

# Art industry perpetuates *injustice!*

Historically, artwork has been utilized to express ideas, opinions and observations from artists representing differing demographics. Students and faculty reflect on injustice within the art industry, the root of the issue, whom its consequences reach and action taken to combat exclusivity.

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Throughout history, Advanced Studio Art student Eddie Yardley ('23) said the art industry holds undeniable power.

Whether a symbol of wealth, a historical reference or a political statement, Yardley said art is the eyes to the past, present and future. Though society celebrates art, he said the injustices hidden behind the frames are often overlooked.

Yardley said the art industry is a "sanctuary" in which society can "embrace culture and history." He said living in Rome expanded his appreciation for historical artwork.

"We would always go to museums and see what people were painting hundreds of years ago," Yardley said. "Art was ultimately a way for me to appreciate the past."

Conversely, Rion Emery ('25) said while art holds the power to stimulate thought and express ideas in a tangible form, it simultaneously elicits a fear that if one "shows too

much of their opinion," it can be misconstrued.

## Art injustice at ASL

Yardley said inequalities within the art community extend beyond the walls of sole art institutions and permeates numerous facets of the school community.

"I've been taking art classes at ASL for four years and we've done research about numerous artists," Yardley said. "We've rarely ever studied a female artist. We just primarily study modern male artists."

Yardley said this lack of diversity in the curriculum often goes unnoticed among students and faculty, which he dubbed problematic because recognition "is the first step in making progress."

Visual Arts Teacher Anthony Gow said the Art Department has entered submissions to the National Arts Education Association, aiming to increase curricular diversity, with a heavy emphasis on anti-racism. Gow said increasing curricular diversity often begins with exploring contemporary artists and the "stereotypes they challenge with visual language."

"My personal mission has

been to expose students to a wide range of contemporary artists in particular," Gow said. "The department wants to open things up in terms of the artists we expose students to and the frequency in which we facilitate discussion around contemporary artists."

Social Studies Teacher Shrita Gajendragadkar, who teaches AP Art History, said significant curricular emphasis is placed on the Western portrayal of art.

"If you study Europe, then you don't have to study the rest of the world, but if you study the rest of the world, you have to study the rest of the world and also Europe at the same depth," Gajendragadkar said. "That is just a pronunciation of how long this is going to go on until they're actually curricularly made equal."

## Exclusivity

Eighty-seven percent of collections exhibited in U.S. art museums consist of works by white, male artists, according to the National Women Museum of Women in the Arts. Further, women constitute 2% of the art industry market, per Artnet.com.

Yardley said the under-

representation of women and minority groups within the art industry runs rampant through white, male domination of the global artistic landscape.

"The art industry is very exclusive because it sets this idea that these people are in the right — that only white males deserve to be in these museums," Yardley said.

Gajendragadkar said the exclusion of this demographic exemplifies the influence of a "material and visual culture" that is remarkably "damaging on many fronts."

Gajendragadkar said art exclusion is determined by the artists within the industry as opposed to the art itself. She said when monetary value is associated with art, this perpetuates exclusion, with the wealthy assuming roles that allow them to "make decisions and direct where the industry is going."

Moreover, Emery said the ubiquity of sexism in the art industry is epitomized through historical art eras, particularly in the representation of wom-

en's bodies and appearance.

"If you examine sexism and male and female roles, when you look back to the Renaissance and paintings of the past, men are normally portrayed as the higher powers in those and the women are portrayed as weaker characters," Emery said.

Ultimately, Gajendragadkar said the objectification of women is put on display, meanwhile work created by women is exhibited less often, demonstrating the gender imbalance within art.

## Consequences

Yardley said a lack of diversity in art inhibits the ability to "fully embrace all the word has to offer," instead providing only a narrow glimpse into a "small section of Western styles."

Emery said she echoes the notion that a lack of diversity in art tends to constrain those who do not fit certain social criteria.

"You can look at all of these pieces of artwork and not be able to relate to or completely appreciate that artwork because the majority is done by men," Emery said. "It can be really discouraging because so many people are not represented in the work that is showcased."

Gajendragadkar said a set criteria existed for artists to conform to so they can attain an acclaimed art education and, subsequently, achieve success in the industry.

"Everyone who is not a white, male artist was essentially not considered an artist because you had to attend an art school in order to be an artist with a capital 'A,'" Gajendragadkar said. "You could only go to those schools if you were white and male."

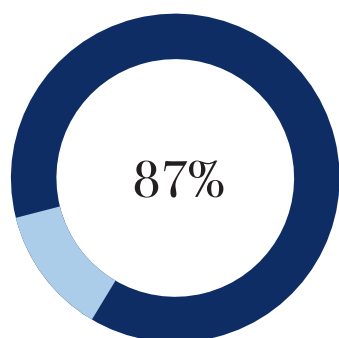
Gajendragadkar also said one's own identity can influence the perception of the art industry.

"In Indian culture, it was not really a thing to study art and archaeology," Gajendragadkar said. "It was very questionable and almost frowned upon being from like a very middle class, regular person background."

Even so, Gajendragadkar said identity did not hinder her experience with art education as she said she "felt just as

“It sets the idea only white males deserve to be in museums.”

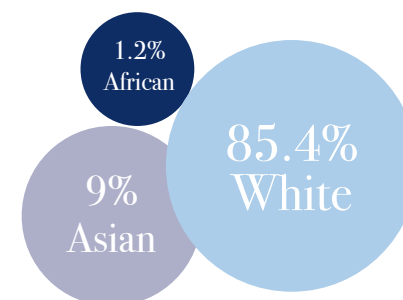
— Eddie Yardley ('23)



of collections in U.S. art museums consist of male works.

Source: National Women Museum of Women in the Arts

## Racial diversity across major U.S. art museums



Source: PLOS One