

ARTNEWS

Ten Tough Women Artists Who Stand Up to the Bad Boys

by Robin Cembalest
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In a male-dominated art season, here's where to find female artists who cut, change the rules, explore new horizons, and do it gangsta-style

Word is the bad boys have taken over the New York art world this fall.

"This is an art season that could make you think that the feminist movement never happened," art critic Deborah Solomon said on WNYC last month.

The fall lineup—Balthus at the Met, Magritte at MoMA, Chris Burden at the New Museum, Robert Indiana at the Whitney, Robert Motherwell at the Guggenheim, and Mike Kelley at MoMA PS1—makes it seem as though the bad boys are not the artists, but the people who program the city's art museums with a depressing consistency of race and gender. It made Solomon wonder out loud if it's time to change the rules. Should museums, she asked, be forced to give equal time and space to women?

The question had bloggers Whitney Kimball and Walter Robinson speculating whether mandatory affirmative action for women, like the kind Title IX offers for college sports, could get museums to change their tune—or at least the conversation. But no law could stop Gagosian, to mention one recent, much discussed example, from putting 34 men plus Kim Gordon in its current London group show. Or solve the incredible whiteness of most of America's art museums.

There's some good news, though. Women might be finally getting credit for cave painting, for one thing. Also, the feminist sensibility is alive and well in other art venues around New York, if you know where to look. Here are ten examples:

Earth Work

The main theme at Creative Time's Summit last weekend was Place, particularly the idea of artists moving from one to another to work—whether by installing Land Art (which Lucy Lippard likened to a kind of gentrification) or trying to effect change on the ground. Warnings went out to those newly minted Social Practice MFAs: think about Collaborative Placemaking, a more nuanced, holistic approach to public art projects that involves local communities.

Mary Beth Edelson has been on the job since the '60s. Her current show at Accola Griefen features drawings, documents, scriptbooks, and more from 25 collaborative performance rituals and community-based workshops she staged starting in 1969. Along the way she came up with some ideas to reclaim the land from Earthworks.



Mary Beth Edelson, Earthwork Series: Reclaiming the Land, 1976.
Courtesy the artist and Accola Griefen Gallery,

Other listed artists:

Isa Genzken, Mehreen Murtaza, Laura Hyde, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Alina Szapocznikow, Eleanor Antin, Senga Nengudi, Tameka Norris, Wangechi Mutu and Artemisia Gentileschi