

# Chanel, Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum Honor Women in the Modern Art World

The annual Washington, D. C., spring luncheon attracted artists, patrons, diplomats and politicians.



Museum Director Melissa Chiu standing with Hirshhorn Award honorees artist Abigail DeVille, Chiu, Tippet Rise co-founder Cathy Halstead; art collector Pamela J. Joyner; seated: philanthropists Jacqueline Badger Mars and Barbara Levine.



WASHINGTON, D.C. — On a bright sunny Wednesday afternoon in a gallery overlooking the capital's National Mall, the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum, in partnership with Chanel, honored women who have contributed to the modern arts landscape in America.

"We are the National Museum of Modern Art and one of the few free modern art museums in this nation," said Melissa

Chiu, director of Hirshhorn, while welcoming guests to the event. "Today we are here to celebrate all of you and a number of women whose vision and creativity have done much to contribute to the cultural life of this nation."

The guests, including CNN political news anchor Abby Phillips, Congressman Don Beyer, Irish Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason and philanthropist Samia Farouki, toured the exhibition "Put It This Way: (Re)Visions of the Hirshhorn Collection," which features nearly a century of work by women artists drawn exclusively from the Hirshhorn's permanent collection, many of which were being exhibited for the first time. Lunch was served in the final exhibition room, which was adorned with posters from the 1980s activist group Guerrilla Girls with messages and statistics like: "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 5% percent of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female."

Historian, curator and art world Instagram star Katy Hessel, who is devoted to highlighting women in the art world, carried around her new award-winning book, "The History of Art Without Men."

"When I was an art history student, I realized I struggled to even name five women artists before 1950, which made me realize I had been learning the history of art from a male perspective. So as a 21-year-old without any resources besides my phone, I started documenting the women artists with my Instagram handle 'Great Women Artists' to just pay homage. I was shocked by my own ignorance and lack of knowledge so I started by wanting to educate myself."

Chiu added, "One of the things that's so invigorating about this moment is we really feel our history is being rewritten. Through exhibition we can set a new kind of agenda."

The honorees presented with the National Arts Award at the luncheon this year included: art patron Jacqueline Mars, renowned installation artist Abigail DeVille, collector Barbara Levine, patron Pamela J. Joyner, philanthropist Cathy Halstead and journalist Megan Beyer.