

Women Artists in Revolution

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Splinter group from the American, male-dominated Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), which refused to expand its protests on behalf of minority artists to include women. The Art Workers' Coalition was a loose collective of progressive artists, filmmakers, writers, critics and museum workers started in January 1969 in New York. They wanted art institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) to restructure, reform and become more politically involved. The artist Takis (*b* 1925) wanted a work removed from a MOMA exhibition because he didn't feel it represented his current work. Several artists met to discuss the political and social role of the artists. These meetings evolved into political activism with protests, letters and demonstrations. However, women artists felt increasingly marginalized by the male-dominance of the group and splintered off to form their own collective as Women Artists in Revolutions (WAR). Many women artists had no gallery affiliation, which made museum exhibition more difficult. They were especially annoyed by the Whitney Museum of American Art's 1969 Annual which included only eight women among the 143 artists in the show. WAR generally agitated to draw attention to women's isolation in the art world, lack of market status and ignorance of the contributions of women to the art world. They wrote fake press releases, demonstrated and picketed. Several of the women artists had participated in the activities of the radical feminist group The Redstockings. Members included Nancy Spero, Poppy Johnson, Muriel Castanis (1926–2006), Sara Saporta, Dolores Holmes, Jacqueline Skiles, Juliette Gordon, Silvia Goldsmith and Jan McDevitt. When the women wanted to have a space for their exhibitions, they created the Women's Interart Center in 1970. WAR was relatively short-lived with its activities ending around 1971. Members got involved in other activist efforts such as cooperative galleries for women artists, such as AIR Gallery and Soho 20 Gallery, and other activist groups in the art world Ad Hoc Women's Committee, Women Artists and Students for Black Art Liberation. The impact of WAR was long-lived in helping women artists develop other gender-based institutions.

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