

# WHERE ARE THE WOMEN ARTISTS?

BRIDGET CANDELARIA - DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY & WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES PROGRAM

## INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the Guerrilla Girls' activism in the late 20th century, this research aims to understand the gender disparity still present in art museums today. Despite the potential for more inclusive art scenes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, data shows that museums have not followed cultural trends. While non-art institutions are compelled to consider their lasting exclusionary practices, the need for museums to consider diversity within their own collection is much less clear. Instead these large institutions maintain collections true to their original purpose, a purpose upholding a canonical view of important art.

Data collected for this study from five prominent art museums helps to quantify the extent to which museums have maintained their exclusion of woman artists. Ongoing research focuses on qualitative data analysis of museum histories, their current financial support, and visual analysis of women's art work that has made it into collections.

Art museums have several roles in society, most importantly a role to educate visitors about the art in their mission statement. Without representing artists of all genders and races in their collections, museums deny visitors more complete histories of artistic production. These findings allow for an opportunity to understand the relationship between fine art museums and artist representation.



Susan Miller (left) and Maria Elena Gonzalez (right) at WAVE (Women Artists Visibility Event), June 15, 1984, <https://clarissaligh.com/30th-anniversary-women-artists-protest-moma/>.



©1989 Guerrilla Girls, <https://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects/>.

## METHODOLOGY

Using museum's self-reported online collections, data from five different institutions was collected. The data set includes all permanent collection works from 1900 - today on-view in October/November 2018.

The data was manually entered into a spreadsheet tracking the following information: artwork title, artist name and year. After transferring works' information from the institution's website to the spreadsheet, research on each individual artist was conducted in order to determine both the gender and race of the artist in question.

Using excel, the total numbers of women/men were tallied and turned into a percentage excluding works with "unknown" artists or done by multiple people.

## WHY ON-VIEW WORKS?

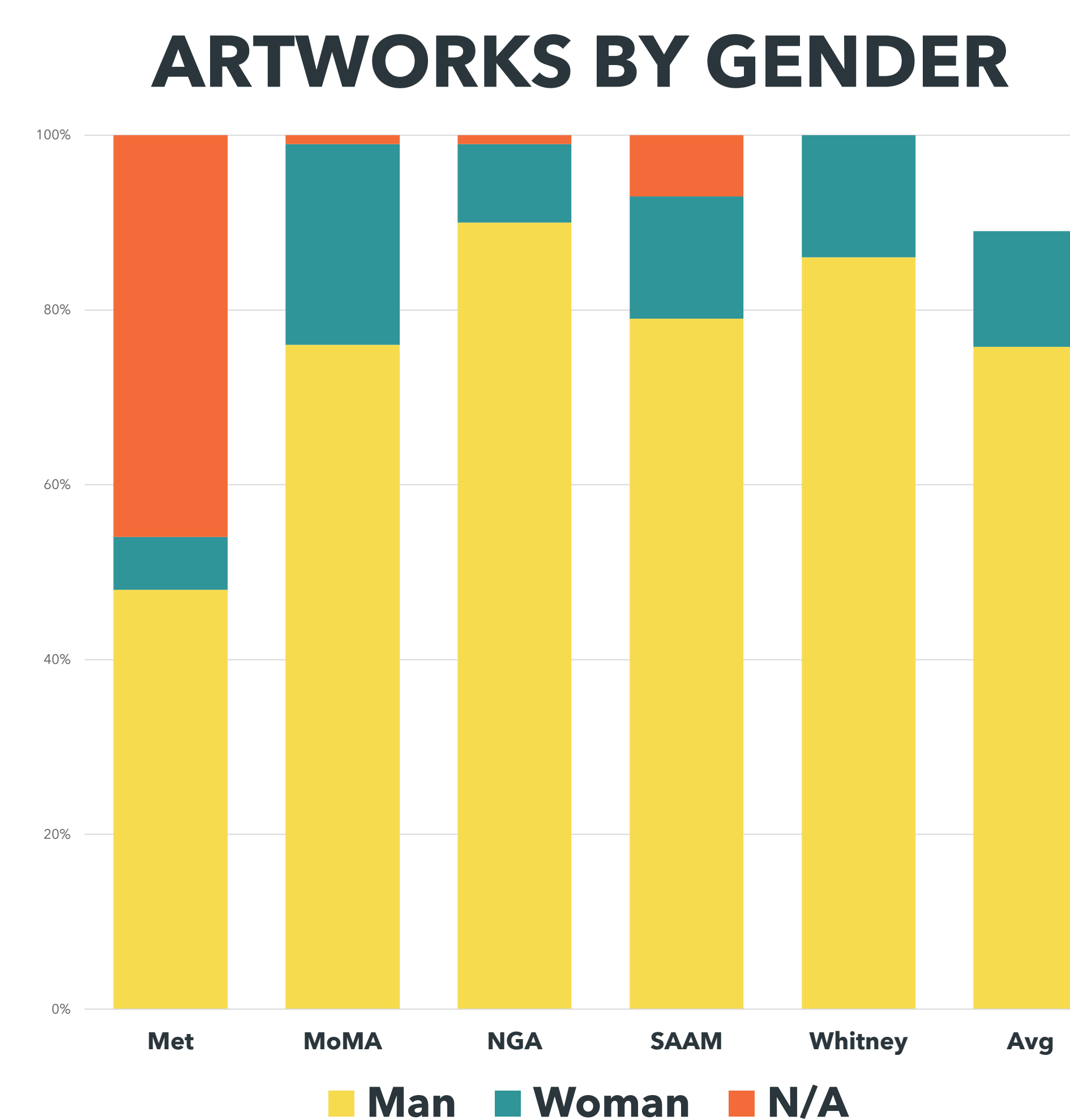
All museums make conscious efforts to determine what goes on their walls and what stays in storage. Whether because of a curator's efforts, an ongoing financial backing, or a popular heritage work, all art on the walls of a given museum is there with intention.

## FINDINGS

A total of 4623 individual artworks across 5 museums show there is a significant gender disparity in the on view works from the last century.

Museum	Woman	Man	N/A
Metropolitan	110	919	864
MoMA	72	243	2
NGA	59	590	1
SAAM	229	1325	109
Whitney	23	135	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>3,212</b>	<b>976</b>

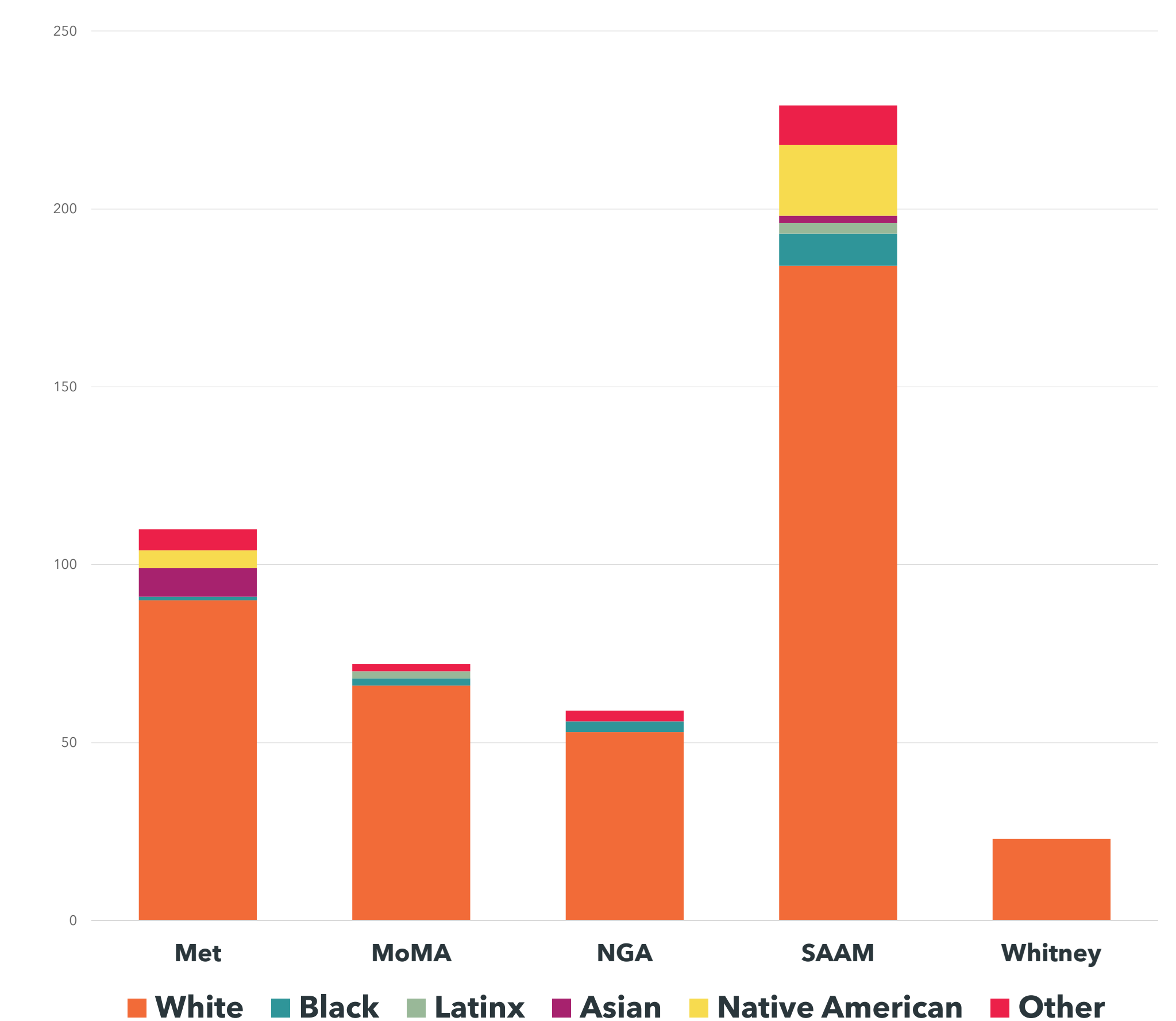
All museums show favorability of artwork by male artists. Museums dedicated to modern and contemporary art did not have more diverse on-view collections, despite the accessibility of art increasing with modernization. There are a significant number of artworks done by communities, more than one artist, or by an unidentified artist. MoMA has the highest percentage of woman artists with 22% of the studied works done by women. The National Gallery has the lowest percentage of works done by women with only 9%. No museums have artwork by artists outside of the gender binary.



## LIMITATIONS

Museum displays are always changing, this study only accounts for a singular moment in time and would benefit from the ability to recount works periodically. The study also relies on a perceived, research driven understanding of the artist's gender and race, therefore has the potential to misidentify either of these identities.

## WOMEN BY RACE



## ON-GOING RESEARCH

- Hirshhorn data collection
- Visual trends of women's work on-view
- Purchase/acquisition trends of women's work on-view

## CONCLUSION

The findings from this research show that woman artists are significantly under-represented in museum collections. With the exception of MoMA, all museums in the study have 15% or less women's artworks on view during the study period.