

ELLE

15 Women Artists Who are Changing Their World – and Ours

By Molly Langmuir and curated by Cary Leitzes

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Whether they make art or they buy, sell, collect, or "incubate" it, these 15 renegades share both an eye for beauty and a piercing awareness of that which is not beautiful—in ourselves, in society, even in the supposedly freewheeling sphere of art. Their mission: make sure we see it, too.

RACHEL UFFNER & HAYAL POZANTI | DISCOVERY ZONE



Rachel Uffner (right) at her gallery with Hayal Pozanti, holding a 2016 sculpture, 2 Glances 21 Electrodes, made from a repurposed CB2 sunshade. Pozanti wears: Mesh dress, SACAI, \$390, collection at Relish, Washington, DC. Slipdress, DKNY, \$398. Her own rings and slides

MARTIEN MULDER

Does gender bias still exist in the art world? "Hahaha" is how Marilyn Minter answered the question in a 2014 interview. "Is the Pope Catholic?" Women's work still tends to sell for less: Last year Louise Bourgeois was the sole female on a list of the 100 most expensive auction lots. And then there's the issue of representation—only 15.5 percent of the artists exhibited at the blue-chip Gagosian Gallery, for example, are women. Rachel Uffner's eponymous New York Lower East Side gallery is a notable exception: Ten of the 13 artists on her roster are female. "In the art world, she's known for two things," says artist Sara Greenberger Rafferty, whom Uffner represents. "Being one of the first galleries [to thrive] in the Lower East Side's postrecession renaissance, and showing a lot of female artists. With so many women artists, it's statistically wrong that she should be so successful." A Philadelphia native, Uffner started out at Christie's, then got a job at the now-defunct Chelsea gallery D'Amelio Terras, where she was promoted to director. She opened her gallery at age 30—just five days after Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy.

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Sales eventually picked up, and in 2014 Uffner moved to her current location, an expansive two-story space with a slanted wall of skylights on the top floor. "People joke sometimes about how I could make so much more money if I showed more men, but I'm just going for the most interesting artists," Uffner says. "The pool is broader if you're not constantly focused on your bottom line." She didn't set out to represent an anomalous number of women, but "I do think the best art has struggle in it, and it's always more of a struggle to be a female artist." Mainly, she gravitates to work in which creation and concept go hand in hand, as is the case with Hayal Pozanti, 33, who had her first solo show at the gallery in September. To invent her own 31-character language, Pozanti studied "how ancient civilizations came up with similar shapes and ways of writing," the artist says. "Borders or nationalities are so focused-on right now, but I like thinking about the commonalities of human beings instead."