

Women in Art Fair Returns with Challenging Programme for London Frieze Week

by Editorial Team

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Women in Art Fair returns to the Mall Galleries this year to provide a prominent platform for women artists, gallerists and curators during Frieze, London's biggest annual arts week.

"This is not about excluding men," says fair founder Jacqueline Harvey, "It's about disrupting the established model which isn't serving us, as it's failing half of the artistic community: women."

She continues, "We need radical innovation to address the glaring gender imbalance in the industry. We stand for diversity and inclusion in the arts, and we're here not just to encourage dialogue around gender and culture but fundamentally to change the way art is exhibited."

Making women's work visible is where Women in Art Fair's annual event succeeds. Launched in 2023 with 20 galleries and 200 independent artists showing work, WIAF had over 2000 submissions via an Open Call for inclusion in this year's Fair, all responding to the theme of the creative process: the challenges and setbacks experienced during the journey to produce a final work of art.

Cynthia Valianti Corbett, a member of the Fair selection committee, has long supported women artists through her eponymous gallery (celebrating 20 years this year), Young Masters Art Prize, which incorporates the Emerging Women Award, and her curatorial platform, Focus on the Female.

She says, "It has been encouraging to see women artists beginning to get more recognition in recent times, building their confidence and bringing more wonderful work to the fore – as has been witnessed by the exceptional quality of work submitted for our Open Call this year. Women in Art Fair is both a powerful initiative – in terms of profile-raising for our exhibitors – and an important moment to celebrate all that women contribute to the art ecosystem."

Women in Art Fair is clear that collaboration with like-minded organisations is needed to help shift the needle on representation of women in the arts. This year, they are teaming up with Rise and Repaint (previously known as ArtGirlRising and Repaint History), a social enterprise that has spent the last six years supporting and advocating for women and non-binary artists globally.

Working with established museums, galleries, and art organizations to help solve the gender gap in the art world, they say: *“Female artists remain drastically underrepresented, and our surveys prove that exhibition opportunities are still severely lacking. Despite increased awareness online, we need real opportunities—like exhibition space for women artists. We are therefore delighted to partner with WIAF to help women artists rise to their rightful position in the art world.”*

Isabel Bardawil, a Specialist and Associate Director in Post-War and Contemporary Art at Christie's, London, agrees that art by women needs more room to be seen.

Her auction statistics do show signs of hope: *“We have observed a substantial rise in the number of works by living artists, particularly women, at auction,”* she says. Since 2023, there has been an *18% increase in the percentage of lots by living women artists offered at Christie’s. In our most recent 20th/21st Century Evening Sale in London in March, 40% of the lots by living artists were by women.”*

It seems that the tide is turning.

Women in Art Fair

9-12 October 2024

Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1