40 For 40: Women In Art

The visionaries and artists reframing the future of the art world

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The art world is undergoing huge shifts, but how will these changes affect creativity? Here, continuing our 40th anniversary celebrations and our promise to spotlight the cohort who will define the next four decades, ELLE shines a light on the industry's visionaries.

These women and non-binary creatives prove the power of art as a means of self-expression, community-building, as well as resistance and leadership. And where they haven't seen themselves represented, they've forged new paths and created meaningful work for a different kind of future.

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Our list was compiled in collaboration with an esteemed panel of judges: artistic director of Frieze, Eva Langret; fashion designer Rejina Pyo; Devyani Saltzman, director of arts and participation at the Barbican; Kate Bryan, global director of Art at Soho House; and Marie McPartlin, director of Somerset House Studios.

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Alayo Akinkugbe (L)

A writer and curator, Alayo Akinkugbe is challenging the limitations of history of art. After studying History of Art at Cambridge and receiving an MA in curation from the Courtauld, Akinkugbe has founded the Instagram platform A Black History of Art and published the book *Reframing Blackness*, which challenges the ways in which Blackness is missing from mainstream art.

Charlotte Appleyard (R)

Director of Development at the British Museum, Charlotte Appleyard is part of the new guard alongside Nicholas Cullinan. She has previously held roles at the Royal Academy of Arts, where she was instrumental in reaching a broader audience across fashion, media and literature with projects including Marina Abramović's Extraordinary Women's tea party. She also sits on several advisory boards including the non-profit 10,000 Black Interns.

Courtesy of Romina Bassu and Juno Calypso

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Romina Bassu (L)

With her feminist art, Romina Bassu aims to turn 'fragility into a superpower'. The Rome-based artist is known for her striking female portraits that confront patriarchal culture. 'Romina's distinctive paintings create a world within a world, where feminine stereotypes and desperation exist alongside beauty and aspiration' – Kate Bryan, global director of art at Soho House

Juno Calypso (R)

Photographer Juno Calypso has crafted a signature style across film, photography and installation that makes her work world-renowned with its layered storytelling and cinematic edge. 'Juno reveals the discomfort in beauty and has been ahead of the curve in her work, her early photographs now feel eerily like premonitions' – Kate Bryan

Alexander James / Jack Elliot Edwards

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Angela de la Cruz (L)

The Turner Prize-nominated Spanish artist has had solo exhibitions across Europe, including at the Lisson Gallery and Camden Arts Centre. Rejina Pyo, the fashion designer and judge for ELLE's 40 for 40 Women in Art, says: 'Angela has inspired my work as a designer from the very beginning. Her fearless approach to blurring painting and sculpture has influenced my own painting practice. She challenges the way we think about form, space and material, opening new possibilities for artists and designers to experiment and rethink boundaries.'

Rose Easton (R)

Rose Easton is redefining what a contemporary gallery can be. At her eponymous space in east London, she champions emerging artists and curates experimental exhibitions. Her programming centres identity and social commentary, creating a vital platform for new voices to develop.

Louise Giovanelli is photographed by Timon Benson

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Aindrea Emelife (L)

As a writer, culture historian and ELLE contributing editor, Aindrea Emelife's work focuses on the politics of representation. She was the curator of the Nigerian Pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale and is currently curator of modern and contemporary works at the Museum of West African Art. Her exhibition *Black Venus*, which explored how Black women have appeared in visual culture, was shown at Somerset House; a book of the same name will be published in 2027.

Louise Giovanelli (R)

Louise Giovanelli is one of the most exciting painters of her generation. Known for her vibrant, meticulous style, she's also invested in the future of painting beyond her own studio. As a founder of Apollo Painting School in Manchester, she's created a space for mentorship and community.

Seye Isikalu / Miguel Lorenzo

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Aliyah Hasinah (L)

‘Aliyah Hasinah’s work is all about empowering Black curators and creatives. With Black Curatorial, she has developed pioneering initiatives challenging institutional biases and building ecosystems through the creation of inclusive spaces and essential professional development programs’ – Eva Langret, artistic director of Frieze London

Mona Hatoum (R)

‘Mona Hatoum has spent her career transforming deeply personal and political themes into powerful, poetic art. Working across performance, video, photography, sculpture, installation, and works on paper, she explores ideas of displacement, belonging, and the invisible systems that shape our lives’ - Devyani Saltzman, director for arts and participation at the Barbican

Lily Bertrand Webb / Portrait of Chantal Joffe by Isabelle Young

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Katy Hessel (L)

Through writing, broadcasting, and curating, Katy Hessel is retelling the history of art with female artists at the centre. As founder of the highly influential The Great Women Artists Instagram and author of *The Story of Art Without Men*, she’s created platforms that challenge exclusion and celebrate creativity across time. Her new book *How to Live an Artful Life* (out in November) is a collection of ‘inspirations from artists on how to bring creativity to your everyday’.

Chantal Joffe (R)

‘Chantal Joffe captures women with a strength and vulnerability that feels so honest. Her portraits linger with you, revealing the intimacy and emotional depth of her subjects in a way that feels tender, immediate and true. Her work opens a space for seeing women, and people more broadly, with empathy and authenticity’ – Rejina Pyo

Adama Jalloh / Laura Bailey

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Rachel Jones (L)

Known for her unapologetic use of colour and unique technique, using her signature tools of oil stick and oil pastels, Rachel Jones's work engages viewers' senses in new, addictive ways. Her exhibition *Gated Canyons* was the first ever contemporary solo show in Dulwich Picture Gallery's main exhibition space. 'With a striking painting style, Rachel is an artist who charts her own course and pushes herself continually – even recently staging an opera' – Kate Bryan

Angelica Jopling (R)

Writer, curator and founding director of London-based gallery Incubator, Angelica Jopling has injected new life into the capital's gallery scene. What began as a series of pop-ups giving emerging artists their first solo shows (42 artists were showcased over three years), transformed into a permanent gallery space in which new audiences can connect with young artists.

Suzannah Pettigrew /Niclas Warius

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Jasleen Kaur (L)

A recent winner of the Turner Prize, 'Jasleen is an incredible artist, and truly one who is not afraid to challenge the status quo, using the huge platform she had in that moment to shine a light where it was and is still most needed,' says Marie McPartlin, director of Somerset House Studios. Fellow judge Devyani Saltzman adds that she is 'a leading figure because of her exploration of cultural memory and political belonging, drawing on the experiences of ordinary people, including South Asian women'.

Keiken (R)

'Keiken is an artist collective from mixed diasporic backgrounds, their name taken from the Japanese word for 'experience', who are part of our Somerset House Studios community. Through gaming and performance, they suggest new modes of being, most strikingly through their haptic wombs: wearable silicone bellies, or "meta-wombs", embedded with vibration technology that transmits sound directly to the body. Worn against the abdomen, they let participants feel the calls of whales, bats and other beings, creating an intimate, physical encounter designed to heighten empathy and expand sensory perception beyond the human' – Marie McPartlin

Alexa Viscius / Jacopo La Forgia

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Nora Khan (L)

'Nora Khan has had a huge influence on a generation of artists working with evolving and advanced technologies, particularly her work on the philosophy of AI and machine learning. Her co-curation of the Biennale de L'Image en Mouvement in Geneva in 2024, *A Cosmic Movie Camera*, was superb, and the accompanying online exhibition was one of the best examples I've seen of curating in virtual space' – Marie McPartlin

Ayoung Kim (R)

'I've been truly rapt by South Korean artist Ayoung Kim's ongoing multimedia series of artworks *Delivery Dancer*, which blend speculative fiction and narrative depth to create what the artist describes as "a queer romance – a complex expression of intimacy and friction between women". Her groundbreaking work, often using CGI and game engines as tools, was recognised this year when she won the prestigious LG Guggenheim Award' – Marie McPartlin

Russ McClintock / ELLE reuse

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Joline Kwakkenbos (L)

'Joline's work is a quiet, introspective journey into self-discovery. Her pieces are deeply personal yet universal, capturing vulnerability and emotional honesty with a rawness that resonates. Her art reminds us that confronting truth and emotion is not only courageous but transformative for anyone experiencing it' – Rejina Pyo

Tarini Malik (R)

'Tarini is a leading curator and above all a great champion of artists. She curated John Akomfrah's awe-inspiring project for the UK Pavilion during the last Venice Biennale and is about to curate Simone Leigh's upcoming landmark exhibition at the Royal Academy – two of the most important artists working today' – Eva Langret

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Sarah Maple (L)

Multidisciplinary artist Sarah Maple's creative output spans performance, painting, installation, collage and photography; her work is exhibited in collections at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and Soho House, where global director of art, and part of our judging panel, Kate Bryan says: 'In her multifaceted practice, Sarah interrogates identity and belonging with wit, playfulness and a dangerous edge.'

Maggie Matić (R)

Director of Auto Italia, a non-profit arts organisation in east London, 'Maggie is a true pioneer, working at the intersection of queer studies and social change to imagine and build robust artist-led institutions. At Auto Italia, Maggie's programme is topical, experimental, community-centred and extremely exciting,' says Eva Langret.

Selvi May photographed by Jacob Lillis

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Rene Matić (L)

A Turner Prize nominee for 2025, Rene Matić is the shortlist's only photographer. Their work plays on a reportage style of photography that highlights the prosaic, accompanied by deeper symbolism as well as personal intimacy. 'Rene has made me think about the notion of Britishness more than any other artist in recent years. Their work is urgent, poetic, and disjunctive,' says Kate Bryan.

Selvi May Akyildiz (R)

As director of Frieze's permanent gallery No.9 Cork Street, Akyildiz is building one of London's most dynamic platforms for contemporary art. Her work focuses on creating space for emerging creatives from around the world. With over a decade of experience in the industry, including stints at Hauser & Wirth and non-profit Create London, where she worked on the Hackney Windrush Art Commission sculptures by Veronica Ryan, she brings a wealth of knowledge to developing collaborative art spaces.

Ernesto Monsalve Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

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Delcy Morelos (L)

'Delcy Morelos is a visual artist whose installations draw deeply from the earth, using materials such as soil, clay, and organic matter. Her work connects spirituality, ecology, and memory, awakening viewers to the inseparability of human life and the natural world. Morelos's large-scale installations have been exhibited internationally, including at the 2022 Venice Biennale' – Devyani Saltzman

Wanda Nanibush (R)

'Wanda Nanibush is an Anishinaabe curator, artist and educator. Currently based in Toronto, she has become a leading voice in shaping how institutions engage with Indigenous perspectives. Her practice spans curation, writing and activism, prioritising stories of resistance, sovereignty, and cultural continuity while amplifying new generations of Indigenous artists' – Devyani Saltzman

Andres Altamirano / Joss Bitelli

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Cassi Namoda (L)

'There's something so moving in the way Cassi paints. Her work draws you into memory, identity and personal history, with colours that feel alive and deeply intuitive. I feel like she's building a visual language that will help us understand memory and identity in ways we haven't seen before' – Rejina Pyo

Iarlaith Ní Fheorais (R)

'Irish curator, writer and producer Iarlaith Ní Fheorais is an important figure in the UK and Ireland when it comes to building a more inclusive art world. Informed by Disability Justice and her own experience as a disabled curator, she published Access Toolkit for Art Workers, an online resource and toolkit for art workers, offering practical information on how to plan, produce and exhibit accessible and inclusive art projects, working to combat ableism in the arts' – Marie McPartlin

Beth Wilkinson / Rocio Chacon

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Toyin Ojih Odutola (L)

'Toyin Ojih Odutola is a Nigerian-American artist celebrated for her large-scale drawings that unfold as speculative, narrative fictions. Her immersive works explore colonial histories, identity, and power through innovative mark-making and installation; she represented Nigeria at the 2024 Venice

Biennale' – Devyani Saltzman

Sikelela Owen (R)

'There's a warmth and authenticity in Sikelela's work that makes the everyday feel profound. She reminds us that softness and domesticity have power, quietly shaping how we connect with the world through art' – Rejina Pyo

Ted Belton / Charlene Prempeh, Copyright © Bonhams. Photo by Gary Morrisroe

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Rajni Perera (L)

'Born in Sri Lanka and now based in Toronto, Rajni Perera is one of Canada's most exciting contemporary artists. Through her dreamlike figures and subversive icons, Perera reimagines cultural narratives and opens space for new ways of seeing resilience, ancestry and transformation' – Devyani Saltzman

Charlene Prempeh (R)

Charlene Prempeh is one of the most insightful voices writing on culture, design and identity today. As the founder of creative agency A Vibe Called Tech, her work directs the conversation around creativity through an African-diaspora lens, and champions new narratives across fashion, art and media.

Adama Jalloh/ Jason Schmidt

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Carrie Rees (L)

Founder of Rees & Co, a global cultural communications agency, Carrie Rees is a powerhouse behind the scenes. As one of the industry's most respected PR and communications experts, she helps shape how artists and exhibitions connect with the world. With a roster of clients including Victoria Miro, The Hepworth Wakefield and the Barbican, she's been instrumental in bringing some of the most important shows and artists to public attention, and doing so with intentionality and authenticity.

Legacy Russell (R)

'Legacy Russell is executive director and chief curator of The Kitchen, New York's pioneering institution for experimental art. Her practice as a curator and writer explores Blackness, queerness, feminism and digital culture. At The Kitchen, she has spearheaded innovative, interdisciplinary programming of underrepresented artists and critical voices. She is the author of *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* and *Black Meme*' – Devyani Saltzman

Courtesy the artist and Timothy Taylor. Photo: Willow Williams © AntoniaShowering / Rachel Louise Brown

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Antonia Showering (L)

‘Antonia’s work is layered, delicate, and deeply emotional. Her paintings and drawings explore femininity and the inner world in all its complexity – soft, fierce, tender and resilient. She has a way of capturing emotion and sensation that feels immediate and personal, inviting us to pause, feel and reflect’ – Rejina Pyo

Victoria Siddall (R)

A key figure in the global art world, Siddall has helped shape what cultural leadership can look like. As director of the National Portrait Gallery and former global director of Frieze Fairs, where she also established Frieze Masters, she continues to push for sustainability, inclusivity and structural change in the arts.

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Ebun Sodipo (L)

‘Ebun is inspirational as a person and as an artist; her critically engaged work manifesting alternative trans futures is so urgent in our current context of societal violence and historical erasure of trans voices’ – Eva Langret

Róisín Tapponi (R)

‘Roísín has built a film collective and streaming platform, Shasha, from scratch. She's making space for countless inspiring artists, directors and collectives from the South West Asia and North Africa region whose distinguished work might otherwise be overlooked. She has also, amazingly, found time to write her first novel *Scene City*, out in 2026’ – Eva Langret

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Bolanle Tajudeen (L)

'Over the last decade, Bolanle [founder of nomadic gallery Bolanle Contemporary] has platformed and nurtured the work of dozens of emerging artists of colour. She has created invaluable support networks where often there are none, building spaces that provide care and community for these groundbreaking artists to build their profile and showcase their work' – Eva Langret

Zoé Whitley (R)

Zoé Whitley is an art historian and curator whose exhibitions reframe art history and make space for urgent, often overlooked voices. As the former director of Chisenhale Gallery and former curator of landmark shows such as Tate Modern's *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, she consistently brings care and cultural relevance to every project she leads.

The Panel (L-R)

ELLE 40 for 40 Women in Art Judging Panel

Devyani Satlzman

Devyani Saltzman is the Barbican's director for arts and participation, as well being a writer and curator. She works at the intersection of art, storytelling, and social change. Formerly director of public programming at the Art Gallery of Ontario and head of programming at the Banff Centre, she's known for creating inclusive cultural spaces and nurturing critical discourse.

Eva Langret

As artistic Director of Frieze EMEA, Eva Langret brings a sharp curatorial eye to one of the world's most influential art fairs. Her approach is grounded in collaboration, spotlighting emerging voices and fostering cross-cultural dialogue within the global art sphere.

Kate Bryan

Global director of art at Soho House, Kate Bryan is a curator, writer and broadcaster redefining who art is for. She's led projects such as Vault 100 and Not 30%, an all-female art fair, championing women and emerging artists. Her work spans television, books and public collections, always pushing for broader representation and access.

Marie McPartlin

Marie McPartlin is the inaugural director of Somerset House Studios, one of London's most influential artist-led spaces. Her programming is bold and interdisciplinary, supporting creatives working across art, music fashion and tech. McPartlin's leadership has helped preserve Somerset House's identity as a pioneer of cultural innovation.

Rejina Pyo

Rejina Pyo has quietly built one of London's most distinctive fashion labels, known for its sculptural silhouettes, subtle colour palettes and everyday wearability. Her work – which, in the decade since her brand's inception, has always been inspired by artists – encourages individuality and creative expression in what we wear.

ELLE Collective is a new community of fashion, beauty and culture lovers. For access to exclusive content, events, inspiring advice from our Editors and industry experts, as well the opportunity to meet designers, thought-leaders and stylists, become a member today HERE.

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