

FACTS, HUMOR, AND FAKE FUR

For the last 30+ years, the Guerrilla Girls have been hard at work, exposing structural inequities in the art world, popular culture and politics through activist art tactics and an anonymous collective voice. When the Guerrilla Girls formed in 1985, they were reacting to what they perceived as ineffective modes of feminist activism through the arts. Instead of walking picket lines, they employ guerrilla tactics, a raucous sense of humor, and spectacle to connect and engage with audiences.

Formed in direct response to a curator of the 1984 MoMA exhibition *An International Survey of Painting and Sculpture* who declared that any artist not in the exhibition should reexamine HIS career, they adopted personae of female heroines, and began creating targeted critiques of the gender inequality in the art world. What began as posters on the streets of New York City has grown to eviscerate many forms of structural racism, sexism and inequality across the globe, empowering female artists and artists of color along the way to make visible the invisible.

Their work is still not done, and they are active in encouraging agency in communities, most recently in their 2016 Twin Cities Takeover, and will join us in the Quad Cities on January 18th for a gig and series of student workshops. We hope you will join us, too.

This exhibition celebrates 30 years of Women & Gender Studies at Augustana through a celebration of 30+ years of Guerrilla Girls' actions, reminding us of the role art can take in protest, activism, and conversation around issues of gender, racial, and economic justice.

A Guerrilla Girls *Portfolio Compleat* was purchased through the generous support of the Augustana Art History Department and the Jaeke Family Life Endowment. The ATMA would also like to thank Samantha Turner ('15) for her assistance on the exhibition, and Comet Blecha for her design of the interpretive materials.

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**#GUERRILLAGIRLS
#AUGIEWGS30
#ATMA**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

ON ANONYMITY:

"In the beginning, we decided to be anonymous for purely self-serving reasons: the art world was a small place and we were afraid our careers would suffer. But we quickly realized that anonymity was an important ingredient to our success. First, it keeps the focus on the issues, not on our work or personalities. Second, the mystery surrounding our identities has attracted attention, which is helpful to our cause. We could be anyone, and we are. Now that doesn't mean that everyone should be anonymous all the time. Many of us are also activists in our real lives under our real names, too. And, of course, most of us have other lives as artists, some very successful."

ON JUNGLE DRAG:

"It's not easy spending hours in a gorilla mask. But more conventional women's clothing - bras, tight skirts, high heels - isn't exactly comfortable, either. At least gorilla masks have a higher mission. They get us attention. Without them you probably wouldn't be reading this book. If we ever get a MacArthur 'Genius' Award, we'll use it to commission a designer mask that's miked and air conditioned."

ON HUMOR AND CHANGE:

"The Guerrilla Girls fight discrimination with facts and humor, attempting to reveal the hypocrisy, conservatism, and corruption in cultural and political institutions. Humor helps us present issues in unexpected, intrusive ways. We believe that some discrimination is conscious and some is unconscious and that we can embarrass some of the perpetrators into changing their ways. We're brainstormers, not improvisers. We want to make sure our work has an effect. We don't simply point to something and say, 'This is bad,' as does a lot of political art. We try to use information in a surprising, transgressive manner to prove our case. We also test our posters on people to make sure we're communicating successfully. Sometimes you get so close to an issue that you do a poster that doesn't make sense to people who haven't been thinking about it day and night. Every one of our projects is probably misunderstood by some people, particularly people without a sense of humor."