

Judith Center Launches To Battle Gender Inequality

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Today, the fact of gender inequality and disparity throughout the art world, in museum collections, auction sales, and even in art reviews, is not news. However, what is shocking is how persistent these inequalities remain.

Over the last fifty years gender disparity has narrowed, but so slowly and so little. Often gender bias persists in situations where there is no reason for these inequalities to continue. Galleries, museums, auctions, even art publications have no reason to feature men more than women, but they continue to do so for a variety of reasons that can be seen as economic, social, and even political.



Artist Kathryn Andrews, founder of The Judith Center PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHRYN ANDREWS

Recently, Los Angeles based artist Kathryn Andrews launched [The Judith Center](#), a not-for-profit with plans to advocate nationally to combat systemic gender discrimination through commissions, exhibitions, talks, and events in collaboration with activists, scientists, artists, and politicians. In October, the Judith Center plans to open their Los Angeles location at the LA Mart building in downtown LA.

According to what [Bright Data](#), a web data collection company, assembled for this article, the work of women artists continues to be less collected, in less collections, be reviewed and written about less and be valued and sold for less than the work of male artists.

Researching gender inequality in contemporary art is challenging because galleries, auction houses, and museums do not make their holdings completely transparent. Beyond that, gender disparity in the art world is also a function of structural inequities inherent in our market economy. There is no easy way to assess whether the concentration of wealth in men is the reason works by male artists are more collected and sell for more money than those of women.

bright data

Bright Data, a web data collection company COURTESY BRIGHT DATA

Bright Data, a web data platform that by their own description “allows for quick and easy data collection at scale to advance AI, business, and research initiatives,” at our request gathered information about modern and contemporary art since 1950. The data was collected from publicly available sources, and because it was more accessible, focused on the record of large institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (the MET), as well as Christies recent auctions of contemporary art, as well as data about digital news and reviews of art and artists in 2023.

“Bright Data’s collection and analysis of contemporary fine art created after 1950 from the MET and Christies coupled with recent reviews underscores what art experts have been saying for decades, there is a wide gender disparity. While experts have pointed to a lack of data, from previous estimates to until now it appears that numbers are slowly improving,” Bright Data spokesperson Jennifer Burns said.

To be clear: When we discuss the holdings of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, we are doing so only based on the information they have made publicly available online. There may well be many artworks in their collection that for whatever reason do not appear online. Similarly, for Christies' Auctions we did not look at the totality of what was offered at auction, or what didn't sell, just what did and was made public. Finally, many legacy media have their art reviews behind paywalls, so we could only access what was publicly available online. Nonetheless, despite these disclaimers, the results of the data are worth considering.

[Bright Data](#) searched publicly available information about the contemporary Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (defined as Art since 1950), finding a total of 1540 male artists, compared to 516 female.

Digging deeper into the data set, Bright Data found 4069 art works by men, as compared to 1034 by women in their dataset. That works out to an average of ~2.6 pieces per male artist and ~2.0 pieces per female artist. 59.6% of male artists only have one piece, compared to 62.8% of female artists. 77.7% of male artists have 2 or less pieces, compared to 81.8% for female artists. 91.9% of male artists have 5 or less pieces, compared to 95.3% for female artists.

Bright Data's analysis of the data by gender revealed each decade from 1950 to 2020 increased the pieces of art acquired attributed to female artists. In 1950 17.6% of art acquired was attributed to female artists. While the number did not grow steadily, it did increase over time. In the past 4 years of the current decade 2020-2024 the amount of female art acquired is 40.9%.

However, over the past 74 years the MET has acquired female art at about one fourth of the rate as male art. In the total collection analyzed from 1950 to 2024, female art is represented 20.3% of the time versus art attributed to males, which is represented 4 times that (79.7%.)

The Metropolitan was presented with this information and given the opportunity to respond and/or correct but offered no response.

Bright Data collected data from 301 fine art Christies auctions from January 2020 to March 2024 listed on its website and filtered those for art created after 1950 through 2024. Again, Christie's was presented with this data and offered an opportunity to respond but chose not to.



Jennifer Burns, Director of Public Relations and Communications at Bright Data ELIZA FLASKA PHOTOGRAPHY. COURTESY OF JENNIFER BURNS

“We analyzed the filtered data set of 8,115 lots (pieces of art) for disparity between male and female art. We found 13.9% of art for sale was created by a female artist, compared to 86.1% created by a male artist. On average individual male artists tend to have more pieces for sale. Females averaged 1.8, while males averaged 2.7,” Burns said.

Bright Data also collected the estimated value of each piece and the sold price. Overall male artists tend to make 46% more than females on a sale. The average female piece sold for \$218,014, while male pieces sold for \$318,802.

“In filtering and analyzing Christie’s data, it was obvious that women’s fine art gained value in the late 20th Century. Analysts found very few female pieces created prior to 1950 for sale, but post 1950 those numbers increased. Additionally, art created by males tends to sell for a much higher value,” Burns said.

Los Angeles based artist Kathryn Andrews, whose work intelligently, and with humor, addresses ways of looking to generate greater awareness about power dynamics, gender politics, race, capitalism, and consumerism, has long been concerned about gender inequality in the art world.

Andrews’ work is in the permanent collections of Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among others. Andrews lives and works in Los Angeles.

In conversation with Andrews about the Judith Center and her own experiences, Andrews explained that she has experienced gender discrimination throughout her career and in all aspects of her practice beginning with hiring the craftsmen she works with.

“I worked for many years in factories where the factory owner and the workers at every level of production were men... And that results in all kinds of challenges... When you enter a space and you're not taken seriously, you're already at odds,” Andrews said.

Andrews has experienced how museums and galleries value art made by men more than that created by women. She believes the reason for the persistent inequities are complicated and can be seen in the way wealth is concentrated in the United States. “If the

majority of wealth holders are men, and a certain level of wealth is required to buy art, you're in this system that's grossly defined by that.”

This is also reflected in what art is reviewed. Bright Data examined English-language digital art reviews published in 2023 in English-language digital art reviews of artist's shows and installations. Bright Data did not include publications whose content is not publicly available. Film, written and oral works were also excluded as art to reflect what was collected from the MET and Christies. Nonetheless, a review of 216 articles published in 2023 that met these criteria resulted in identifying 120 artists that were sole named reviews. Bright Data found in 2023 female artists were reviewed 38% of the time, while males were reviewed 62% of the time.

Andrews first thought of founding a think tank about gender inequality during the 2016 Presidential campaign, in which Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton were running for President, Andrews was struck by the rhetoric used and the difference in language about men and women seeking positions of power.

Over the next few years, Andrews began discussions with women from different professions, including the arts, politics, finance, law, business, astronomy, and education, exploring how sexism permeates all levels of society. She was both shocked by how little was understood about discrimination in these different realms and, as she put it, “how intensely normalized within our culture sexism is.” Andrews became convinced that by acknowledging and understanding how bias from one field bleeds into others and how it becomes rooted in others, “we could open up new solutions to the problem.”



Workers preparing the Judith Center office at the LA Mart for its October opening COURTESY OF KATHRYN ANDREWS AND THE JUDITH CENTER

To take on this work, Andrews has launched [The Judith Center](#), a not-for-profit with plans to advocate for equality nationally through commissions, exhibitions, talks and events in collaboration with university art museums and other non-profits. In October, the Judith Center plans to open their new Los Angeles location at the LA Mart building downtown.

Andrews explained that one of the reasons she chose that name, was Artemesia Gentileschi's painting of the biblical story of Judith, the Israelite, who beheaded the Assyrian General Holofernes. Gentileschi had been raped, and her rapist was brought to trial and convicted but never punished or imprisoned. Art historians have

proposed that in this painting, Gentileschi painted Judith as herself, and that in Holofernes she is referencing her rapist.

Andrews further elaborated: “She’s used this painting as a way of addressing her lack of power and the failings of the judicial system. It’s an important example of how art can be used as a tool for justice by those who are oppressed.”

[The Judith Center](#)’s inaugural initiative will play out over the next five years, as 50 American artists have been invited “to produce posters on a range of topics related to contemporary sexism.”

“The artists are women, men and nonbinary persons. We believe inclusion is critical given that gender studies historically has been thought of exclusively as a woman’s arena.”

“We want to focus on questions of masculinity as well, and how traditional constructs of gender reinforce the status quo.”

The Judith Center will exhibit these posters in collaboration with university art museums across the US. Their goal is to partner with 20 institutions over the next five years, with the first exhibition taking place this October at Michigan State University’s Broad Art Museum.

Holding the first exhibition in Michigan is important, Andrews said, because “of the history of violence against female politicians in the State.” (i.e. the plot to kidnap Governor Gretchen Whitmer). Andrews added that because Michigan State is primarily a science school, with a leading focus on new technology, it offers a ripe environment to consider contemporary forms of

sexism. Andrews adds, “Artificial intelligence is the next frontier in terms of where violence is occurring that's impacting the democratic process.”

[The Judith Center](#) location at the LA Mart will offer public programming, performances and exhibitions. The Judith Center is open to volunteers, and further financial support from individuals and organizations, and is seeking to collaborate with institutions across the United States that serve diverse populations to initiate conversations specific to their communities. “We're attempting to be a central place where one can learn how instances of gender inequality are part of our everyday lives. We want to expose what is shaping that alongside solutions.”

For more information about [The Judith Center](#) or to get involved email info@thejudithcenter.org or their [Facebook](#) page or [Instagram](#)

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