outnumbering men in art school. In line with the 2014/15 audit, London's major institutions remain the least likely to hold solo shows by female artists, with just 30% of all solo shows at major galleries by women.

The percentage of women representing Britain at the Venice Biennale and winning the Turner Prize over the last ten years has improved. However, new data collection in this report reveals appalling inequality in other aspects of the art world, including public art commissions – just 13% of the UK's most popular public artworks since 2000 are by women – and in the commercial sector – just 29% of artists represented by London's major galleries were female artists, and just 3% of auction lots in the top ten highest-grossing sales of each of the Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales in 2016 were by women artists.

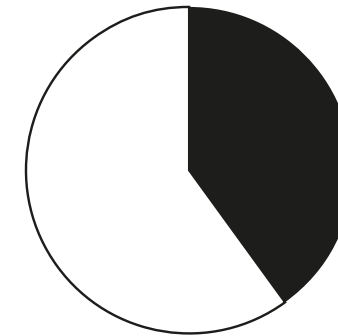
According to The Universities and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS), 63% of undergraduates studying creative arts and design in 2016 were female. (3)

We conducted an audit of solo shows featured in the exhibition programme of 44 non-commercial galleries in London (2016), and found that:

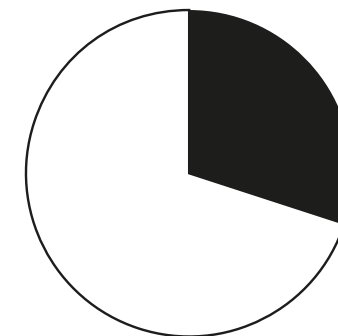
Solo Shows in Non-commercial Galleries in London



40% of these shows were by female artists



38% of solo shows at NPOs and DCMS funded organisations were by female artists (4)

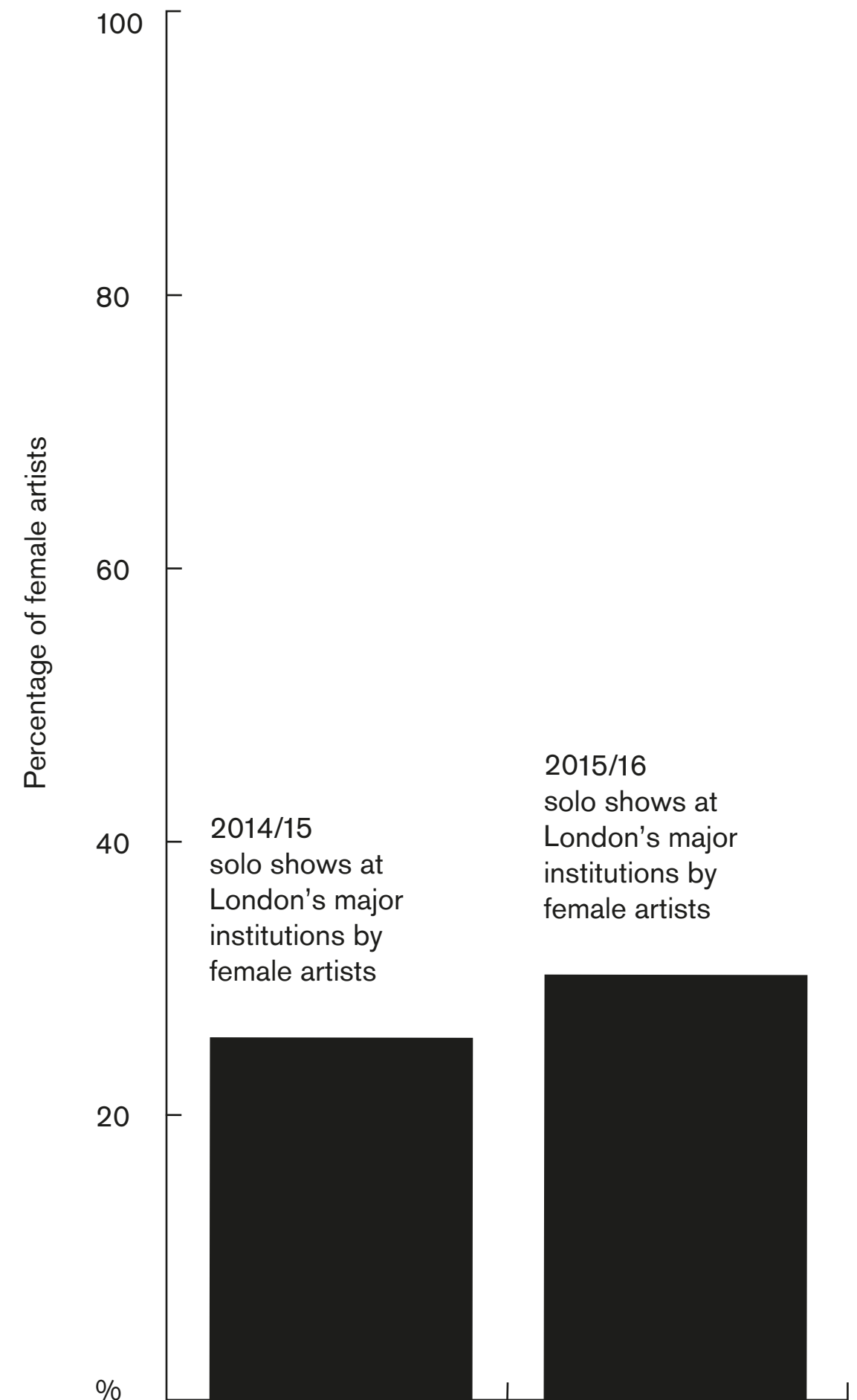


30% of solo shows at London's major institutions were by female artists

Our 2014/15 audit found that 25% of solo shows at London's major institutions were by female artists.

In 2016, this had increased to 30% – a welcome improvement, but still a long way from parity.

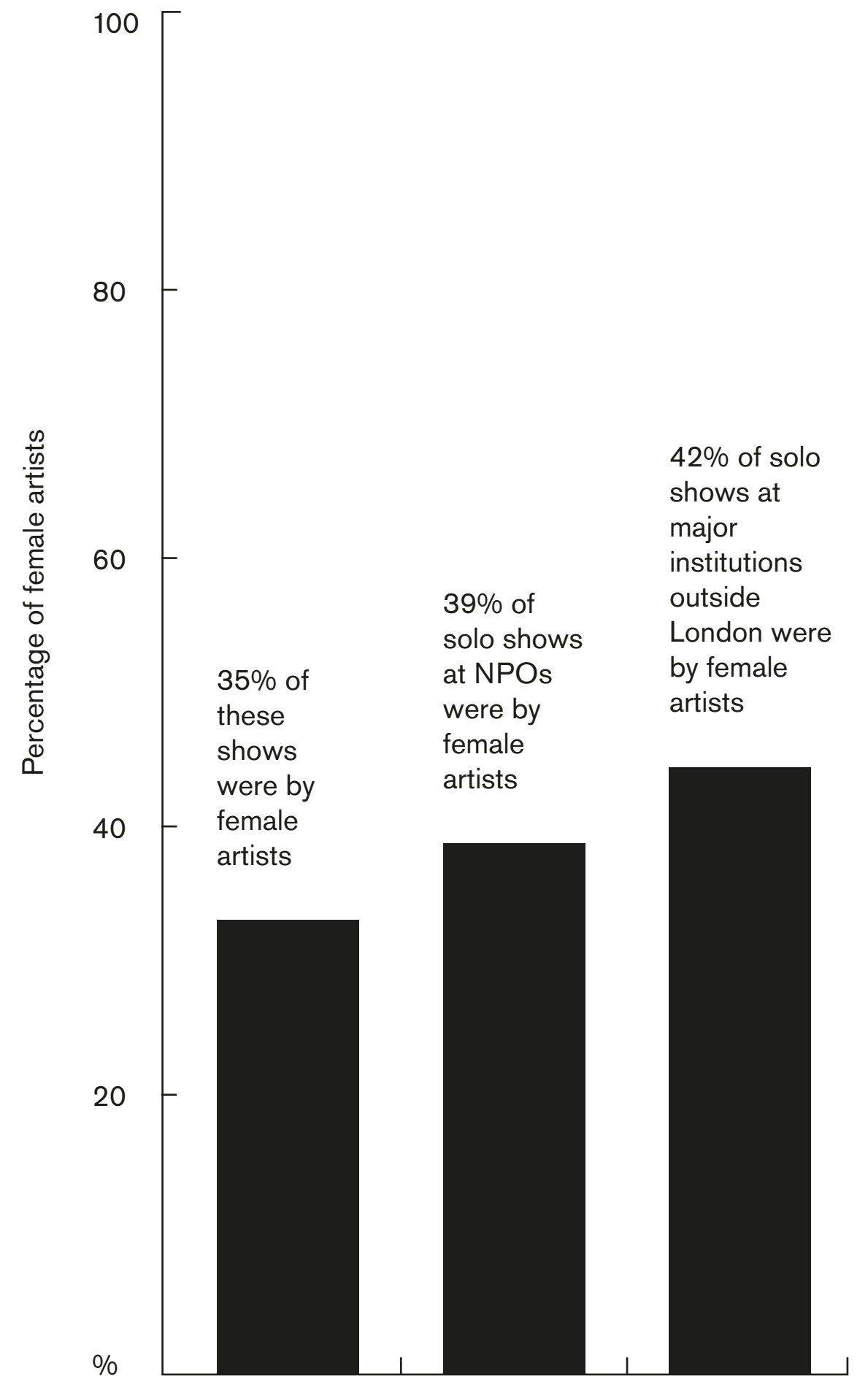
Solo Shows at London's major institutions



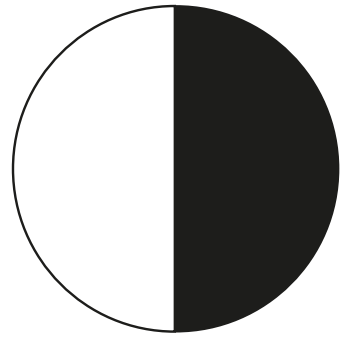
We conducted an audit of solo shows featured in the exhibition programme of 33 non-commercial galleries outside London (2016), and found that:

Representation of female artists outside of London is poor, at just 35% for all non-commercial galleries. However in contrast to the situation in London, and the 2014/15 findings, representation has actually improved in major institutions outside London, with the figure rising to 42% of solo shows held by female artists.

Solo Shows in Non-Commercial Galleries outside London



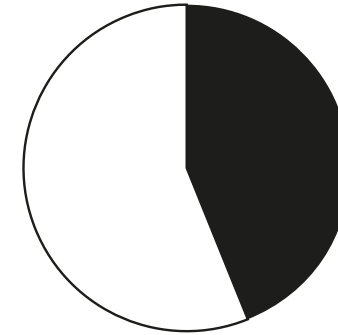
Our audit of artists selected to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale over the last ten years found that:



50% of selected artists were women

This represents an improvement from our 2014/15 report, which found that 33% of selected artists were women.

Our audit of Turner Prize winners over the last ten years found that:

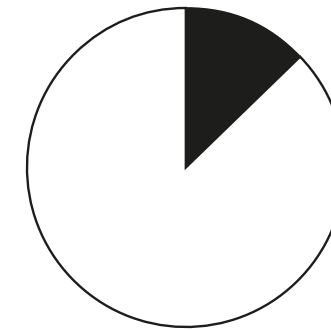


44% of winners were female artists

Again, this represents a slight improvement from our 2014/15 report, due to the number of female winners in recent years. In 2014/15, the number of female Turner Prize winners stood at 40%.

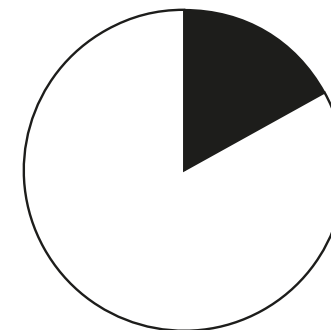
Public artwork by women is not sufficiently recognised or encouraged. We must work harder to ensure public artwork by women has the opportunity to be canonised for future generations.

We created a composite list of the UK's most popular (5) public artworks created since 2000 and found that:



13% of these works were by female artists

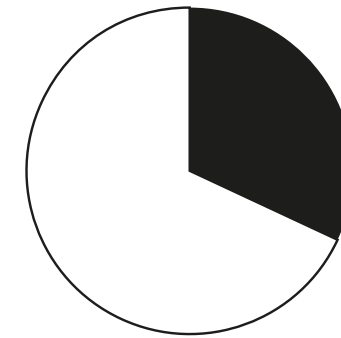
We conducted an audit of post-war public sculptures selected to be Grade II and Grade II* listed in 2016 and found that:



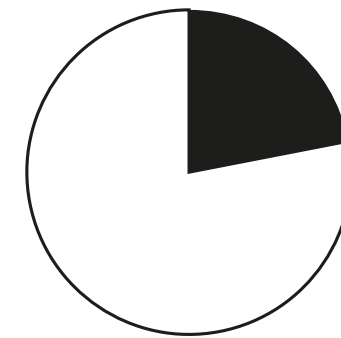
17% of these works were by female artists

Admission onto the ArtReview's prestigious Power 100 is a marker of influence in the art world. Unfortunately women, including artists, curators, collectors, gallerists, etc., made up less than a third of this list in 2016. And, of the 23 artists included in the list, women made up less than a quarter. There were only two UK nationals among the artists included in the list and therefore it was not possible to refine these entries for UK artists in any meaningful way.

We analysed ArtReview's 2016 Power 100 list and found that:



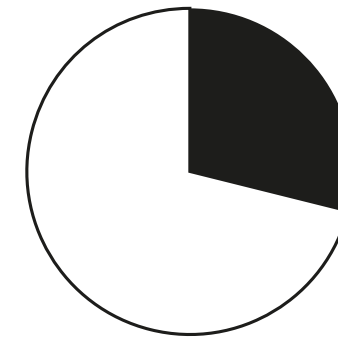
32% of entries were women



22% of artists on the list were women

Representation by a major commercial gallery provides career recognition and stability for an artist. Gender disparity in the commercial sector is plainly evidenced by this data.

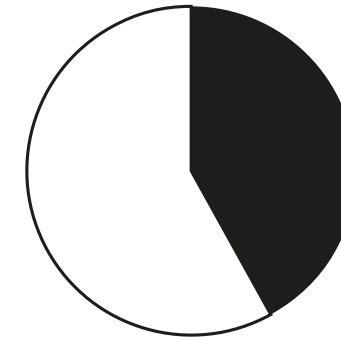
We conducted an audit of artists represented by London's major commercial galleries in 2016 and found that:



29% of artists represented by London's major commercial galleries were women.

We are pleased that despite the disparity in represented artists, many major galleries gave their prime Frieze week slot to a solo show by a female artist.

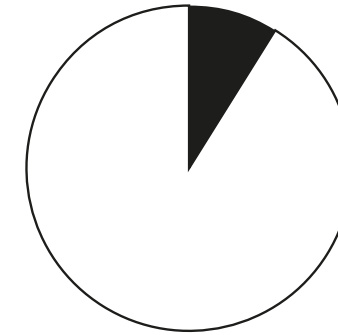
Our audit of solo shows at London's major commercial galleries during Frieze Week 2016 found that:



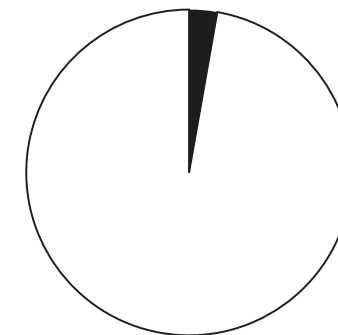
42% of these shows were by female artists.

While we have seen some improvements in the public sector, women are still under-represented in many key aspects of the commercial art world. These appalling statistics suggest that women artists are missing out on the benefits of participation in important market structures, such as the auction house.

We audited lots up for auction at all Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales in 2016 and found that: Jenny Saville's 'Shift' (1970) sold for £6,813,000 in the June 2016 sale. It was the highest price achieved for a work in the sale, and the only work by a female artist in all of the top ten highest-grossing sales in the Contemporary Art Evening Sales in 2016.



9% of these lots were by women artists



3% of the top ten highest-grossing sales in each of the Contemporary Art Evening Sales were by women artists

- 1 Audit of solo shows in the exhibition programme of 44 non-commercial galleries in London – based on the New Exhibitions of Contemporary Art (NECA) listings, this report audited solo shows in the exhibition programme of 44 non-commercial galleries in London in the period January 2016 – December 2016. In total, 156 solo shows were examined. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender. From those 44 organisations, the research identified which institutions were NPOs (in 2016) or DCMS grant-in-aid organisations, and how much money they received (in 2016). Of the 44 organisations that were initially audited, 17 were NPOs or DCMS funded, and 72 solo shows were examined.
- 2 Audit of solo shows in the exhibition programme of 33 non-commercial galleries outside London – also based on the NECA listings, this report audited solo shows in the exhibition programme of 33 non-commercial galleries outside London, in the period January 2016 – December 2016. In total, 181 solo shows were examined. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender. From those 33 organisations, the research identified which institutions were NPOs (in 2016), and how much money they received (in 2016). Of the 33 organisations that were initially audited, 20 were NPOs, and 98 solo shows were examined.
- 3 Most popular public artworks created since 2000 – based on a compilation of five ‘Best of...’ lists of public art, which were then filtered to examine works after 2000 only. In total, 31 works were examined. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender. Collaborations of more than two people were excluded.

- 4 ArtReview’s Power 100 – based on the list published by the magazine in 2016. We analysed all 100 entries to identify the number of women on the list. Then, we applied the filter ‘artists’ to identify the number of female artists on the list. Mixed-sex entrants were excluded, while same-sex, two-person entrants were counted towards the relevant gender. Entries constituting more than two people were excluded.
- 5 Artists Represented by London’s Major Galleries – based on galleries selected to participate in the main section of Frieze Art Fair in 2016. In total, 35 galleries and 1,248 artists were analysed. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender.
- 6 Solo Shows at London’s Major Galleries During Frieze Week 2016 – based on galleries selected to participate in the main section of Frieze 2016. We then analysed the solo shows that were being held in their gallery during the week of the Fair. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender.
- 7 Sotheby’s Contemporary Art Evening Sales – based on auction events in London in February, June and October 2016.

- (1) East London Fawcett (ELF) is a campaign group for equality between men and women. In 2012/13, ELF launched the Great East London Art Audit, a yearlong campaign to assess the representation of women in London's art world. More information about that study can be found at <https://elartaudit.wordpress.com/>.
- (2) In this report, 'major institutions' are defined as organisations in receipt of over £1 million ACE/DCMS funding.
- (3) UCAS data shows relative consistency in the number of women studying creative arts and design over the last decade. In 2007, 61% of undergraduates studying creative arts and design were women, and in 2012, 63% were women.
- (4) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) are Arts Council England's (ACE) regularly funded organisations. Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) funded organisations, such as Tate and the Victoria and Albert Museum, are organisations that receive grant-in-aid directly from the DCMS. Throughout this report we have specified organisations that are either NPOs or DCMS funded as a way of identifying established, government-backed institutions of some standing.
- (5) In order to identify the most 'popular' works of public art in the UK, we compiled a list of five 'Best Of...' lists of public art published by the Guardian, The Telegraph, The Royal Academy of Arts, Culture24 and TimeOut. The lists were filtered to consider works produced after 2000 only.
- (6) In this report, we define 'major commercial galleries' as galleries that were selected to participate in the main section of Frieze London 2016.

Charlotte Bonham-Carter is the researcher and writer of this report. The report is one of a series of studies undertaken for the Freelands Foundation to investigate issues in the arts sector. Charlotte is a published author, arts manager and consultant, and Course Leader of MA Arts and Cultural Enterprise, at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts, London.

The report is copy edited by Sarah Auld, an independent editor and formerly Publications Manager at the Whitechapel Gallery.

