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50 WOMEN ARTISTS WORTH WATCHING

ART+AUCTION PEGS THE MAKERS, BOTH ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING, THAT THE MARKET IS BUZZING ABOUT

● Wouldn't it be nice to think that a gender-delimited list is no longer relevant? It's true that to be a practicing woman artist today is hardly the struggle it would have been in Mary Cassatt's era. Women artists are actively acquired by museums and honored with major surveys and retrospectives; recent names in the spotlight include Julia Margaret Cameron, Rineke Dijkstra, Zarina Hashmi, Sarah Lucas, Cindy Sherman, Lorna Simpson, Rosemarie Trockel, Carrie Mae Weems, and Francesca Woodman. Collectors pounce on new inventory by Marlene Dumas, Julie Mehretu, and Dana Schutz. Many women artists are doing well, even very well, thanks to committed galleries and ecumenical collectors. Dealers boast of higher private sale prices than public ones for their female artists. Yet there remains a glass ceiling in the salesroom.

Time and again, the specialists and dealers we spoke to emphasized that the prices commanded on the block were by no means a measure of the works in question in terms of critical acclaim or artistic value. Connoisseurs in search of excellence, they say, would be wise to ignore gender outright—especially if considering works of the 50 artists we have highlighted here, whose critical reputations outstrip their value in the marketplace.

The women in this group, ranging from deceased to emerging, were selected because their contributions seem not to have been fully registered by the market. Many of the artists we chose have either a challengingly conceptual practice or a very wide-ranging one that resists easy categorization. Some were simply ahead of their time. To the extent that dollar value has come to determine the actual worth of these objects in circulation, it is our hope that with visibility, more value will accrue to them. **—THE EDITORS**

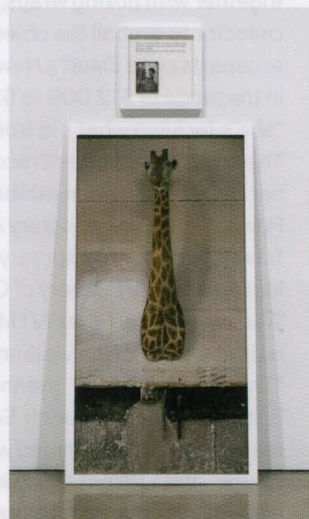


Ⓢ **LEE BONTECOU** |
B. 1931 | UNITED STATES

In the early 1960s, Bontecou was the only woman on famed New York dealer Leo Castelli's roster, which also included Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, and Frank Stella. She was celebrated for her investigations of industrial materials—canvas scraps, pieces of conveyor belts, and gas masks—resulting in monumental, abstract wall reliefs. Fusing painting and sculpture, organic feminine forms and macho automaton aesthetics, Bontecou's work captured the angst that pervaded the United States in the Cold War era. Her aggressive sculptures from the 1960s are also strong at auction, fetching 9 out of her 10 highest auction prices, topped by *Untitled*, 1962, which sold for \$1.9 million at Christie's New York in 2010. Although Bontecou—today represented by Freedman Art—is best known for her early three-dimensional work, drawing is an equally important component of her artistic practice as affirmed by "Lee Bontecou: Drawn World" at Houston's Menil Collection last winter, which showcased nearly 80 of the artist's works on paper. According to Michelle White, the Menil curator who organized the exhibition, "Her large corpus of graphite works has really been a surprise to many this year." —SEHBA MOHAMMAD | **UNTITLED**, 1967. COLORED PENCIL AND GOUACHE ON PAPER, 15³/₈ X 20⁵/₈ IN.

Ⓢ **SOPHIE CALLE** | **B. 1953 | FRANCE**

A French conceptual artist, Calle built a career as a voyeur in the pre-digital age, gathering intimate details of other people's lives for her mixed-media pieces, which consist largely of text and photographed images. For *The Hotel, Room 47*, 1981, she posed as a chambermaid in a Venice hotel to photograph and document the personal items and messes left behind by guests. For her controversial project *The Address Book*, she contacted people listed in an address book belonging to a Pierre D., which she found on a Paris street. Having copied its pages before anonymously returning it to its owner, she embarked on a quest to know the stranger through his acquaintances, publishing details of her encounters with them alongside photographs in a series of articles in the French newspaper *Libération* in 1983. For *The Sleepers (Les dormeurs)*, 1979, a 200-element work that sold for an artist-record \$218,500 at Christie's in November 2011, she invited strangers to sleep in her bed while she observed and photographed them. As for the artist's



draw, gallerist Paula Cooper says, "It's her mind, it's her storytelling." This has earned Calle solo shows at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, and a place in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City. —ANGELA M.H. SCHUSTER | **AUTOBIOGRAPHIES (THE GIRAFFE)**, 2012. DIGITAL PRINT MOUNTED ON ALUMINUM, TEXT PANEL WITH BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPH AND FOUND FRAME. FRAMED TEXT: 19³/₄ X 19³/₄ IN. FRAMED IMAGE: 80³/₄ X 43³/₈ IN.

Ⓢ **ELIZABETH CATLETT** |
1915–2012 | UNITED STATES

Homage to My Young Black Sisters, 1968, a life-size, red-cedar sculpture of a stylized female form, with arm and head raised in a gesture evoking the Black Power movement, is emblematic of Catlett's groundbreaking practice, which probes themes of gender and race through recurring portrayals of mothers and female laborers. The work set an artist record, \$288,000, at Swann Auction Galleries in October 2009. Prices on the secondary market for Catlett's sculptures, created from the 1960s until her death nearly 50 years later, depend on medium and size: Wood and bronze pieces can go for more than \$100,000; unique works in terra-cotta, marble, or onyx bring upwards of \$50,000. "We have sold more than 100 works by Elizabeth Catlett at auction over seven years," says Nigel Freeman, director of African-American fine art at Swann. Her most recognized work, however, is not a sculpture but a 1952 print:

Sharecropper, reissued in 1968–70. The linoleum-cut print is a portrait of a weathered yet resilient female farmworker. Editions can be found in major museum collections, including MOMA in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. —SM | **HOMAGE TO MY YOUNG BLACK SISTERS**, 1968. RED CEDAR WITH PAINTED AND CARVED DETAILS, 68 X 12 X 12 IN.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MICHAEL ROSENFELD GALLERY, NEW YORK; SWANN AUCTION GALLERIES; SOPHIE CALLE, PAULA COOPER GALLERY, NEW YORK; ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK, AND ADAGP, PARIS