



Guerrilla Girls!

by Kate Rockwood

Swarms of females wearing ape masks march to a movie awards ceremony, toting posters, signs and paper bags for the crowd. This is not another group of fans gone crazy, ready to pounce on the celebrities as they exit their glossy white limos. These are the Guerrilla Girls, the self-described conscience of the art world and they are here to protest the lack of nominated female directors at the awards.

The Guerrilla Girls, established in 1985, are "a group of women artists, writers, performers, and film makers who fight discrimination" using everything from stickers to bulletin boards, poster to letter writing campaigns. "Dubbing ourselves the conscience of culture, we declare ourselves feminist counterparts to the mostly male tradition of anonymous do-gooders like Robin Hood, Batman, and the Lone Ranger," explained one Guerrilla Girl.

Though no one is sure of exactly how many women now belong to this masked group, everyone agrees on its origins. In 1985 the Museum of Modern Art in New York opened an exhibition titled "An International Survey of Painting and Sculpture," an definitive summary of "the most significant contemporary art in the world." Out of the 169 artists, only 13 were women. All the artists were white, either from Europe or the US. To add insult to injury the curator, Kynaston McShine, said any artist who wasn't in the show should rethink "his" career. Enraged by the clear gender and race bias, women artists protested outside the museum and the Guerrilla Girls was formed.

"Our situation as women and artists of color in the art world was so pathetic, all we could do was make fun of it. It felt so good to ridicule and belittle a system that excluded us," says one Guerrilla Girl about the humor that runs rampant in their posters and signs. "We send secret letters to egregious offenders, often honoring them with bogus awards. We

gave John Russell of The New York Times an award for "The Most Patronizing Art Review" when he reviewed Dorothy Dehner's show and called her "Mrs. David Smith," referring to her famous sculptor husband (they had been divorced for years). We send Season's Greetings to friend and foe. We remind the latter that "We know who's been naughty or nice." We wish the former "Peace on Earth, Goodwill toward women."

While discrimination may be easy to concede examining an all-male board meeting of a Fortune 500 company, convincing people of discrimination within the art world can be

more difficult. "The world of High Art, the kind that gets into museums and history books, is run by a very small group of people. Our posters have proved over and over again that these people, no matter how smart or well intentioned, have been biased against women and artists of color. Thus far, and throughout history, the system has been set up to support and promote the work of white male artists," laments another Guerrilla Girl.

It is not just the networking within the art community that often resembles a boy's club: the connections between dealers, critics and artists. It is the setting of the standard of art, the creation and maintenance of the definition itself. "We create culture," says feminist Catharine MacKinnon, "I also know that we have not only been excluded from making what has been considered art; our artifacts have been excluded from setting the standards by which art is art." Thus females struggle not only to break into a male-dominated field but must also limit themselves to male-determined definitions of art if they are to succeed. "If art is the expression of experience and everyone admits that gender and race affect experience, then it stands to reason that [the work of women and artists of various races] could be different. We think the art that's in

THE ANATOMICALLY CORRECT OSCAR

HE'S WHITE AND MALE, JUST LIKE THE GUYS WHO WIN!

No woman has ever won an Oscar for feature film Director, Cinematography or Sound.

94% of the Writing awards have gone to men.

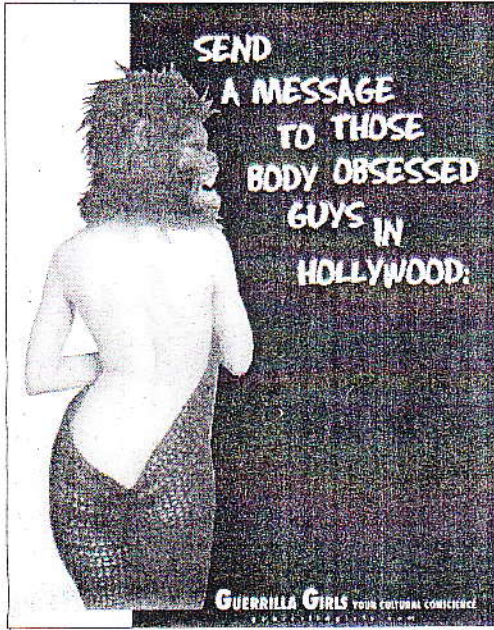
Only 3% of the Acting awards (Leading and Supporting) have ever gone to persons of color (African-American, Latina, and Asian-American combined).



A MESSAGE FROM THE GUERRILLA GIRLS YOUR CULTURAL CONSCIENCE www.guerrillagirls.com

GUERRILLA GIRLS DEMAND A RETURN TO TRADITIONAL VALUES ON ABORTION.

Before the mid-19th century, abortion in the first few months of pregnancy was legal. Even the Catholic Church did not forbid it until 1869.*



the museums and galleries should tell the whole story of our culture—our real culture, not just the white male part,” the Guerrilla Girls explain.

This doesn't mean an implementation of quotas in which museums are forced to begrudgingly host equal numbers of men and women; it means a redefinition of art itself. “We've never, ever mentioned quotas. We've never attacked an institution for not showing 50% women and artists of color but we have humiliated them for showing less than 10%,” said one Guerrilla Girl. She pauses for a moment, smiles and continues, “To make up for what's happening so far in art history, every show should be 99% women and artists of color, but only for the next 400 years. We're not going to forget about Rembrandt and Michelangelo. We just want to move them over to make room for the rest of us!”

In the meantime, the Guerrilla Girls continue to distribute posters and protest award ceremonies; they host letter-writing campaigns to museums and encourage others to do the same. Crowded outside one awards ceremony, the Guerrilla Girls have been warmly received by the crowds who chant along and hold up the signs they've been handed. The police are careful to keep the Guerrilla Girls behind ropes; the celebrities are confused as they arrive. For the Guerrilla Girls, confusion is the best thing next to revolution. **FP**

Kate Rockwood doesn't identify as a Guerrilla Girl. Yet.

THERE'S A TRAGEDY ON BROADWAY AND IT ISN'T ELECTRA.

Only 8% of the plays and less than 1% of the musicals on Broadway are written by women. Guerrilla Girls think that's even sadder than a Greek tragedy. There's only one explanation for what's currently playing: **DISCRIMINATION**

Waging War on Working Women

Bush administration slashes women's initiatives in Washington

by Kristen Blue Shelby

The Bush administration's proposed budget involves an attack on the only unit in the federal government dedicated exclusively to the concerns and rights of working women, the Department of Labor Women's Bureau. Established by Congress in 1920, the DOL Women's Bureau played an integral role in promoting the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, and has continued to address the needs of working women in the form of educational campaigns to teach women about discrimination issues, pay equity, health and child care, and other issues that concern working women. The Women's Bureau also works with local women's advocacy groups to promote fairness in the workplace and high skill and wage work for women. The Women's Bureau was designed to “formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment.” Clearly, the elimination of this bureau demonstrates the direction of the Bush administration's agenda with regard to women and is an attack on women fighting to achieve equality in the workplace.

Currently, women comprise 46% of the total American work force, a huge expansion since the foundation of the Women's Bureau. Yet, the large number of women in the workforce makes the job of this bureau even more important, as there are still major issues for working women that must continue to be addressed. One-third of all working women do not have paid sick leave and many benefits have declined over the last generation, such as health care and retirement benefits. In addition, the Women's Bureau plays an integral role in making the welfare-to-work transition effective.

This is not the first time women's organizations within the government have come under attack by the Bush administration. Just last month, a group of women in the military expressed discontent at the

administration's abandonment of a board that reported to defense leaders about women's issues and pressed for women's full participation in the military. Last January, the Bush administration closed down the White House Office on Women's Initiatives and Outreach, which acts as a liaison between the government and women's groups and worked to advance the Family and Medical Leave Act. Karen Nussbaum, the former director of the Women's Bureau, says, “getting rid of these offices is another way the Bush administration is cutting off working women from solutions to their problems.”

While the proposed budget cuts do not eliminate the bureau entirely, they do close many of the regional offices of the Women's Bureau, thus centralizing the organization and rendering it incapable of fostering local initiatives. Melissa Josephs, of the Chicago-based Women Employed, says, “We see this as a step to eliminating the Women's Bureau completely.” Clearly, these attacks on women's organizations within the government are more than just budget cuts; they are calculated attempts by the government to weaken the power of women. The cutbacks on the Women's Bureau are only an indication of the greater war at hand, and we must struggle against such setbacks in the battle for gender equality. **FP**



The DOL encourages women in nontraditional fields. photo courtesy of National Association of Women Construction

Kristen Blue Shelby loves Agamemnon, her *Dino Chia* pet.