FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS AND THEORIES OF ART

I. EDITION 2012

Author GUERRILLA GIRLS

Title GUIDE TO BEHAVING BADLY

☐ AZKUNA ZENTROA ✓ ALHÓNDIGA BILBAO

"There is a good principle that created order, light and man, and an evil principle that created chaos, darkness and women"

(Pythagoras, VI century BCs).

"Girls begin to talk and stand on their feet sooner than boys because weeds grow more quickly than good crops"

(Martín Luther, 1533)

"I consider women writers, lawyers and politicians as monsters and nothing but 5-legged calves. The woman artist is merely ridiculous, but I am in favor of the female singer and dancer"

(Auguste Renoir)

"DEAR GROUP OF COMMUNISTS: YOU'RE THE STRONGEST BUNCH OF BITCHES GANGED TOGETHER 1'VE EVER SEEN IN WORLD OF ART. Don't think to career you will make at 80. Best work of art a woman or girl can make is in bed making well love and sometimes procreate non idiot females. Feminism is the reason of highest number of aids casistics (sic) in United States of America. Thank to you bitch feminists if weakest men become gay. A woman can be genius. Do you remember the Holy Virgin you damned bunch of whores. Answer me if you have the courage, bunch of bitches"

(Letter to the GGs from an Italian art critic)

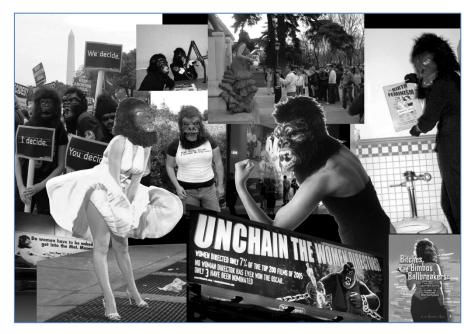
"My dearest Guerrillas: I'm in my senior year at the Willem de Kooning Art Academy in Holland. I'm glad you girls exist. This year I am the only female in my class of who won't be making art of myself naked in order to graduate. It's really frustrating to have my work criticized by male professors for missing that naughty factor"

(Signed, GRRRRR!)

Twenty-eight years ago, we got the idea to put up two posters on the streets of NY about the state of women artists in the New York Art world. It wasn't a pretty picture. But we had a new idea about how to construct political art — to twist an issue around and present it in a way that hadn't been seen before. The **Guerrilla Girls** were born -- an anonymous bunch of women artists who wear gorilla masks in public and take the names of dead women artists as pseudonyms.

We didn't know that our work would cause all hell to break loose... We didn't know it would cause a major crisis of conscience about diversity in the art world, a subject museums, collectors and critics had ignored and denied for a long, long time. Now, after 28 years, it's a no brainer.... you can't tell the story of a culture without all the voices in it.

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Ilustration 1. Collage of Guerrilla Girls work, 1985-2014

We didn't know that those first two posters would lead to hundreds of others, plus street actions, billboards, stickers and books -- not just about about art, but about women and people of color in the worlds of film, politics and pop culture. Who knew that 27 years later we — the agitating outsiders — would wind up inside the museums we criticize, like *The Museum of Modern Art*, NY, and the *Tate Modern London*, where a room of our posters is on permanent display. Who knew we'd do large-scale outdoor projects for cities like Rotterdam, Mexico City, Bilbao, Istanbul, Athens and Shanghai. Plus, we've brainstormed with Greenpeace, participated in Amnesty International's *"Stop Violence Against Women Campaign"*, and we're doing new projects about politics and global women's issues.

The Guerrilla Girls have been so lucky to do this work and we're so grateful that thousands of people all over the world, aged 8 to 80, email us each year telling us that we inspired them to do their own crazy, creative kind of activism.

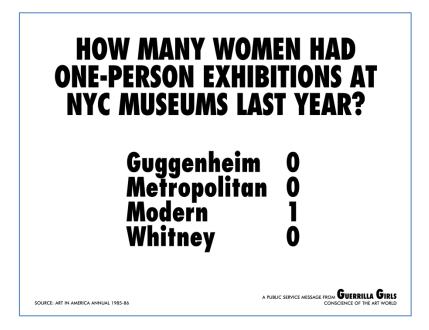
We started out in 1985, sneaking around in the middle of the night putting up posters all over New York, posters that revealed the truth about the status of women artists in the New York Art world. (By the way, affixing a poster to a US mailbox is a serious offense)

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Ilustration 2. Guerrilla Girls poster on US postal box, ca. 1988

We did it because we were pissed off but the posters caught everyone's attention and started everyone talked about the issues. This is an example of how bad things were We weren't complaining because there weren't 50% this or 13% that. We were complaining about 0%, 10%.



Ilustration 3. Guerrilla Girls poster, How Many Women Had One-Person Exhibitions...Last Year, 1985

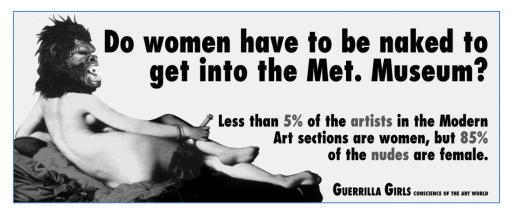
Soon the word on the street was that the Guerrilla Girls are a bunch of whining complainers...so negative! We took this criticism to heart and decided to do a poster to help women artists be more positive about there their situation: The Advantages of Being a Woman artist.



Ilustration 4. Guerrilla Girls poster, The Advantages Of Being A Woman Artist, 1989

This poster has been translated into many languages and hardly a week goes by when we don't get letters from women in fields as diverse as veterinary science, music, cartooning, physics, even mortuary science, telling us that this poster is the story of their lives, too..

A few years later, we were invited to do a billboard in Manhattan and try out this crazy voice we had developed on a larger audience. So we went to the *Metropolitan Museum* to conduct what we affectionately came to call "*The Wienie Count*." We counted naked males versus naked females in the artworks. When we went thru the classical art section, most of the naked figures were male. When we toured the early Christian sections, there wasn't any flesh at all. In the Renaissance and Baroque paintings, the only fully frontal naked figure we could find belonged to the Baby Jesus! It was only when we arrived in the 19th and 20th century, the modern era—when sex replaced religion as the major preoccupation of European artists—that we found this statistic.

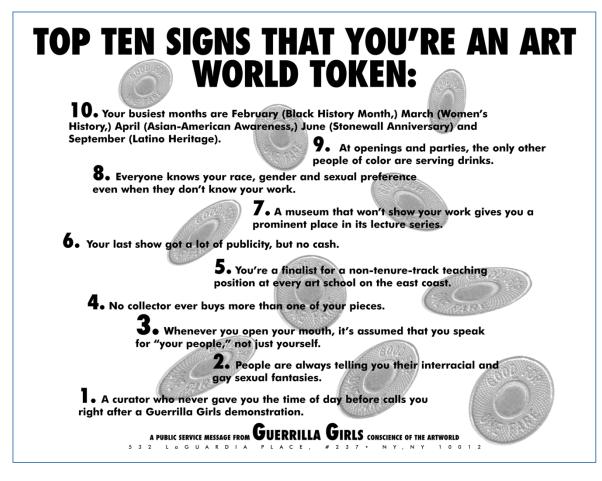


Ilustration 5. Guerrilla Girls poster, Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into The Met Museum? 1989

Our work has made a big difference in the art world, but old habits die hard and some museums are still lagging behind. We went back to the Met summer before last to see if anything had gotten better...we were sure it had...but what did we find: Fewer women artists but more naked males. Is this progress?

Last summer we did a similar count at the *Boston Museum of Fine Arts* to see how they stacked up in the wienie count. An art school in Boston then rented a billboard truck and drove the results all around Boston and in front of the museum. The Museum quickly tweeted that their contemporary collection is over 30% women and they are trying to do better. We're going to keep them to their word.

In the mid 1990s, the buzzword in the art world was multiculturalism. Art institutions were playing catch up with women and artists of color. But instead of showing the great diversity of women and artists of color, we realized that most museums were showing the same few artists over and over. We decided to do a campaign about tokenism asking the question: is Tokenism a solution or a continuation of the problem of exclusion? Top Ten Signs You're an Art World Token. Every one of these things happened to members of our group.



Ilustration 6. Guerrilla Girls poster, Top 10 Signs That You're An Art World Token, 1995

Recently the Guerrilla Girls have been busier than ever...and we've faced with a dilemma: what do you do when the system you have spent your life attacking embraces you? In 2005 we were asked to do a large-scale installation at the *Venice Biennale*. In the last couple of years our work has been seen at major museums all over the world. So what's a girl activist to do? We've agonized over it, but for now we've made the decision to participate in exhibitions and appearances at museums because we want to get our message out to as large an audience as possible...and...it's a thrill to criticize art institutions on their own walls.

In Venice we did an installation of six 17-foot high posters that were the first thing viewers saw in the main exhibition hall of the Arsenale.

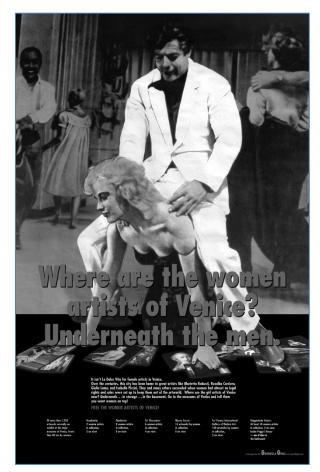
First we took on the Biennale itself, documenting 110 years of discrimination. But we also declared it the first feminist biennale. Why? Because it had the first women directors ever, and — SURPRISE — the highest number of women artists ever.



Ilustration 7. Guerrilla Girls project for Venice Biennale, Benvenuti Alla Biennale Femminista! 2005

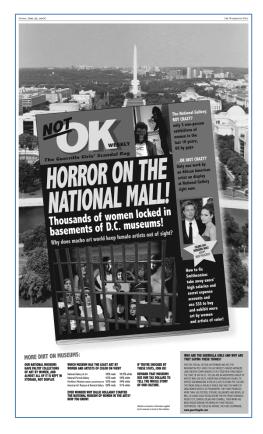
Then we also took on the museums of Venice. We discovered that every historical museum in Venice, except one, has work by women in their collection, but almost all of it is kept in the basement, not on the walls. We appropriated the iconic image of Marcello Mastroianni straddling Anita Ekberg from the famous Fellini film "*La Dolce Vita*". Then we demanded that viewers go to the museums of Venice and tell them to put more women on top!

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Ilustration 8. Guerrilla Girls project for Venice Biennale, Where Are The Women Artists Of Venice? 2005

When *The Washington Post* newspaper gave us a full page as part of a special section on feminism and art, we designed our own tabloid, *NOT OK!*, *The Guerrilla Girls' Scandal Rag*, to reveal the shocking truth about the low, low number of women and artists of color in the US' national art museums. *HORROR ON THE NATIONAL MALL! Thousands of women locked in basements of D.C. museums!*. We even got the Post to buy us a pic of Brangelina, since no tabloid is complete without them. (Their caption says: "Celebs Say, Museums must adopt new policies.") We got all our statistics from the museums themselves or from their websites, but when the Post called to fact-check, the museums went bananas! The National Gallery hurriedly installed a sculpture by an artist of color, and the Hirshhorn suddenly found works by women and artists of color it never knew it owned!



Ilustration 9. Guerrilla Girls project for the Washington Post, Horror On The National Mall! 2007

Lots of museums have the names of dead white males permanently inscribed on their facades. We've always wondered if that wasn't part of the problem. So, we've come up with a solution - a sex change operation.

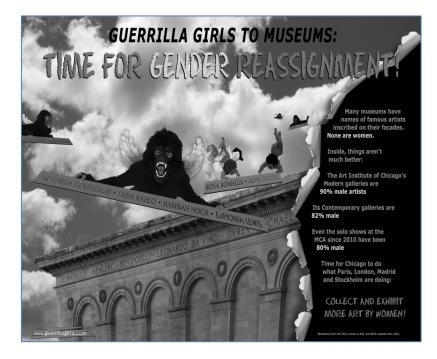


Illustration 10. Guerrilla Girls project for Columbia College, Time For Gender Reassignment! 2012

Our latest poster, which debuted a few weeks ago in Chicago, does just that to the *Art Institute of Chicago*. "Guerrilla Girls to Museums: Time for Gender Reassignment. Right now", AIC modern galleries are 90% male, the contemporary galleries are 82% male, and there is only one work by an African American woman on display. Now that we've done the poster version, we're ready to do it for real

Let's look at an area of US culture that's even worse in than the art world — Hollywood.

The film industry wants to think of itself as edgy and progressive and ahead of the curve but if you look behind the scenes, at writers, directors, editors, you find a pathetically low number of women and people of color. So for several years we've been renting billboards in Hollywood just a few blocks from where the Academy Awards are held. For our first one, in 2002, we decided to put a little realism into the Academy Awards. We redesigned the Golden Boy to look more like the guys who take him home.



Ilustration 11. Guerrilla Girls billboard, The Anatomically Correct Oscar, 2002

"The Anatomically Correct Oscar: He's White and Male, just like the Guys who win". We had to back up this outrageous statement with the facts: No woman had ever won Best Director. 94% of the writing awards have gone to men. Only 3% of the Acting awards have gone to people of color. That was the very year both Denzel Washington and Halle Berry won Oscars for their performances and we are convinced it was...because of our billboard. A few years later, Mo'Nique and then Octavia Spencer became the fifth and sixth African-American women in 90 years to win an Oscar for acting, Geoffrey Fletcher became the first African-American to win a writing award, and Kathryn Bigelow became the first women to win Best Director...and of course we take credit for that, too.

Now for some pure politics. We've done lots of posters about politics and social issues, particularly during the Bush era, when everyone asked, "What are the Guerrilla Girl doing to help our country's efforts to fight terrorism?" Well, we've developed a new weapon that we think could change modern warfare forever.



Ilustration 12. Guerrilla Girls billboard for Meltdown Festival London, The Estrogen Bomb, 2012

The Estrogen Bomb: Drop it on Washington and the super rich 1% trying to take over the US government will government throw down their big guns, hug each other, say it was all their fault, then finally start to work on human rights, education, healthcare and an end to poverty. Got left over estrogen pills? Send them to Karl Rove, the Koch brothers, Foster Freiss, Sheldon Adelson and the corporate CEO of your choice.

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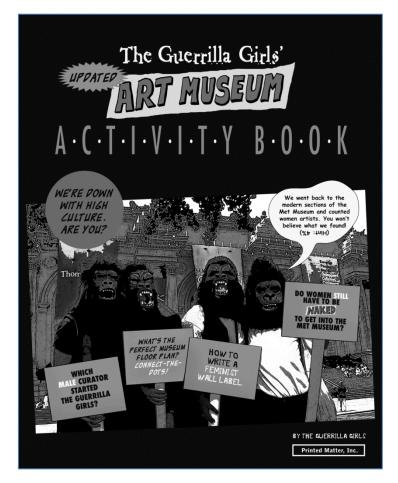
Ilustration 13. Guerrilla Girls street project for Montreal, Disturbing The Peace, 2009

Recently we finished a poster about hatred of and violence against women that appeared on the streets of Montreal on the 20th anniversary of their worst mass murder ever in Canada. A gunman, Marc Lepine, claimed he was "fighting feminism," and killed 14 women studying engineering at the Ecole Polytechnique. Our poster is a graffiti wall of sexist hate speech through the centuries -- from Plato to Confucius, who said "One hundred women are not worth a single testicle," to Pat Robertson, who said feminism "is a socialist, anti-family movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." It struck us that it's still ok to publically say things about women that wouldn't be tolerated if said about other groups.



Ilustration 14. Collage of Guerrilla Girls Books

We love doing posters and billboards, but over time we wanted to go a little deeper and explore the underlying causes of discrimination. First we wrote an art history book, "*The Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art*", which offered an alternative to the usual textbooks and discussed the lives of women artists in every period of Western Art.



Ilustration 15. Guerrilla Girls Art Museum Activity Book, 2004-2012

We love art and artists but let's face it -- the art world and the art market really suck. Both are full of poseurs, snobs, insider traders, and crooks. The art market is pretty much unregulated. In fact, it has been described as the 4th largest black market in the world -- after drugs, guns and diamonds. It's the playground of the 1% of the 1%-- who manipulate prices and tell the rest of us what museums should collect. The following is lifted mostly from our new, updated "*Guerrilla Girls' Art Museum Activity Book*". It's our parody of those books museums sell to teach kids to appreciate art. Only ours encourages everyone to criticize museums.

A Brief History of Museums. It all began because rich people have always had a lot of stuff. A few centuries ago they ran out of space in their palaces and churches and needed new places to store it all. Bingo! They started art museums. In Europe, museums became part of the government and are run by bureaucrats and civil servants. In the US, most museums were—and still are—funded and overseen by the super rich.

Lots of the art you see in European and American museums was originally stolen: sometimes from countries (the Greek friezesin the British Museum), sometimes from indigenous peoples (Indian artifacts in US museums), and even from victims of the Holocaust. Some countries, native peoples and families are now trying to get their stuff back. But, the richest museum in the world, the Getty, just hired a president who doesn't believe modern countries have any claim to antiquities from their past, even after a Getty curator went on trial for smuggling! Finders keepers, losers weepers!

Few museums collected art of their own time until the *Museum of Modern Art* was founded in 1929. Today there are plenty of contemporary art museums and they have one big advantage over historical museums. The artists they exhibit are alive and can come to openings, so they have better parties!

Museum directors used to be underpaid, but over the last 10 years their salaries have gone up, up, up! The director of MoMA made a cool \$2.25 million in 2008! With a couple of exceptions, the few women who direct museums are still paid a whole lot less than the guys.

US museums are overseen by a board of trustees consisting mostly of wealthy businessmen who donate money and artworks and get huge tax deductions. Museum newsletters are full of photos of these trustees at museum functions and bios of their illustrious careers—that is, until they go to jail for price fixing or running their companies into the ground. Trustees sit on acquisition committees that help the curators decide what art to collect. Curators don't really need help figuring this out, but they need trustees' money to get the art. It doesn't take a genius to realize that the system is ripe for corruption since collectors can promote acquisitions of work by artists they own, and that in turn makes their private collections more valuable.

If a board member gives enough money, the museum or some part of it will be named after him. We're thinking of endowing the Guerrilla Girls' Toilet Stall at the Whitney.

Until recently, almost every museum was filled with art by white males, plus one or two token women or artists of color. Due to the work of the Guerrilla Girls, and lots of other tireless agitators and enlightened scholars, things have improved a bit. Now there are nine or ten token women and artists of color who get their work shown.

LET'S TAKE A QUIZ!

QUESTION - Which of the following fashion houses purchased an exhibit of its own designs at a major museum?

A. Dior / B. Cartier / C. Armani / D. Alexander Mac Queen

ANSWER - All of them! Alexander McQueen Inc. was a major financial sponsor of the blockbuster Met show Savage Beauty: Alexander McQueen (2011). When asked about the ethics of a company funding an exhibit of its own work, the curator of the McQueen show said that everyone is tired of that argument, because there's such a long tradition of it! The Met organized a Christian Dior show funded by Dior (1996) and a Cartier show funded by Cartier (1997). The Guggenheim accepted \$5 million from Armani the same year it mounted a major exhibition of Armani design.

QUESTION - How much do art collectors have to pay to get their private collections shown at a museum?

A. Nothing / B. Plenty?

ANSWER - Nothing. Museums fall all over themselves to exhibit people's art collections in the hope that afterwards the art will get donated to the museum.

<u>Plenty</u>, but it's worth it. In 1999, the Brooklyn Museum opened a show of contemporary British art from the collection of Charles Saatchi. He secretly gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to pay for the show. Saatchi auctioned off work by the same artists soon after the exhibit and received record prices.

QUESTION - Can you make money from a museum while you're on its Board of Trustees?

ANSWER - \$11 million says YES! That's what Count Guiseppe Panza di Biumo was paid in 1990 for selling part of his art collection to the Museum of Contemporary Art in LA while he was on the board. He also sold other pieces from his collection to the Guggenheim that year — for \$30 million.

HERE ARE SOME ARTRAGEOUS FUN FACTS ABOUT TWO MUSEUM TRUSTEES

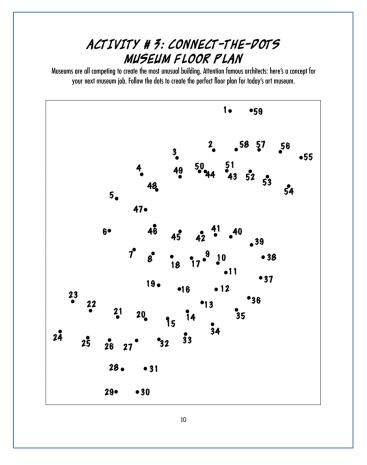
One Who Went To Jail And One Who Got Away. Fun

Fun Fact #1. In the late 1980s A. Alfred Taubman, who made big bucks building shopping centers, sat on the board of the *Whitney Museum of American Art* while he was also the chief stockholder of Sotheby's Auction House. At the Whitney he was privy to which artists the museum would be showing and acquiring—information that could have been very useful to his auction house. No one questioned the ethics of this at the time, but in 2002 the Feds sent him to the slammer for price fixing with rival auction house Christie's.

Fun Fact #2. Ralph Esmerian, art collector, jeweler and Chairman of the *American Folk Art Museum* got 6 years in prison for fraud, false sales and embezzlement. Here's what he did: he used a valuable gem as collateral to obtain a loan, then sold it to someone else and deposited the cash in a Swiss bank account. While Chairman of the Museum he pushed through an expensive renovation that nearly bankrupted the place, then jumped ship when the financial shit hit the fan. MoMA profited from these woes, however, scooping up the new building for a song!

Fun fact #3. Gary Winnick was the guy who dreamed up Global Crossing, manipulated the stock price, sold off his own holdings for \$734 million, then ran the company into the ground, wiping out his employees' pension plans. Now he is on the board of MoMA. Keep him away from the Finance Committee!

Museums are all competing to create the most unusual building. Attention famous architects: here's a concept for your next museum job. All you have to do is connect the dots to create the perfect museum floor plan.



Ilustration 16. Detail from Guerrilla Girls Art Museum Activity Book, 2004-2012

QUESTION - What artist had two retrospectives at a major museum while his art dealer was the brother of the chief curator?

ANSWER - Frank Stella! Stella had a MoMA retrospective in 1970 and again in 1987. Stella's dealer in Europe just happened to be Lawrence Rubin, brother of MoMA curator Bill Rubin. Bill Rubin retired from MoMa in 1988...Stella hasn't had a retrospective there since.

QUESTION - Almost no women artists are good enough to be in a show about what subject:

A. War / B. Still life

ANSWER - Still Life. In 1997 MoMA curator Margit Rowell organized a show titled "Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life." Despite the fact that, throughout the centuries, still life was one of the few categories of art open to women, Margit included only 3 white women and one woman of color out of 71 artists in her show. We sent her hundreds of postcards suggesting she change the show's title to "The Objects of MoMA's Desire Are Still White Males.

QUESTION - Is ONE the number of cocktail parties MoMA gives daily to entice donations from hedge fund managers?

ANSWER - Probably, but <u>ONE</u> is also the pathetic number of career surveys MoMA gave to African American artists over the last five years. And that was to a guy. ZERO is the number of shows given to female African American artists.



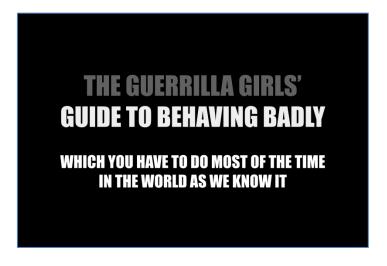
Ilustration 17. Detail from Guerrilla Girls Art Museum Activity Book, 2004-2012

We're always trying to improve museums and whenever we go to a museum store, we can't help but think of products we'd like to see there. Here are a few.

- A baseball cap that says: Diversity in American Museums: 50 Years Behind Baseball
- An umbrella that proclaims The Whitney Museum of Art. None of our present board members are in jail.
- And an Art-Collector-for-a-Day Kit, styled after the life of Leon Black, Met and MoMA trustee, there' everything you need to act like you're a billionaire museum trustee, including:
 - CD of Elton John songs, plus Glittery Party Hat. Pretend to have your own multi-million dollar birthday party in the Hamptons, complete with \$1 million live performance by Sir Elton—just like Leon Black's August 13, 2011 bash.
 - Realistic-looking Auction Paddle. Act out going to Sotheby's and paying \$47 million dollars for an 8 by 10 inch Raphael drawing you will eventually donate to the Met museum for a huge tax deduction.
 - Adorable Recession Proof Piggy Bank. Stash the billions you made buying up distressed debt. Bad times are for everyone but you.

 Toy Stretch Limo and Chauffeur. Play-visit all your former colleagues who are now, or have been, in jail—like Michael Milken. It's so very important to do something nice for those less fortunate.

Two years ago, the Guerrilla Girls gave our first ever commencement address at the *School of the Art Institute of Chicago* -- in front of 4000 cheering people in Millennium Park. Last December, we presented a version of it to Spain's Minister of Culture, and a bunch of Spanish and European curators. We're going to end our talk today with some excerpted rants from our manifesto...



Ilustration 18. Image from The Guerrilla Girls' Guide To Behaving Badly, School Of The Art Institute Of Chicago Commencement Address, 2010

"The Guerrilla Girls' Guide to Behaving Badly, Which You Have to Do Most of the Time in the World as We Know It". This is a guide for artists, art and culture workers and anyone trying to change an entrenched system.

- BE A LOSER. The world of art doesn't have to be an Olympics where a few win and everyone else is forgotten. The art market

 and its hypercompetitive celebrity culture -- makes everyone but the stars feel like failures. But there's another world out
 there that's not about raging egos a world of artistic cooperation and collaboration. That's the one we joined, and you can
 join it, too! It's crucial that we connect and make trouble together.
- BE CRAZY. Political art or activism that points to something and says, "This is bad" is preaching to the choir. Instead, try to change people's minds. And do it in some unforgettable way. Here's a trick we learned: Humor helps you fly under the radar. If you can get people who disagree with you to laugh at an issue, you have a hook right into their brain. Once inside, there's a much better chance to convert them.
- BE ANONYMOUS. Sometimes you gotta speak out publicly, but sometimes it works even better to speak out anonymously. Now this has its disadvantages, like working your whole life without getting any credit, but it has lots of advantages, too. Our anonymity, for example, keeps the focus on the issues, and away from our personalities. The mystery of who we might be draws lots of attention to the issues we promote. Plus...you won't believe what comes out of your mouth while wearing a gorilla mask!
- BE AN OUTSIDER. Even if you are working inside the system, we say act like an outsider. Seek out the understory, the subtext, the overlooked, and the downright unfair. Then expose it. Jam your culture. Remake your institution.
- JUST DO ONE THING. If it works, do another. If it doesn't, do another anyway. Don't be paralyzed if you don't get it right every time. Just keep chipping away. We promise that, bit by bit, your efforts will add up to something effective.

As you have seen tonight, we've done huge banners and billboards all over the world. But there are lots of simple things we've done that you can do too: Stick fliers into the books in museum stores, paste messages on the inside of toilet stalls. Want more

ideas? Attach hang tags with political messages on merchandise in stores, put up street art across from your workplace, slap stickers on fashion magazine covers. In five minutes this crowd could think up a million more ideas.

- ARTISTS: DON'T MAKE ONLY EXPENSIVE ART that only billionaire art collectors can afford. Curators: Don't exhibit only
 the expensive art your trustees donate! Let's have more cheap art that everyone can own.... like books and movies -- like our
 posters can.
- SHOW MUSEUMS TOUGH LOVE. It's unethical that wealthy art collectors who invest lots of money in art can become museum trustees, overseeing institutions that in turn validate their investments.

What a lousy way to write and preserve our history! Demand ethical standards inside museums. Don't allow conflicts of interest or insider trading! No more cookie cutter collections of Art That Costs The Most. Convince art collectors their collections are inferior without work by women and people of color. Don't let museums perpetuate the white male version of art and power, with a few tokens thrown in. Make sure your favorite museum casts a wider net and collects the whole story of our culture.

Finally, whether you work in a museum or a classroom, don't teach an art history constructed by corrupt institutions. Write your own!

- COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN. But be a creative complainer. Be a professional complainer. Don't assume people know what's missing from museums — remind them how many modern and contemporary collections still contain less than 15% women. When we put up banners and billboards about the pathetically low number of women and people of color in art collections -- or working in the film industry -- people tell us how shocked they are that they didn't know this stuff before.



Ilustration 19. Image from The Guerrilla Girls' Guide To Behaving Badly, School Of The Art Institute Of Chicago Commencement Address, 2010

USE THE F WORD — FEMINISM. We think it's crazy that so many people who believe in the tenets of feminism won't call
themselves feminists. Feminism doesn't get the respect it deserves. It changed the world, revolutionized human thought and

gave many women lives their great grandmothers could never have imagined. The "F" word 'feminism" is also the "f" word for the future. Join us on the right side of history.

GUERRILLA GIRLS

www.guerrillagirls.com