

LOS ANGELES COUNCIL OF WOMEN ARTISTS REPORT

June 15, 1971

Women today are demanding the right to live a whole life, to use fully all the mental, spiritual, and physical capacities we possess. We reject the half-life that society has imposed upon us.

Even in those fields in which we participate, such as the visual arts, we seldom attain the same status accorded to men. As many women as men are enrolled in the art schools of this country, but the number of women who achieve recognition is negligible. Women artists are discouraged by a society which places no value upon women in the role of artist. We persevere, only to find that our work is repeatedly ignored, misunderstood, or underrated by a male-dominated art community.

Women represent 53% of the population. Yet at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, between 1961 and 1971, only 4% of the works shown in group shows have been done by women. (Of 713 artists shown, only 29 have been women.) Of the fifty-three one-artist shows at the museum in this time, only one was devoted to a woman artist. ^{plus 70%} On June 1, 1971, a count of works on display in the Ahmanson wing of the museum revealed 520 by men, 285 anonymous, and exactly 5 (less than 1%) by women. On that same day, the rental gallery displayed 32 works by men, 3 by a woman. Of the 29 works displayed in the sculpture court and on the grounds, all 29 were by men. The 24 Young Los Angeles Artists show included 21 works by men, 3 by women. And in the Art and Technology show, the ~~season's most touted offering~~, there were works by 16 men and NONE by women. These statistics clearly indicate the discrimination practiced against women artists, not just at the Los Angeles County Museum, but all over the country.

add artist
in January

- add recent shows -

2

The Los Angeles Council of Women Artists is an amalgam of women painters, sculptors, art historians, critics, teachers, film-makers, craftswomen, graphic artists, curators, collectors, and industrial designers. As women artists, we are not seeking token acceptance into museums or galleries which have not questioned the inherent inequities in the present structure of the art world. We want to help change that structure, so that it will be more responsive to its constituency, half of which is women. We want the public to understand that our efforts are part of the efforts of women throughout this country who are working to give full, meaningful status to women in every area of our society.

We were particularly provoked by the blatant discrimination against women in the highly publicized Art and Technology show now at the Los Angeles County Art Museum. Sixteen artists are represented in this invitational show - NONE are women. NONE of the technical advisors with whom they collaborated were women. A prominent curator of modern art and the organizer of this show claims in the show's catalogue that he sought "as wide a range of artists as possible." But in fact they invited no Blacks, no Chicanos, no Asians, and no women. Not only were no women invited to be in this show, but of the 78 unsolicited proposals received by the museum, many of which were printed in the catalogue, only one by a woman was even published.

This same curator indicated that while he was aware of the moral conflicts involved in asking artists to collaborate with, as he put it, "the temples of Capitalism, or more particularly, with militarily involved industry", he felt justified in carrying on with the show because he felt it would increase the prestige of the L.A. County Museum, thereby placing it in a more competitive position to vie with other museums for funding, donations, and retrospective shows of leading artists. The Los Angeles Council of Women Artists wonders whether the primary objective

of any museum is to compete with other museums, especially when this competition tends to minimize the worth of the individual work of any given artist, and to concentrate on the show as a quasi-theatrical event with the real emergent star and focus of the exhibition being the "curator-producer-director." This new form of museum show subjugates the artist to the concept of the show. These staged extravaganzas force the artist into that very corporate structure which he or she has traditionally avoided. *These corporate productions are a burden to the taxpayer, as well.*

The Art and Technology show has been heralded as "the wave of the future." If this is so, then we are most distressed to observe that there are no women in it. Distressed, but not surprised. Women in our patriarchal society are supposed to be consumers, not producers. The more museums and artists ally themselves with big corporations, which are sexist by definition, the more the art world will have a vested interest in ignoring the works of women artists.

The L. A. County Museum and other art institutions have the potential to reverse the present discriminatory situation by recognizing and encouraging the many women artists who are already doing professional although unpublicized work. The Los Angeles Council of Women Artists has prepared a program whereby the museums would alter certain procedures to allow more exhibitions, purchase awards, and new talent²scholarships for women. The program also includes provisions for educating the public as to the contributions of women to the arts in the past and opportunities for women now and in the future. We hope to negotiate first with the Los Angeles County Art Museum concerning this program; however, if necessary, we are prepared to persuade them through the legal means of the Civil Rights Commission via a law suit.

To implement this program, we therefore propose:

- ✓ 1. That henceforward half of all contemporary work shown by the L.A. County Museum of Art be the work of women artists.
- ✓ 2. That henceforward half of all one-artist shows mounted by the L.A. County Museum be devoted to women artists.
- ✓ 3. That henceforward half of those contemporary works purchased by the museum for its permanent collection be the works of women artists.
- ✓ 4. That a concerted effort be made to seek out works by early women artists to add to the older works in the permanent collection.
- ✓ 5. That half of the Board of Trustees be women, and that one of these women be a working artist.
- ✓ 6. That, starting from the bottom up, all jobs at the L. A. County Museum be granted, at EACH LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION AND SALARY, half to women and half to men. This applies equally to senior curators and to secretaries.
- 7. That the job of docent be a paid position, thus creating job opportunities for men and women seeking professional careers in the arts and eliminating a situation whereby certain women are, in effect, penalized because of the success of their husbands.
- 8. That fund-raising functions be eliminated from the curator's job and that curators not be permitted to advise private collectors. A curator with no obligations is freer to choose an unknown artist's work either for purchase or for exhibition.
- 9. That there be no interlocking directorships; that in cases where conflict of interest necessitates the resignation of a trustee, he or she be replaced by a trustee more representative of a cross-section of the Los Angeles community, so that eventually the museum really belongs to its constituency, which include many Blacks, Chicanos, *native Americans* Asians, and women.

- ✓ 10. That resale of purchased or donated work be publicly announced, since it is in the public domain.
- ✓ 11. That museum directors, curators, etc., support the Seth Siegelraub contract which protects artists by entitling them to a royalty on each resale of work. *Can. Res. to be staffed by*
- 12. That an ~~EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM~~ *L.A. Center for Women's Art* be initiated in the following manner:
 - A. That a fund be established to cover the salaries of one or more women art historians to research the history of women in art, with an aim both to purchase works by women for the permanent collection and to establish a slide bank of works which will be available for educational purposes both to schools and to the general public *Min. the gates*
 - B. That half of the prizes awarded annually by the New Talent Committee to young Los Angeles artists be granted to women. *That the job of docent be a paid position*
 - C. That a fund be established to provide scholarships for women who wish to train as art historians and art critics, with special efforts made to attract women from minority groups.
 - D. That the museum provide funds to develop a program for teaching secondary and primary level children about the contributions of women artists, and about opportunities and training programs for future women artists.
 - E. ~~That a~~ Museum Council for Women in Art be set up to supervise the implementation of these proposals, and to provide continuing educational programs for adults and children about women in the arts.

1. Sp. Curator for a ...
2. Sp. Curator for a ...
3. Sp. Curator for a ...
4. Admin. ...
5. Sec'y ...
6. Librarian

Appendix II

ONE-ARTIST SHOWS AT THE L. A. COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

1961 Modigliani
Peter Bruegel the Elder
Mauricio Lasansky
Georges Roualt

1962 Jean Dubuffet
Simon Rodia
Reuben Nakian
Umberto Boccioni
Tiepolo

1963 Philip Guston
Gaston Lachaise

1965 Bonnard
Mitelli
Peter Voulkos
R. B. Kitaj
Constable
David Smith
Knud Merrild
John Paul Jones

1966 Giacometti
Edward Kienholtz
Josef Albers
Man Ray
Picasso
John Mason
Seymour Rosen

1967 Morris Louis
Inigo Jones
Jackson Pollock
Rico Lebrun
R. M. Schindler
Aubrey Beardsley
Rodin

1968 Chaim Soutine
•Dorothea Lange
Wallace Berman
Burgoyne Diller
H. C. Westerman
Billy Al Bengston

1969 Vincent Van Gogh
Willem de Kooning
Stephen von Huene
Richard Diebenkorn
Rembrandt
Edvard Munch
George Brecht
Mies van der Rohe

1970 Mondrian
John Marin
Sam Francis
Daumier

1971 Scott Grieger
Hayningen-Huene

Appendix III

GROUP SHOWS AT THE L. A. COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

<u>Year</u>	<u>Show</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Unknown</u>	<u>Women</u>
1961	Precisionist View	15		2
1962	American Prints Today	43		5
	Ben Heller Collection	13		0
1963	Six Painters and the Object	6		0
	Six More	6		0
1964	Post-Painterly Abstraction	30		1
1965	New York School	15		0
1966	American Paintings from the Metropolitan Museum of Art	97	3	2
	Ceramic Work of Gertrud and Otto Netzler	1		1
	*Craftsmen U. S. A.	198		79
1967	Ten Italian Architects	10		0
	Leigh Block Collection	32		0
	David E. Bright Collection	17		0
	American Sculpture of the Sixties	66		5
1968	Late Fifties at the Ferus	16		1
	American Pastels and Watercolors	11		0
	American Printmaking	31		0
	Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage	87		3
	Eight American Masters of Watercolor	8		0
	John Sloan and George Bellows	2		0
1969	Kate Steinitz Collection	25		4
	Ganz Collection	17		0
	Prints from Gemini	2		0
	Drawings from Lewis Collection	17		1
1970	The Cubist Epoch	59		1
1971	Three Graphic Artists	3		0
	24 Young Los Angeles Artists	21		3
	Art and Technology	16		0

*This show was not included in our statistics. There seems to be less discrimination against women in crafts.