

the
Roadmap
to **Equality**
in the Arts

CONFERENCE REPORT
2020



A conference addressing the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women artists, WOC and non-binary artists.

ArtEZ Arnhem (NL),
January 18, 2020

NOTE The documentation of the conference includes [podcasts](#), [videos](#) and this written report. Read the [full program](#) here.

Introduction

The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women artists, non-binary and gender-queer artists in the Dutch art world is undeniable. Data and an intersectional approach in current research are still strikingly missing. Time to bring about change. How can we act, instead of acknowledging the status quo repeatedly? The conference entitled *The Roadmap to Equality in the Arts in the Netherlands* attempted to establish stepping-stones on the path to gender equality in the arts by raising awareness, gathering available data and mobilising existing networks and collective knowledge. This conference was the first public event organised by the workgroup *The Roadmap to Equality in the Arts*.

Workgroup *The Roadmap to Equality in the Arts*

The Roadmap to Equality in the Arts is an ongoing project to advocate for equality, solidarity and diversity at every level and to address the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women artists, women artists of colour, non-binary and genderqueer artists. Founded in 2019 by Delphine Bedel, Els Cornelis, Catelijne De Muijnck and The School of Missing Men (ArtEZ), the workgroup aims to:

- Raise awareness
- Develop educational projects and online resources
- Commission surveys and publish articles
- Develop events, tools, joint actions & spokespersonship
- Mobilise existing networks and collective knowledge to establish a gender equality roadmap in the arts in the Netherlands.
- Create an observatory for data monitoring, evaluation schemes and follow-up.

The intersectional, strategic and informal coalition of the workgroup *The Roadmap to Equality in the Arts* comprises artists, educators, researchers, designers, curators, critics, activists and one art school.

Together we can be a catalyst for change. If you are interested in joining the workgroup or give input or suggestions, please contact us. We are very much looking forward meeting you.

Core Tenet of the Conference

The core tenet in composing the conference's programme was to discuss how to bring change and address this situation collectively. In our view, it was crucial to adopt an intersectional approach. As touched upon above, the current situation can best be summarized as a lack of data collection and monitoring. There is no overview of the situation in the visual arts in terms of income, parental leave, pensions, art education, exhibitions, public collections, grants and residencies, etc. Many institutions still have not implemented a system of reporting racism, discrimination or harassment.

Exploring ways to bring about the much-needed change in the Netherlands, one of our sources of inspiration was the process of policy change in France led by Agnès Saal, who is Senior Equality, Diversity and Discrimination Prevention Officer to the General Secretary of the Ministry of Culture. Saal realised that data monitoring and evaluation on gender issues is the only way to influence policies. Without waiting another hundred years for spontaneous change to occur, she implemented quotas in all the cultural sectors. One of the points is that now all the art institution and art academies that receive public funding have to implement these new policies and appoint a diversity officer. Saal contributed to the conference in the form of a pre-recorded interview (see below). As the situation and culture in France is different from the Netherlands, it is neither possible nor desirable to implement this process of policy change as such.

This raises the following questions: Which elements could we use from the French experience? What data do we have in the Netherlands? What are the initiatives and who are the pioneers of change here? What models of change are there? How can we act together, from an intersectional and inclusive standpoint?

This set of questions led us to compose a three-parts programme:

1. MISSING DATA AND NEW PLATFORMS
2. ART EDUCATION, DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT
3. MODELS FOR CHANGE

The conference was well-attended—about 200 visitors registered. During breaks (with food and drinks provided by students from The School of Missing Men, ArtEZ) the visitors mingled and continued the discussion. The themes addressed during the conference resonated with the attendees and much felt deeply touched. We received many positive reactions, stating that they will bring about change, whether by contributing to the workgroup or by setting up initiatives within their own work contexts. Here are some reactions of contributors and visitors:

‘Dear all,

What a pleasure and an honour it was to perform in this context!

I felt so inspired by all the power, activism, love and care.

Thank you so much and I hope we will meet again in the future!

Keep up the good work.
All my love,’

Marijke De Roover (performance
artist, contributor)

‘... it was very fascinating and important and uncomfortable and hugely encouraging.

Staying with the trouble, as Donna Haraway would say...’

Jolanda Schouten (lecturer at HKU
University of the Arts Utrecht)

‘It was an interesting day. I learned a lot and had to adjust a few personal opinions.’

Tijs (artist)

‘Dearest all,

It was a pleasure and a privilege and joy and encouragement meeting you all. Thank you for the wonderful and rich and touching event and organisation—there was a wave of relief and recognition and energy moving through the audience and the room.

You moved us.’

Petra van Brabandt (feminist philosopher, lecturer, contributor)

‘This day was one of the most eye-opening experiences and one of the conversations I’ve been missing in the Netherlands.

Such extremely important and valid points were made, and such a good start of the year! One for the books!’

Dustin Thierry (artist, photographer)

‘As a researcher and educator at HKU, but grown-up and experienced in the more outside worlds, I wasn’t very aware of the issues of gender and diversity in relation to (in)equality in this sector.

The first thought that came to mind was therefore: how urgent is this matter, anyhow? Well, through the day, during sessions, speeches and performances, it became very clear to me. This IS an issue. Numbers and figures of research results were exchanged, and some strategies were discussed: the collection of more data, a change of the ‘standard’ canon to be used in education and a change of recruitment and policy.

Being a (gay) woman who is not easily drawn to activism in general, I really do feel that some radical changes need to be made.’

Arja Veerman (lecturer at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht)

CONFERENCE REPORT

Introduction

The conference was introduced by Nancy Jouwe, cultural historian and cofounder of Framers Framed, and [Delphine Bedel](#), artist/researcher and founder of Meta/Books. Jouwe addressed some questions to the audience. Bedel presented the workgroup and some of the key points of the conference.

Nancy Jouwe

Keynote 'A Case for Intersectional Thinking and Doing in the Arts: The Dutch for example'

The moderator and keynote speaker of the day, [Nancy Jouwe](#), made a strong case for intersectional thinking and acting in the arts in the Netherlands. Her keynote was composed out of three substantive issues: 1. Intersectionality, 2. Hindrances, 3. Accelerators.

1. **Intersectionality.** The term *intersectionality*, first coined by the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, refers to the complex interplay and overlap of axes of identity such as race, class and gender. Jouwe, considers intersectionality as a tool for analysis, for emancipation and against oppression. She provided us with information on its origins, and some examples in the Dutch context.

Sojourner Truth (1797–1883) who was born into slavery and escaped in 1826, became a women's rights activist. At the *Ohio Women's Rights Convention* in 1851, she delivered a landmark speech on racial inequalities entitled 'Ain't I a Woman?'. She addressed the neglect of black women by her feminist contemporaries as well as the neglect of women by the abolitionist movement. Truth stressed in her speech that among blacks there are women and among women there are blacks.

For Crenshaw, a key element of intersectionality is that multiple forms of oppression are not being expressed in separate types of suffering but in one integrated form of suffering.

Jouwe presented a recent and baffling case of the intersecting mechanisms at work with Ezra Coskun. In 2014 Coskun, a woman of Turkish-Dutch descent became disabled after a traffic accident. In court, she received only 12.7 % of the expected insurance money—70,000 Euros instead of 555,000 Euros. This percentage was established by ranking Coskun on the different axes of identification. At the time of the court case, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) stated that migrant women, especially from the second generation, had more often a full-time job than non-migrant women—still, Coskun was expected to be less successful than women of Dutch descent and of the same age.

In the arts and in the media too, people are positioned by various axes of identity. What to think of the literary critic who reacted to the Surinamese writer Astrid Roemer being awarded the PC Hooftprijs in 2015? 'Well, it's politics, they want to give attention to Surinam, the Caribbean, literature across borders. They have made a political decision, because is there anybody living there who can actually write?'. Roemer's achievement was played down by stereotypical and racist marginalisation.

After she presented the workings of intersecting mechanisms of oppression and exclusion by striking examples, Jouwe continued by summing up some hindrances in the process of emancipation.

2. **Hindrances.** One of the *hindrances* is the idea that there is nothing left to do. In 2003, De Geus, Minister of Social Affairs and Emancipation, found the emancipation policy portfolio unnecessary for the cabinet to convene: ‘Emancipation was done’ after all.

Another hindrance is the idea that diversity and quality are at odds with each other. Stephen King, a well-known American author, felt the urge to tweet on the 14th of January 2020 that he ‘would never consider diversity in matters of art. Only quality. It seems to [him] that to do otherwise would be wrong.’

Jouwe mentioned a third hindrance in the emancipation project, the tendency for people in the Netherlands to close their eyes on race issues. Jouwe considered this as a possible consequence of World War II. “Race” became a taboo topic after World War II. Not only in daily life but in the academic context. The term “Ethnicity” became more common and the concept of tolerance was generally regarded as a typical Dutch trait. Therefore, “racism” is not a problem in the Netherlands because ‘we do not do race’.

In the arts, the canon—mostly composed by works by white men—is a substantial hindrance. When one thinks of a genius in the arts, it will be often personified by a white, cisgender, male artist, allegedly producing “quality art” and therefore featured in museums. The gendered position in the art canon and the position of the “genius” are clear.

Despite these hindrances and the confronting situation we are still in, Jouwe defined some accelerators.

3. **Accelerators.** Some questioned the canon and provided access to other narratives. Established or emerging art Institutions, such as Museum Arnhem, The Black Archives or Mama Cash are of vital importance in this regard. Theorists and artists such as Gloria Wekker, Simone Zeefuik and Iris Kensmil also contributed significantly.

In 2018, the footsteps of the artists collective the Guerilla Girls, the feminist organisation Mama Cash carried out a simple counting exercise: in eight major Dutch museum, only 13% of the artworks exhibited were by women artists; by seven Dutch publishing companies, only 32% of the works published were by women writers (Pauline Salet, one of the other speakers, presented this research more in depth). These data show what the current situation indisputably entail and that emancipation is not done. The use of data can steer discourses and activism.

Jouwe concluded that it isn’t a linear process. Initiatives towards the decolonisation of museums (The Tropenmuseum, for instance) transform the public space and public discourses. The Black Archives, documenting the history of black emancipation movements and individuals, make black literature, knowledge and information accessible for study and research. In their own ways, all the individuals and institutes mentioned, contribute to the change we are aiming for. They provide inspiring and much-needed examples.

MISSING DATA AND NEW PLATFORMS

Since the introduction of the *Fair Practice Code* and the *Code Culturele Diversiteit*, what has changed in the Dutch art context? The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women is undeniable. What is striking is not only the lack of data, but also the lack of an intersectional perspectives. It is essential to highlight the different, intersecting mechanisms of oppression and exclusion, and how they work, but also to question the binary categories of male and female. Only then we may find solutions to the underlying, structural mechanisms of exclusion.

Panel 1: Missing Data

The first panel addressed the importance of data as a catalyst of change.

Agnès Saal

Interview ‘The Equality Roadmap in Culture in France, 2019–2022’

As [Agnès Saal](#) (Senior Civil Servant for Equality, Diversity and the Fight against Discrimination at the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Culture) could not attend, an extract from a pre-recorded interview between Saal and Bedel was presented. Saal highlighted some of the key points of the *Equality Roadmap in Culture 2019–2022* in France (see above). She discussed the challenges and achievements, the yearly data survey and the central role of quotas, data monitoring and analysis. She briefly pointed at some aspects that could be relevant in other European contexts, Saal first explained that the Ministry of Culture questioned for some years how to reach gender equality.

‘The starting points were the reports elaborated by Reine Prat who, in the years 2006–08, wrote detailed reports on the presence, or rather on the absence of women in most cultural institutions. These reports had a strong impact as the conclusion was quite severe. [...]’ An observatory was implemented within the Ministry of Culture and Communication, which became essential and widely consulted for its statistical surveys about gender equality in all cultural sectors. But year after year, these surveys showed that these measuring tools were essential but not enough to bring changes.

The minister of Culture and Communication Françoise Niessen wished for a more ambitious and decisive plan. In 2017, they worked together on a new document, the *Equality Roadmap*. It is important because it is a document that has a political weight. ‘The goal of the Roadmap is to constitute an extremely operational tool, and to define clear lines of continuous improvement, as well as the means for actions at our disposal, and to define the way we will reach our objectives, as well as measuring and evaluating these results.’ Saal presented some of these tools in the visual arts, the implementation of quotas or financial incentives, for instance. ‘There isn’t one single domain that stands out regarding equality, and we ask, how can we do to improve the situation, and go further? Sexist and sexual harassments, violence, sexist behaviours concern all sectors, [...] we have to act.’ She explained how the ministry has put in place a strong political engagement of zero tolerance and how these objectives are declined in all the cultural policies and within art institutions. The interview concluded on a European perspective and the transmission of experiences.

NOTE The Equality Roadmap in Culture <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Sites-thematiques/Egalite-et-diversite/Les-engagements-du-Ministere/Feuille-de-route-Egalite-2019-2022>.

Galit Eilat

Talk 'The Lobotomised Museum / The art Object and its Context'

[Galit Eilat](#), a writer and curator, did pioneering research in the Netherlands regarding museum collection and data monitoring and analysis. At the end of 2010, Eilat left Israel. During this year, she commuted between Israel and The Netherlands, directing the Digital Art Lab and was invited to work as guest curator in the Van Abbemuseum; *Play Van Abbe 3; The Politics of Collecting—The Collecting of Politics* was the first exhibition she curated for the museum. The core idea was to investigate how the Van Abbemuseum handled its collection. What does it mean to collect and keep works of art? What world is perceived when viewing a collection? Who decides what and why? *Play Van Abbe 3* is the third part of an 18-month research/exhibitions project called *Play Van Abbe*. *Play Van Abbe 3* is about collecting as an archive of visual cultural memories, a map out what a collection tells us about the politics of the museum. What does it mean to collect *political moments*, moments that give meaning to our contemporary culture?

Prior to this project, Eilat had initiated and curated exhibitions with archival materials but never curated an exhibition that focused on modern and contemporary art collection. She states that, a museum's collection has an insurance and market value but an archive has only a symbolical value. In general, when a museum's collection is presented, it will be done by naming certain artists in order to validate the collection. She wanted to work with the collection as one unit and asked the collection: Who are you or what are you? She looked at a selection of works of the Van Abbemuseum and compared them with collections and archives created by artists. The comparison between the artist's archives and institutional collection became key to this project. Eilat made an in-depth presentation of her research, the criteria retained, her methodology and findings.

During this research project, Eilat was frequently asked about the reason and the importance of an archive being created by an artist. Her answer, clear and concise was: 'When you don't have a history, you construct an archive to retrieve yourself and identify yourself with.' There are different models of how artists are dealing with history and identity. For many artists that experienced war or occupation, collecting is a strategy to deal with traumatic events in their personal or collective history: 'Collections belong to the people. Cultural heritage is explicitly acknowledged as a public good to be enjoyed and managed by the majority of its stakeholders, instead of specific communities.' Therefore, public museums' collections belong to the people. 'They are the people's pension.' As part of *Play Van Abbe 3*, three schemes of data visualisations were presented. One presentation was of art objects that were under investigation into museum acquisitions from 1933. Next to the works, the display included the archival materials and acquisitions documents. Eilat reminded us: 'Museums have been built on looting and stealing, from antiquity to modern times. The core was to show trophies of war and what could be taken from others.' Subsequent data visualisation gave information about the nationality and land of birth of all the artists in the collection.

Inside the museum walls, she visualised the overview of the data analysis of the collection. Through various horizontal and vertical graphics, each category of work was denoted by a symbol: painting, sculpture, photograph, drawing or other graphic work, video or installation; another symbol indicated whether a male artist, a female artist or a collective made it. The result was visually striking: a devastatingly short line on the wall for female artists, while a line illustrating the number of works by male artists covered the long corridor's wall. Works by male artists in the collection were not only hugely over-represented in numbers and in all periods but also, in the way the museum presented them. Male artists such as El Lissitzky or Picasso mainly represented the collection, for instance.

Eilat concluded that although there are lots of data available, it is not always easy to collect them, as they are located in different places or systems, for instance. Although most museums in the Netherlands had their collections digitized, some metadata such as the gender ratio is not always added or analysed critically. But since a rough framework of data is present in any case, it is important to look at it more closely. In Eilat's words: 'We just need someone to get the data out of it. This is worth the effort.' Data visualisation helps to make clear what is really going on.

Pauline Salet Talk 'Count me in'

In 2018, following the example of the anonymous artist collective the Guerrilla Girls, [Pauline Salet](#) conducted research about Dutch museum collections for the Dutch feminist organisation Mama Cash. This research was based on her Master Thesis in Gender Studies. Salet visited eight major Dutch museums to map and count the percentage of works by women artists hanging on the walls of the museum's collections. She selected the museums based on the number of visitors, the amount of funding and the influence they were regarded to have. The museums varied in location—Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Centraal Museum in Utrecht, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, the Groninger Museum in Groningen, Museum de Fundatie in Zwolle, Drents Museum in Assen and Gemeentemuseum (now Kunstmuseum Den Haag). She found that in 2018, in the permanent collection on display, out of 926 artists, 769 were male and 124 were female artists, 84,1% male /13,4% female and 2,5 % others (collectives and collaborations). She noted that De Fundatie had no works by women artists on display. She also analysed exhibitions. For the temporary exhibitions between 2015–2018, out of 341 solo exhibitions, only 22,9% consisted of women artists. These data highlight the underrepresentation of women artists in museum collections and exhibitions. Her research offers a critical reflection on representation within museum spaces. She concluded on the limitations of collecting data in four points: 'scope, categorisation, upholds a gender binary, ignores themes in the artworks themselves.'

Salet pointed out that, although an overview based on numbers shows the inequality between men and women at a glance it is not sufficient. The analysis of the sources of inequalities is of the highest importance when reaching out for structural changes. The collection of quantitative data exposes sexism but not racism and it upholds a gender binary. Data, and by extension, quotas might lead to tokenism. She says that data collection can be a way of using categories strategically, make a problem visible, gather evidence and expose hegemonic discourses. As Galit Eilat earlier, she concludes that 'we need to think new models for data collection that are more intersectional and inclusive.'

These critical remarks by Salet were meaningful for the rest of the conference, and these questions reoccurred through the day. How to transcend the "classical" categorisations in research to be inclusive? How to investigate not only sexism but also racism? How to use quantitative data for the best, not the worst—e.g. for a superficial, administrative policy measure leading to tokenism?

NOTE Please refer to the results of this research https://www.mamacash.org/media/documents/the_position_of_women_artists_in_four_art_disciplines_in_the_netherlands_mama_cash_2019.pdf.

Q&A

After the presentation of Salet, there was space for questions from the audience. Mirjam Westen, curator at Museum Arnhem pointed out that Museum Arnhem and Museum Gouda were not included in the study. She explained that both museums had developed, since the seventies, exhibition and collection policy in which the work of female artists has been amply represented. This preferential policy is applied by Museum Arnhem since the 1990s to this day with attention to the work of artists with a culturally diverse background. Salet replied that she is aware of it, but that Museum Arnhem was closed for renovation at the time and her research was limited to exhibitions on display at the time (a two-month time span in 2019).

Westen also pointed out that, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Dutch Foundation called Women in the Visual Arts (SVBK) had initiated and done a great deal of research. SVBK created, for instance, an archive of artist documentation and initiated research into the socio-economic position of women artists. They looked into the hypocritical criteria of “quality” and into the gender percent of exhibitions reviews. Four times a year, the foundation published a newsletter, that later developed into the quarterly magazine: *Ruimte*. It was the only art magazine that a gender perspective on (contemporary) visual arts. Unfortunately, it ceased to exist in 1996.

Westen added that the magazine *Metropolis M* is reviewing yearly the male-female percentage of the new acquisitions by Dutch art museums. The magazine *Ruimte* and more recently the *Boekmancahier* brought attention for the position and representation of women artists in collections, reviews and the art market (galleries).

NOTE [Atria](#)—Institute on gender equality and women’s history houses the archives of *Ruimte* magazines and further information. The *Boekmancahiers* are archived at the [Boekman Foundation](#) in Amsterdam. The archives of the magazine *Ruimte* are not yet digitised unfortunately.

[Metropolis M](#) was invited to present their surveys at the conference but couldn’t participate. You can find their yearly survey in the December issue of the magazine since 2016.

Panel 2: New Platforms

The second panel focused on what an intersectional standpoint might entail. What questions, insights, new platforms and acts of resistance arise when we “live out” this intersectional approach?

Tender Center (Yin Yin Wong & Katherine MacBride)

[Yin Yin Wong and Katherine MacBride](#) presented Tender Center. They explained the importance of an intersectional, anti-racist, feminist, queer and collective process of space making. The 11 members wrote a collective manifesto with great care. Mac Bride read it slowly. It took them time and energy to come up with a text in which all members recognised themselves. Wong noted that when joining Tender Center, she had to adjust to a slower rhythm, as she was conditioned to work at a fast pace, as most of us. However, she loved to slow down and connect to what it means to choose consciously for a different pace and a different mindset, to stop consuming and producing. We take this rhythm for granted, but often suffer from it, an issue that Petra van Brabandt also addressed that day.

Tender Center provides a different model in which experiencing and learning together/ learning from each other in an open space, is key. A model that intends to provide the beginnings of a new community centre for culture. On that day, the similarities between the workings of Tender Center and the Black Student Union became clear: a collective space for joy is needed.

Naomie Pieter

Talk ‘Black Queer & Trans Resistance NL’

[Naomie Pieter](#) is an activist and the co-founder of Black Queer & Trans Resistance Netherlands. Pieter also founded Pon Di Pride, a safe dancehall space for BPOC LGBTQAI+ people.

Pieter unfortunately could not attend the conference. Therefore, she provided a text and images for the organisers to read, so that she could still share her ideas, energy and initiatives with the audience.

‘My name is Naomie Pieter,
I’m the co-founder of Black Queer & Trans Resistance,
I’m the founder of Pon Di Pride,

[CLICK IMAGE]

I’m a member of Kick Out Zwart Piet.
I’m a choreographer and a performance artist.
I’m the youngest child at home and I love pie and cupcakes!

A lot of people would call me an activist, but I’m just trying to play my part..
wherever I can!

If you have seen injustice..
How can you close your eyes to it?
I know, some can.
But I refuse to.

[...]

NOTE The manifesto can be found here: <https://tendercenter.space/>

Both morning panels *Missing Data* and *New Platforms*, focused on the importance of visibility.

- Making the underlying structures and mechanisms visible to bring awareness about the current situation. This is the foundation to define the steps to create the much needed and desired changes. Data monitoring and analysis (quantitative or qualitative) are essential in this process.
- The visibility of artists who are joining forces and raising new initiatives and platforms. They are still too often misrepresented and under-represented in the 'regular' art world. These artists are providing new models and access to experiences and knowledge, new ways of acting, working, experiencing, learning and enjoying together.

Marijke De Roover **Performance 'Live, Laugh, Limerence'**

After lunch, we enjoyed the performance *Live, Laugh, Limerence* by the Belgian artist [Marijke De Roover](#). Dressed in a pink bonbon dress, she presented the conference's themes in a perfectly timed and executed tongue-in-cheek opera-buffa-style performance. Watch her performance [here](#).

ART EDUCATION, DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The afternoon session focused on the situation in Dutch higher art education. Art education holds a key position in the chain as it is the place where it all begins. Female students dominate the art schools in the Netherlands: between 2005 and 2013, 70% of the intake in fine art courses were women, but the balance has started to shift. It is startling to realize that although the majority is female students, the art-world continues to be mostly male dominated. Even if art schools should offer safe and challenging spaces, sexist and racist mechanisms still are at play today. How can we work at change in art education and its institutions?

Petra Van Brabandt

Talk 'Subjective Mapping: Racism and Sexism in Art Education in Flanders'

Philosopher and head of the research department at Sint Lucas School of Arts Antwerp (KdG), [Petra van Brabandt](#) offered a passionate and razor-sharp argument about the challenges that art education faces and the pitfalls it comes across. She stated that, in theory, art schools offer their students an environment that is just as challenging as it is safe to freely develop their artistic vision and capabilities. But in practice, research has shown that art schools in Flanders and abroad are still struggling with many forms of everyday sexism and racism.

Petra van Brabandt started her presentation by placing herself on the intersectional axes of identity: she is aware that she is a white, cis-woman. In addition, she described herself as being originally from the working class. She worked her way up into the middle class, but is well aware of the class betrayal, and even feminist betrayal, this entailed. She reminded us that it is important, when talking about oppression, to take our own position into consideration. 'When you are breaking the glass ceiling, don't only ask who constructed it, but also ask yourself: who is sweeping up the glass?'

Van Brabandt spoke on behalf of ENGAGEMENT, an artist-led movement tackling sexual harassment, sexism and power abuse in the Belgian arts field. The research she presented is a continuation of a research project done by Ilse Ghekiere and Anissa Boujdaini on sexism in arts education in Flanders.

Van Brabandt's presentation explained the value of subjective mapping of racism and sexism in the art education field in general. The method of subjective mapping was deliberately chosen in order to focus on the experience of victims. Victims are subjects of their stories (owners), not objects of stories. They wanted to break with standard research methods: stories are valid and should be taken seriously. When we are collecting quantitative data, we should always remember that data collection used to be a colonialist instrument of oppression and as such has its source in colonialism.

Van Brabandt was very clear: 'Don't believe anyone who states that sexism and racism do not exist in art education.... Putting sexism and racism on the table as a problem to discuss often leads to a lot of defensive reactions and political correctness.' Van Brabandt made us aware of the often intimate settings and less formal relations that are quite common, the trap of being "liberal and progressive" and the fact that evaluations often resemble personality tests.

NOTE For an article on their research, see: <https://www.rektover-so.be/artikel/racism-and-sexism-in-art-education-a-subjective-mapping> and for information on ENGAGEMENT, see: <https://www.engagementarts.be/en>.

'In general,' she said, 'there is a lot of subjectivity involved in the assessment criteria and a lack of objective feedback (an objective framework and transparent evaluations).' This creates an environment in which sexism and racism can thrive.

She spoke too of the homogeneous groups of teachers (white and male is still dominant) and students, of new topics that are being brought forward, but with the same framework and by the same people over and over again, of the "quality" argument to keep hiring the same employees, of the precarity of contracts (freelancers/ guest teachers being used as diversity tokens, but without real power) and the fear of quota (often only 10% of staff is diverse, which makes it impossible to speak up).

Students of colour are instrumentalized (only 10-20% is actually diverse, whilst in the promotion of the educational programmes diverse students are always presented). Sexual intimidation is found in the form of unprofessional text messaging, and for example in offers from teachers to students to provide help at their homes. In the theatre and dance departments they found a still existing focus on nudity ("freedom") and evaluation based on appearance and body.

One of the other big problems is that there is a "no complaint, no problem" system, and also, as a result of this system, the person who complains becomes the problem. They found that the only complaint that works is a collective complaint.

Van Brabandt ended with some advice. Art educational institutes should realize that "patience" is no action. Asking for patience is a tool designed to maintain power. Furthermore, she stated that intentions are irrelevant. Don't only talk about racism and sexism and avoid implementing change as being too radical (and don't just be politically correct). Acknowledge that there is an important difference between explicit and implicit racism and that neutrality does not exist. Ask yourself: who does it serve? This argument of "neutrality" is wielded by a very small group of people and the same goes for the argument of quality above diversity.' Remember that students in this process are not unpaid teachers 'teaching the teacher'. At least teachers are being paid, they have access to knowledge; they should be doing the work. And avoid hiring freelancers to be critical (they can leave afterwards and give students the feeling of radicalism in the institution, yet they are not a danger to the institution).

Van Brabandt believes in the power of quota: 'I don't believe in one person in an organization that will provoke change. We need quota at all levels, not only in the student body.' Moderator Nancy Jouwe added: 'I have been asked to join the board and I never did. Because it's a white dominated racist organization and I would be the one who's going to go under. Saying no to this is a form of self-care.' To which Van Brabandt answered: 'When I talk about quota, I mean 50%. Because otherwise it's challenging to make changes or work in an organization as a minority.'

As a reaction to a question from the audience, Van Brabandt explained in more detail the term 'pornographic rhythm' that she used in her presentation, as the compelling pace we face and the emphasis that is put on production as a neo-liberal instrument and a form of conditioning. 'It's a hyper consumerist rhythm. It is not so much about what you say anymore, as long as what you say can be sold. This makes you profitable, you're worth making money. We are engaged in rhythms that are profitable rhythms, and that we have to undo. Sometimes we have to stop producing and think: 'What are we doing?'

Someone in the audience thanked Petra Van Brabandt for holding up a mirror to us and said: 'We could start by looking in the mirror every morning and acknowledge that we are part of the system.'

Anik Fournier

Talk ‘Survey BEAR Alumni 2014-2018’

In the next presentation, [Anik Fournier](#) (professor at BEAR/ArtEZ Fine Art) presented a survey that was conducted in 2019 amongst 135 alumni of BEAR—BA Fine Art ArtEZ Arnhem. The aim of the survey was to gain insight in the professional activities of the alumni with regards to gender balance and equality. The survey was conducted by the [School of Missing Men](#), a student led platform that takes as its starting point the fact that 75% of students at BEAR are women (a norm ratio in art schools across the Netherlands and abroad) and yet only a small number of them truly “make it” as an artist.

The survey shows that a majority of the students identifying as women leave the art world. First of all, this is because of financial reasons. The survey also confirms that, in the early years after the academy, the male alumni manage to realize an exhibition, find a gallery, apply for a residency or grant much more successfully than their female colleagues. The School of Missing Men strives to open up normative discourses through intersecting positions, allowing a variety of voices and experiences to resonate and contribute in developing knowledge, strategies and a supportive network for students, both during their schooldays and after graduation, to engage students in changing the results of this survey.

Marjolijn Brussaard

President of ArtEZ University of the Arts, Marjolijn Brussaard, reacted to this survey with the words: ‘I’m not going to make any promise—presidents hardly ever do—but what I can promise is that we as a board are very committed to discuss and open up. And to see what we can do together. We are on your side and we will help you.’

Isis Germano

Talk ‘Powertools for Art and Social Justice’

[Isis Germano](#) (coordinator of ArtEZ’s Honours Programme) presented a project she is working on with ArtEZ studium generale called *Power tools for art and social justice. Rethinking diversity and inclusion for artistic practices*, a collection of texts in the making that offer students and professors in higher art education very practical tools to think about art from a theoretical feminist and postcolonial perspective. It contains examples of concrete artistic strategies—from all possible disciplines—as sources of inspiration. Hopefully, it will be used by ArtEZ educators as a starting point for discussion and as a tool to understand how artistic practices are embedded in a social and historical context. The texts can be used both as a starting point for thinking and as a starting point for acting.

Isis Germano put forward 4 points for attention and questions:

1. Teaching and learning are very intimate and delicate processes. As a theory professor, students expect her to give them clear directions and/or empower them.
2. Research is for sharing. Young students who are interested in positioning their artistic practice in the social environment, should have access to simplified literature on topics of research that are of importance to their working field.
3. Art is not broccoli. You can assess if a broccoli is biological, well-cooked or not. With art, this is difficult. You can’t really assess this.
4. What kind of students do we admit and who feels safe? How do we empower artists to see the potential of their work in the social world?

NOTE For the results of the *Survey BEAR Alumni 2014-2018* see the attachment page 22.

Nagaré Willemsen Talk 'The Black Student Union'

In her presentation, [Nagaré Willemsen](#) (coordinator of the Black Student Union at Rietveld/Sandberg) asked the question: Can Student Unions be sustainable diversity organisations within an art academy? She sent the following letter for the report:

"Reflecting on the letter: THE PRECARIOUS BODY: ANALYSING THE BLACK EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE ART SCHOOL, 2018.

After my performative reading of the letter in 2018, I was offered a job as the coordinator of USB (Black Student Union) at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and Sandberg Institute. A year before my graduation in 2017, the USB was initiated by students of African descent. These students noticed that they all shared the same racialized experiences within the academy. They found that they were treated differently than other students, experienced micro-aggressions, but especially they felt the effect of a more or less a fully European-oriented programme. This weighs heavily on underrepresented students, because there was no space or knowledge being provided for their black identity, which makes a space uninviting. The USB created a common ground and safety net by sharing perspectives, creativity and dreams. By organizing regular meetings, public events, artist talks, screenings and reading groups, the union is contributing to an ongoing discussion about diversity and inclusivity.

Our goal is to have a permanent space for the black identity within the institutional structure, that will be allowed to evolve to reflect the needs of the black students. This space is particularly important, because it highlights the necessity of giving room to the voices that have been historically silenced through imperialism and colonialism, and still remain heavily underrepresented in western academia. It is for this reason that the space that the USB creates is used to invite black artists and creatives to share their work processes, whether that be in the form of a workshop, lectures or private talks.

The first speaker that had been invited was writer, poet, painter and curator Michael Tedja (1971), who gave individual talks to all the black students. This was the first time I could experience having a conversation with a role model, which was an immense enrichment to my art practice. I found that I could directly start to reflect on my art-practice and learn from his experience, instead of getting stuck in the same conversation loop where I often have to explain my perspective and black identity.

The individual talk with Michael Tedja inspired me to request three changes from the Sandberg Institute, which I used in my performance letter: 'There will be workshops and lectures given by black people (1), a black tutor will be hired (2), and Critical Race Theory will be permanently integrated into the curriculum (3).' In my letter, I deliberately shift the responsibility to realise these changes to the Dirty Art Department, towards the department head, director and staff members.

There is a structural problem at the art academy where expectations and emotional labour rests on the shoulders of students with different cultural backgrounds. I experienced this while studying at Sandberg. There is a strong need for a broader representation of different backgrounds, lifestyles, genders, cultures and schools of thought in the academy. Students are not there to solve racism. The responsibility needs to be taken up by the organisation, so that students can have the space to learn, advise, study, reflect and grow. The paradox is that I am still carrying a part of the responsibility by being the coordinator of the USB_ Black Student Union, for which I'm very grateful. Awareness of this paradox allows me to keep the organisation accountable for responsibility. I hope that, by providing support and building a network, it facilitates black students and staff to have a sense of belonging in the

academy. A place that maintains people's uniqueness within the organisation, as they fully contribute to the processes and outcomes.

There has been a chain reaction of activities and discussions about inclusivity and diversity in and beyond the Rietveld and Sandberg over the last years. For instance, the adoption of a policy for diversity and inclusivity made by Unsettling, more student-led projects such as the Student Council and Student Unions such as the Asian Union, Near East Union and Latin American-Caribbean Union.

We have now come to the point where all Unions are in need of structural support, such as a budget and training opportunities, in order to become sustainable and professional platforms within the organization. The unions are playing a crucial role in the environment of the academy, not only for the students involved, the rest of the school also profits in terms of encouraging cultural shifts, pointing out blind spots, opening new perspectives and providing student support.

My advice for all art academies is to ask students every year to write a critical letter, reflecting on the quality of the organization. It is important to question knowledge production within the art world. The way it is now, has been shaped by colonialism and western superiority, which influences what is seen as relevant and what is not. The letter as a medium has a powerful feature, in that it demands that you take time for the words. And it is a monumental immediate position, contrary to digital communication, that is more ephemeral.

There has been an evolution in the audibility of the student's voice, and it has had an influence on the curriculum. Students have a more advisory role they are involved in study groups and roundtable discussions in the institute. However, there is a pitfall in all this. How can the student unions be made a sustainable and permanent part of the institution? Student initiatives cannot help but shift the power relations or dominance of "whiteness" within the institute that will allow for the broader representation of different backgrounds, lifestyles, genders, cultures and schools of thought that the art academy so desperately needs.

It is for this reason that it is important for an institute to provide resources and continual support to student initiatives. The academy can make use of alumni in this. They have intimate knowledge of the academy and besides nurturing the local artistic community, supporting students and alumni will help to actively develop and maintain knowledge within the institute, contributing towards a diverse and inclusive institution."

Panel: Models for change

**Galit Eilat, Tender Center (Yin Yin Wong & Katherine MacBride),
Petra van Brabandt, Nagaré Willemsen and Delphine Bedel.**

Moderator: Nancy Jouwe

The time has come to bring about change. But how? How can we act, instead of acknowledging the status quo repeatedly? What do we need? How can we be solidary catalysts? We explored these and other questions that need to be tackled with today's speakers.

During the panel, the speakers asked the audience to realise that this work is difficult, it's an emotional labour that can meet fierce forms of harassment. Therefore, be realistic about the cost of doing something in a sensitive situation. Delphine Bedel asked herself: 'How many times can you do this work? [...] Most art institutions don't even have policies in place to bring up issues of equality. There is a cost for you, personally, to bring up subjects like these.' She makes a plea for creating safe spaces within organisations, to provide care and money, and to offer space for experimenting. She pointed that as speaking up can be traumatising, we need to do this work collectively. To which moderator Nancy Jouwe added the importance of intergenerational sharing in conferences like these.

The conclusion: there is a lot of work to be done. Patience is history. Good intentions are history. It is high time to collect and spread data and to make unheard voices heard. As Nancy Jouwe so beautifully put it at the end of her keynote: 'It's a collective effort, it's all of us; share your knowledge and experiences. It doesn't stop here, and it doesn't stop today.'

- Put yourself at stake. Ask yourself: Who am I giving value?
- Connect with people (speak up and do it together)
- Don't get into any fight if you don't have enough agency
- Create a collective agenda

We ended the conference with a call to other institutions (present): Please take over the baton and think about hosting a next conference/conversation on this. We should strive for a growing strategic coalition and this should be a road show running in different places. We need consortiums, a coalition of the willing that is determined to move ahead. As someone said: 'Don't be an ally, be complicit.'

Please feel invited to contact the workgroup if you want to join our initiative.

COLOPHON

Editors

Delphine Bedel, Els Cornelis, Catelijne de Muijnck.

We are grateful to Amber van der Linden (student at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht) and Christianne van Leest (student at ArtEZ University of the Arts).

Workgroup Initiative

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Graphic Design & Logo

Pleun Gremmen

Fonts

Report font: *Capriola* by Viktoriya Grabowska.

Conference fonts: *VTF Victorianna* by Sébastien Hayez, Jérémy Landes and *League Gothic* by Caroline Hadilaksono, Micah Rich and Tyler Finck

Production Conference

Rosell Heijmen

Podcast

Dennis Gaens / De Nieuwe S

Video

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Video Editing

Marie Docher

Partners

ArtEZ studium generale, School of Missing Men, BEAR / Fine Art ArtEZ, Meta/Books

A big thanks to our moderator and speakers, to our advisers and allies: Joke Alkema, Mounira Al Solh, Maja Brouwer, Marie Docher / La part des femmes, Maja Brouwer, Danièle Josselin, Astrid Kerchman, Christianne van Leest, Emmanuelle Waeckerle, Mirjam Westen, students of School of Missing Men and ArtEZ University of the Arts for making this event possible.

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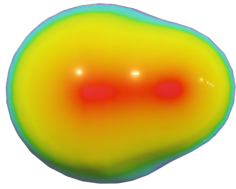
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ATTACHMENT
Survey BEAR Alumni
2014-2018



The School of Missing Men Survey BEAR Alumni 2014 – 2018



December 2019

In December 2019 the School of Missing Men conducted an elaborate survey amongst the 135 alumni of BEAR – Base for Experiment Art & Research – BA-Fine Art ArtEZ Arnhem.



The aim of the survey is to gain insight in the professional activities of the alumni with regards to gender balance and equality in the field of contemporary art.

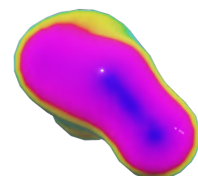
The results of the survey will be thoroughly analysed and followed up by recommendations to improve the current curriculum. The survey provides a mapping of the present state of affairs and

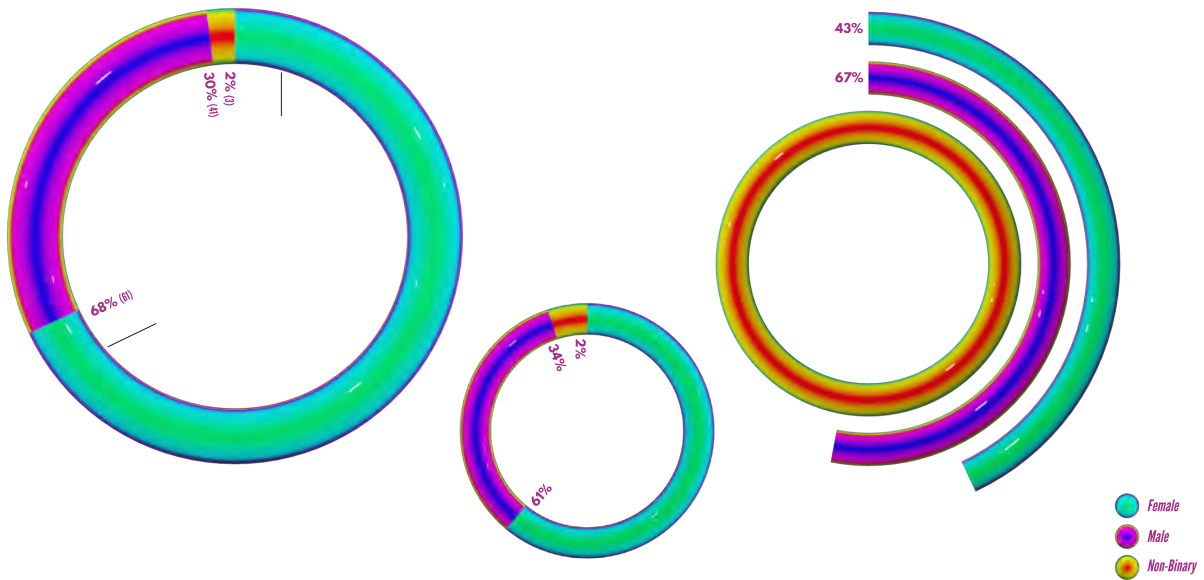
allows us to see with precision where we can improve on giving students a better understanding of the field, what resources and trajectories within the field are available to them, and on developing self-empowered young artists who can navigate and actively contribute to, and transform, that terrain once they graduate.

The School of Missing Men takes as its starting point the fact that 75 percent of students at BEAR are women, a norm ratio in art schools across the Netherlands and abroad. How is it then that the art-world continues to be for the most part male dominated?

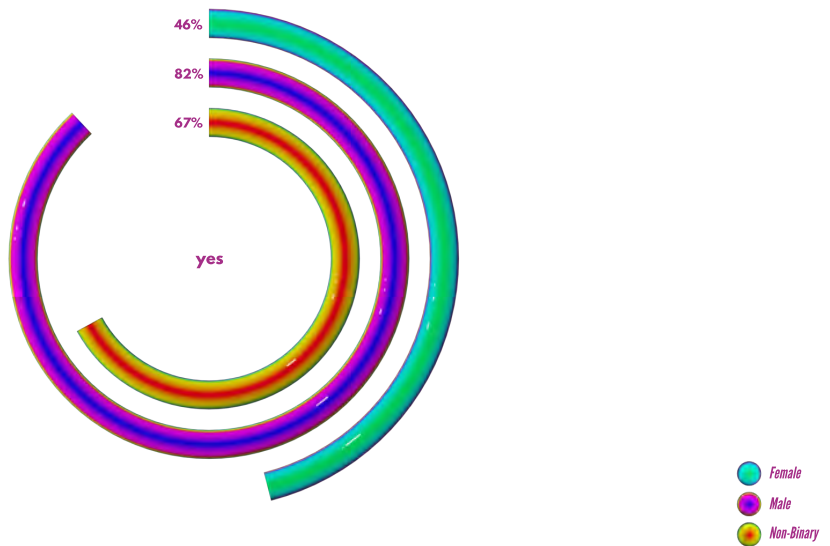
Our goal is to see how we can learn from our current situation, to see it both as a set of systemic problems to investigate as well as a series of opportunities to take hold of. Over the past two years we have implemented changes across the BEAR curriculum and organized a range of student lead initiatives, including performances, lectures, workshops, screenings, studio visits and excursions.

The School of Missing Men strives to open up normative discourses through intersecting positions, allowing a variety of voices and experiences to resonate and contribute in developing knowledge, strategies and a supportive network for students both during school and after graduation.

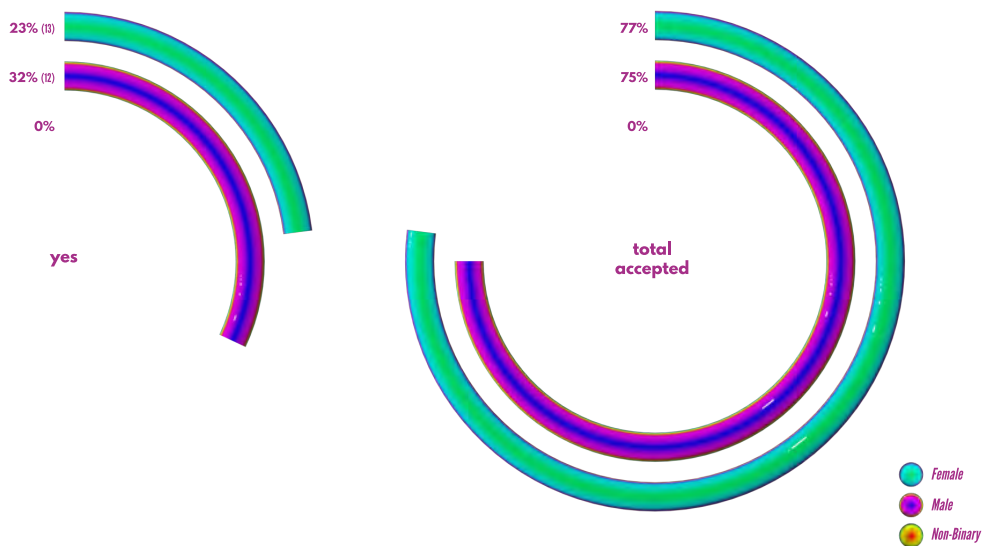




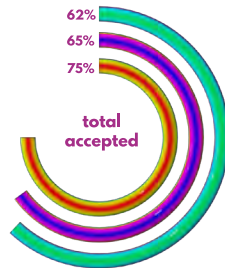
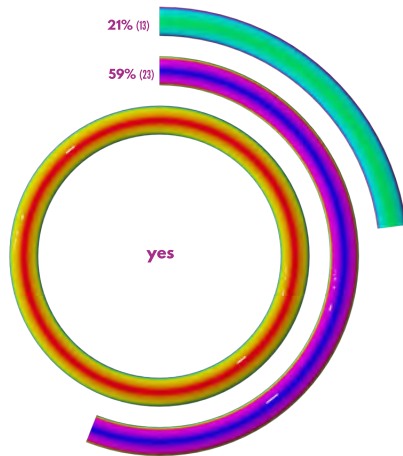
Are you currently working within the arts field?



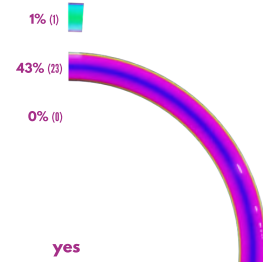
Have you applied for a Masters education?



Have you applied for a residency?

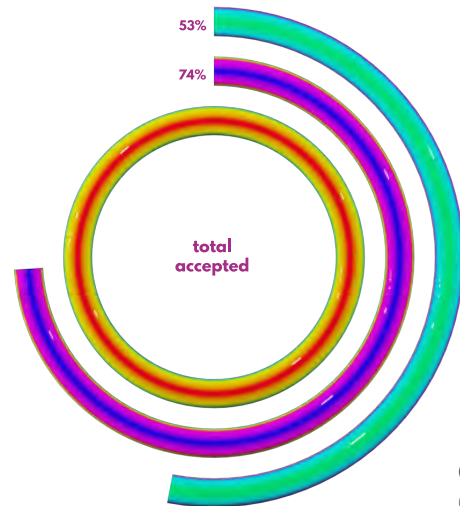
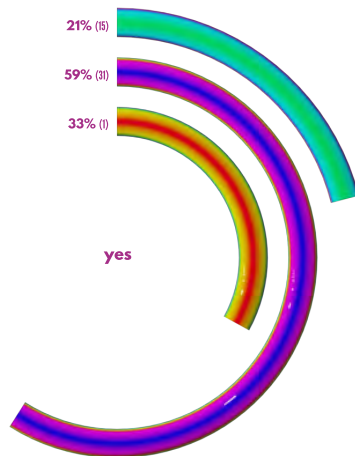


Have you applied for a residency at the Rijksakademie, Jan van Eyck Academie or De Ateliers?



Female
Male
Non-Binary

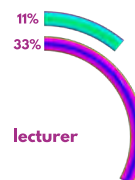
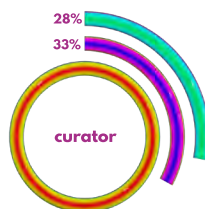
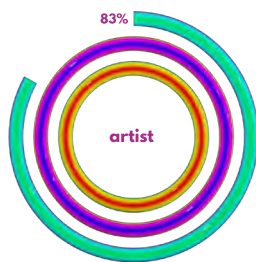
Have you applied for grants/subsidies?



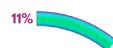
Female
Male
Non-Binary

Question posed only to alumni currently working in the arts field
Multiple answers possible

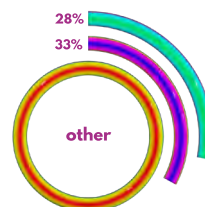
How would you describe your art-practice?



writer



photographer

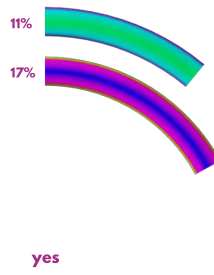


other

Female
Male
Non-Binary

Question posed only to alumni currently working in the arts field

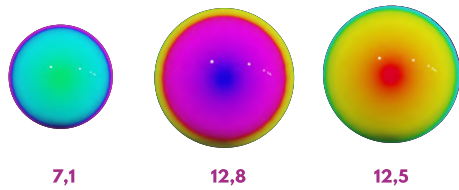
Are you represented by a gallery?



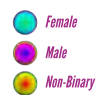
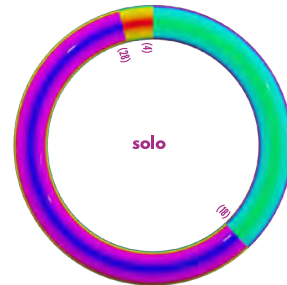
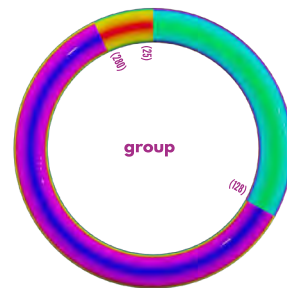
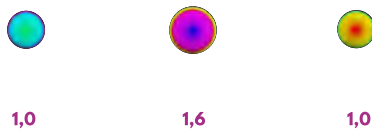
Question posed only to alumni currently working in the arts field

Have you participated in exhibitions after graduating?

average group p.p.

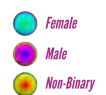
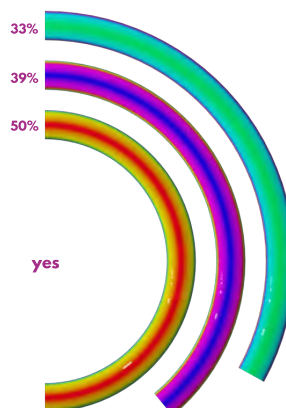


average solo p.p.



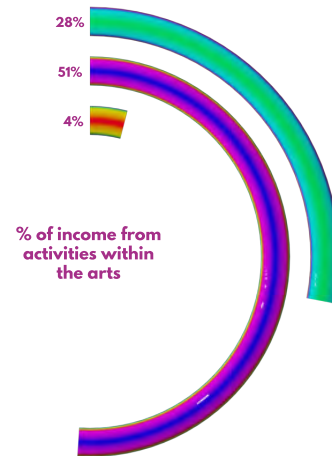
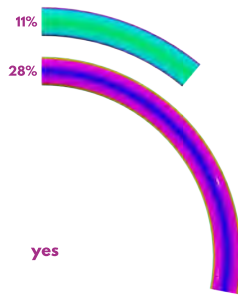
Question posed only to alumni currently working in the arts field

Is your work included in art collections either private or institutional?



Question posed only to alumni currently working in the arts field

Can you make a living from art related activities alone?



● Female
● Male
● Non-Binary

Question posed only to alumni currently working in the arts field

What is currently your average gross monthly income (incl. Scholarships, benefits)?



● Female
● Male
● Non-Binary

Follow-up questions posed to 5 students no longer working within the visual arts field. Lorem ipsum

Q: What were the reasons / factors for you to change career fields?

Anonymous 01
Female - Currently studying Masters in science

I am interested and studying for a master's degree in computer science. Financial security played a role.

Anonymous 02
Female - Working with film & advertising

My interest lies in collaborating with others, not that common within the arts. Another factor is financial stability.

Anonymous 03
Male - Has several part-time jobs unrelated to the Arts

Finance.

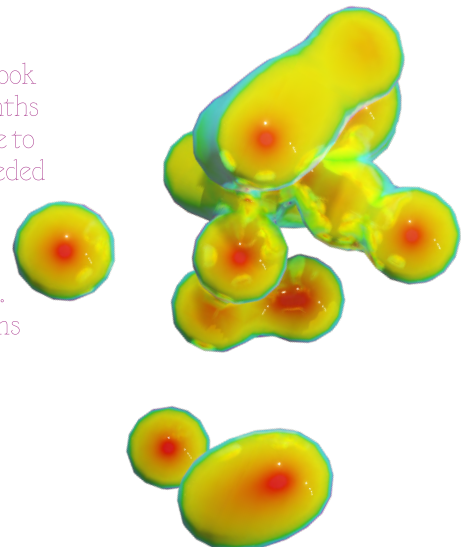
Anonymous 04
Female working at a governmental organisation unrelated to the Arts

I was trying to organize exhibitions and meet people.

However the rejections were very difficult for me. I think I took it very personally. After 5 months being abroad, I came back home to stay with my parents and I needed a job.

Anonymous 05
Female - Has a job unrelated to the Arts

Not realistic to be just an artist. I was invited to some exhibitions but mostly there were no payments.



Follow-up questions posed to 5 students no longer working within the visual arts field.

Q: Do you think the factor of gender played a part in your decision to change career field?

Anonymous 01
Female - Currently studying Masters in science

No.

Anonymous 02
Female - Working with film & advertising

The film world is very male dominated. However, there are different roles and tasks in film that are pretty easy for a woman to work in (for example editing, which I do a lot).

Anonymous 03
Female working at a governmental organisation unrelated to the Arts

I don't see a male domination in the

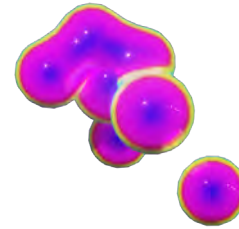
art-world. But at the same time I also don't think I have a broad vision.

Anonymous 04
Female working at a governmental organisation unrelated to the Arts

I think men are more self-assured, but we women tend to complicate things more in our mind. For example, if someone offers €300 for my work, I would take it personally and think it is related to my self-worthiness. Men just take it as a business. Men also think more in a straight line, just follow the goal. It is also a matter of self-esteem. One should not doubt oneself too easily; yes plans change a lot, but you still have to try to sell yourself or your work.

Anonymous 05
Female - Has a job unrelated to the Arts

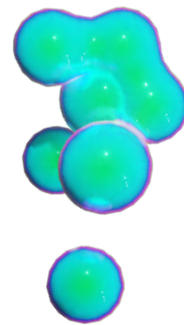
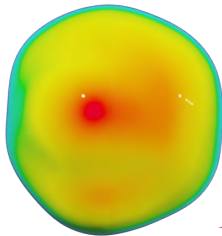
It's obvious that from school time the people who succeeded are mostly boys. Maybe guys are better at trying, contacting a lot of people. Maybe girls have more security issue, less big mouth and don't shout loud. There is definitely a gap in it.



The BEAR Alumni 2014 - 2018 Survey is initiated and drafted by Rosell Heijmen / The School of Missing Men and carried out by Yuchen Li.

Design & data visualisation: Pleun Gremmen

We would like to thank ArtEZ studium generale, the Innovation Funds for Diversity of ArtEZ 2019 and Walter Bookstore in Arnhem for their continued collaboration and support in making many of our initiatives possible.



ArtEZ studium generale

ArtEZ hogeschool
voor de kunsten

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ART &
RESEARCH

the
Roadmap
to **Equality**
in the Arts