

# Representation of Women in City Property

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A GENDER ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC ART, STREETS, BUILDINGS, AND PARKS

December 2019

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**City and County of San Francisco**  
London N. Breed  
Mayor

**Department on the Status of Women**  
Emily M. Murase, PhD  
Director

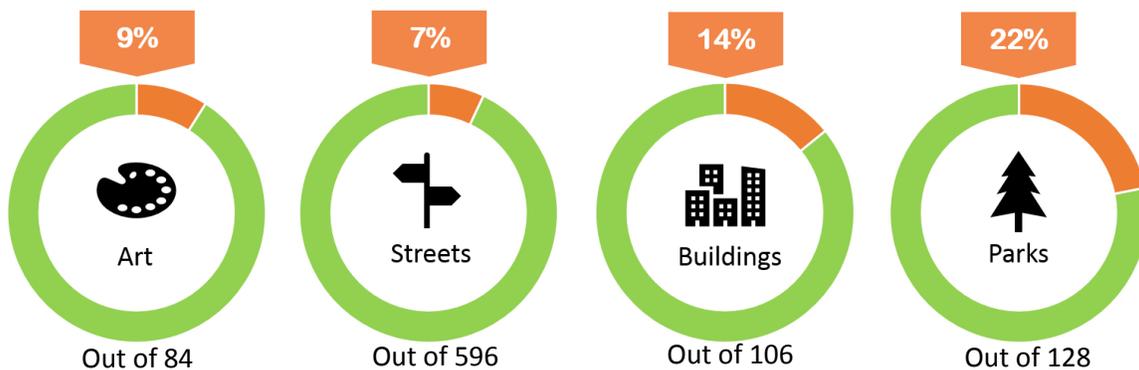


## Executive Summary

In October 2018, the Board of Supervisors passed, and Mayor London N. Breed signed, [Ordinance 243-18](#) (“the Ordinance”) to expand the extent to which women are represented and commemorated in the public sphere, including in artwork, statues, street names, facilities, parks, and more. It establishes a City policy which states that at least 30 percent of historic figures depicted or recognized in the public sphere be women. This level of representation is important because studies show that 30 percent is the proportion at which critical mass is reached so that a minority’s voice begins to be heard, not as a minority but as part of the group.<sup>1</sup>

The Ordinance calls for a work of public art depicting Maya Angelou, American poet, civil rights activist, and San Francisco’s first female cable car operator, to be installed in front of the Main Library. The Ordinance also creates a fund to accept gifts for the design, construction, repair and maintenance of public art depicting historic women. It further requires a report monitoring the representation of women depicted in public art and on public property by the Department on the Status of Women by December 31, 2019, the following year (2020), and every other year thereafter.

This first report establishes a baseline of representation of the proportion of nonfictional people recognized in the public sphere that are women across the categories identified in the Ordinance. As of December 2019, the proportion of nonfictional women recognized in public property is the following:



### Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Micaela Leonarte, Public Policy Fellow at the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women. Department Director Emily Murase, PhD, Policy and Projects Director Elizabeth Newman, and Associate Director Carol Sacco provided significant support and guidance.

The Department on the Status of Women would like to thank the following departments for their efforts to gather and provide data contained in this report: The Arts Commission, the City Administrator’s Office, the City Administrator’s Real Estate Division, the Municipal Transportation Agency, the Port of San Francisco, Public Works, the Public Utilities Commission, the Recreation and Parks Department, and the San Francisco International Airport. All visualizations, including images, graphs, and maps, were created by the Department on the Status of Women, unless noted otherwise.

<sup>1</sup> “Does Critical Mass Matter? Views from the Boardroom.” Broome, L. L., Conley, J.M., & Krawiec, D.K. (2010) [https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3085&context=faculty\\_scholarship](https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3085&context=faculty_scholarship)

## Introduction

Statues and public art serve as a vehicle to recognize people who have significantly contributed to society. The United States has less than 400 statues depicting real historic women.<sup>2</sup> Generally, statues tend to portray war heroes or elected officials, who are overwhelmingly Caucasian/White men. When women are portrayed in statues, they are often hypersexualized, fictional characters, or a means to carry a metaphor, such as Lady Liberty.

Today, women have accomplished an extensive array of achievements and hold more positions of power than ever. Regardless, recognition of women in the public sphere is disproportionate. Recent efforts to change this underrepresentation of women in statues were catalyzed by the Empowerment 2020 movement led by former U.S. Treasurer Rosie Rios, known for initiating the process to feature a woman on U.S. currency. Empowerment 2020's efforts have been extended to comprise women's representation in the classroom and statues.

This movement inspired several cities in America to take action. New York, a city with only five statues depicting historic women, none of which are located in Central Park,<sup>3</sup> began to partner with outside organizations to erect bronze statues of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, and Susan B. Anthony, with dozens more to come, including a statue of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

With the passage of [Ordinance 243-18](#) ("the Ordinance"), San Francisco hopes to similarly increase the representation of women in public property, starting with the creation of the statue of prominent poet and San Francisco's first female cable

car operator, Maya Angelou, in the year 2020. The Ordinance also requires regular reporting by the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women of the progress to reach 30 percent women's representation in public art, street names, buildings, and parks. The following is the first report on the representation of women in City property.



### **Representation is important.**

Psychologists, such as Albert Bandura, suggest that at early stages of development we tend to perform observational learning: the idea that we imitate what we see. If women and girls do not see accomplished women honored in their cities as much as men do, they may be at danger of asking themselves: "**Are women even capable of accomplishing great things?**" This in turn may limit their aspirations and the fields young women enter, like science, politics, and business.

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<sup>2</sup> "The US has fewer than 400 statues of women – but that's changing." Quartz. (2019). <https://qz.com/1732974/new-york-citys-central-park-will-get-its-first-statue-of-women/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Methodology

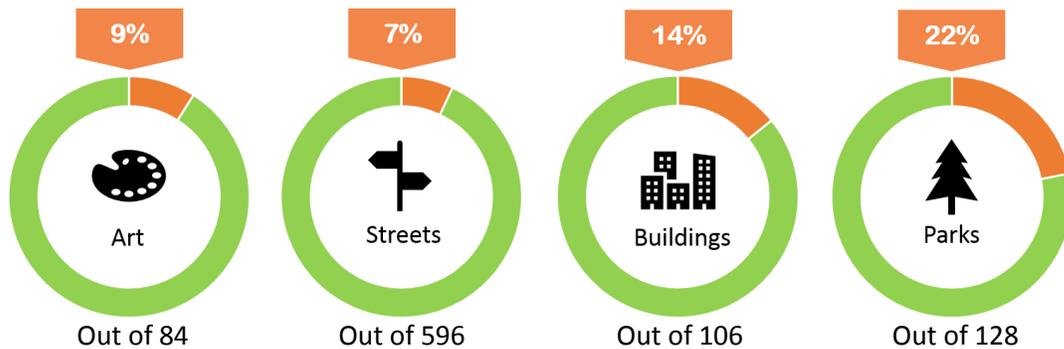
City departments provided the data for this report as required by the Ordinance, including the Arts Commission, the City Administrator's Office, Public Works, and the Recreation and Parks Department. Departments compiled a list of historic figures depicted or recognized by name in property under their jurisdiction. Artwork in museums and spaces requiring an admission fee were excluded per the Ordinance. Data that was posted on each Departments' website or received by the Department on the Status of Women by November 25, 2019 was included in this report. Additionally, supplementary data was provided by the City Administrator's Real Estate Division, the Port of San Francisco, the Public Utilities Commission, the San Francisco International Airport, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, the San Francisco Public Library, and the Department on the Status of Women. Any incomplete and missing data will be noted in the report.

The goals of this analysis are to:

- ➔ Measure the current proportion of public property depicting or recognizing nonfictional historic women as compared to men.
- ➔ Determine the level of equity needed in the public sphere to reach the City policy goal of at least 30 percent women.
- ➔ Highlight the importance of the representation and commemoration of women in public art and public property.
- ➔ Create a baseline for women's representation in the public sphere in San Francisco to inform future naming decisions and depictions of historic people.

## Findings

Based on the data gathered, the following are the results of the analysis regarding the representation of women in public spaces including public art, street names, buildings and other facilities, and parks and open spaces. They are discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

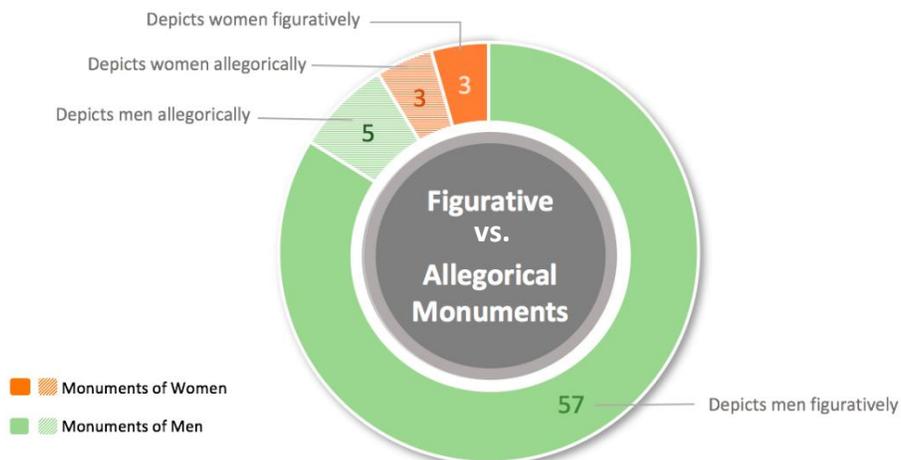


## Public Art



Data Source: the Arts Commission

The representation of women in public art includes all permanently sited works of art that are sculptural monuments and memorials as provided by the Arts Commission. Out of 84 monuments or memorials, 16 are ambiguous or general and 68 depict historic figures, with 91 percent (62) recognizing or depicting men, and 9 percent (6) recognizing or depicting women. This category is 21 percentage points behind the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal. This would require the addition of 21 monuments named after or depicting historic women.



Of 62 monuments or memorials of men, 92 percent (57) are figurative depictions and 8 percent (5) are allegorical or do not include a depiction. Out of 6 monuments or memorials of women, 50 percent (3) are figurative depictions and the other 50 percent (3) are allegorical or do not include a depiction. The three women depicted figuratively in public monuments are former San Francisco Mayor and current U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, statistician and creator of modern-day nursing Florence Nightingale, and Italian Soprano Luisa Tetrazzini. All 84 monuments were privately-funded gifts to the City.

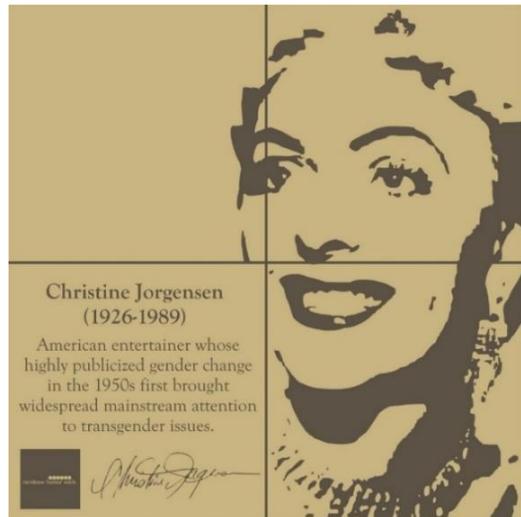
Despite the low representation of women depicted in works of art, the San Francisco Arts Commission has made great strides towards supporting gender equality in the arts by awarding 50 percent of its public art commissions to female artists. Additionally, the creation of an artistic depiction honoring Maya Angelou in front of the Public Library is underway and is expected to be installed by the end of the year 2020. The list provided by the Arts Commission does not include two-dimensional art, such as plaques, murals, paintings, and similar objects, which hopefully will be included in future updates to this report.

## *Additional Art*

In addition to the Arts Commission's collection, other City departments that have public art in their jurisdiction submitted data on the representation of women in memorials, plaques, and works of art.

### **Plaques at the Rainbow Honor Walk**

Located in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood, the Rainbow Honor Walk honors deceased Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ+), and gender-non-conforming individuals who have contributed to society in a variety of fields ranging from science, art, politics, and more.<sup>4</sup> The 44 plaques installed on the sidewalk, include a portrait of each honoree, of which 36 percent are women (16), and 64 percent are men (28).<sup>5</sup> The list includes Zuni native, male-bodied, We'wha, who performed "feminine tasks" such as crafting,<sup>6</sup> and was known for living a life of advocacy; and Christine Jorgensen, an entertainer who brought attention to transgender issues. The Rainbow Honor Walk showcases the intersectionality of representation and the importance of seeing an array of diversity in the public sphere.



### **Public Utilities Commission**

The Public Utilities Commission has an independent art collection open to the public that consists of 346 pieces of art. The collection includes three pieces of art depicting nonfictional men and zero depicting nonfictional women.

### **Recreation and Parks Department**

The Recreation and Parks Department has 11 plaques under their jurisdiction recognizing historical people, from which 82 percent honor men (9) and 18 percent honor women (2).

<sup>4</sup> Approved by the Arts Commission and installed by Public Works on sidewalks in the Castro District.

<sup>5</sup> Classified by gender for each honoree's self-identified gender.

<sup>6</sup> "Transgender Spotlight: We'wha." Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition. (2014).

<https://www.masstpc.org/wewha/>

## Street Names



Data Sources: Public Works and the Recreation and Parks Department.

The representation of women in San Francisco’s street names includes all officially valid avenues, streets, drives, ways, lanes, courts, places, and roads. Out of 596 streets named after historic individuals, 93 percent of streets are named for men (554), and 7 percent are named for women (42). This category is 23 percentage points behind the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal. This would require the addition of around 200 streets named after women.

Regarding the existing 42 streets named after historic women in San Francisco, the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood has the most streets named for women. Ten out of 12 of these streets are named after racially diverse activists who sought to make Bayview-Hunters Point a better place, like the “Big 5,” a group of local advocates from the ‘60s. Lake Merced, located near San Francisco State University and the surrounding student housing, has the second most streets named after historic women. Four out of 7 of these streets, which surround a roundabout, are named after members of the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition to San Francisco during 1775-1776, including Juan Bautista de Anza’s wife, Juana Cardenas. Additionally, it is important to highlight that most streets named after women in the Bayview-Hunters Point and Lake Merced neighborhoods are in very close proximity to one another, as mapped below.

Zip Code/Neighborhood	Streets Named for Women	San Francisco Streets Named After Historic Women
94124: Bayview-Hunters Point	12	
94132: Lake Merced	7	
94109: Russian Hill/ Polk (Nob Hill)	3	
94103: South of Market	2	
94112: Ingleside-Excelsior/ Crocker-Amazon	2	
94115: Western Addition/ Japan Town	2	
94127: West Portal/ St. Francis Wood/ Miraloma	2	
94131: Twin Peaks/ Glen Park	2	
94102: Hayes Valley/ Tenderloin/ North of Market	1	
94107: South Park/ SOMA	1	
94117: Haight-Ashbury	1	
94118: Inner Richmond (Golden Gate Park)	1	
94121: Outer Richmond (Golden Gate Park)	1	
94134: Visitation Valley/ Sunnysdale	1	

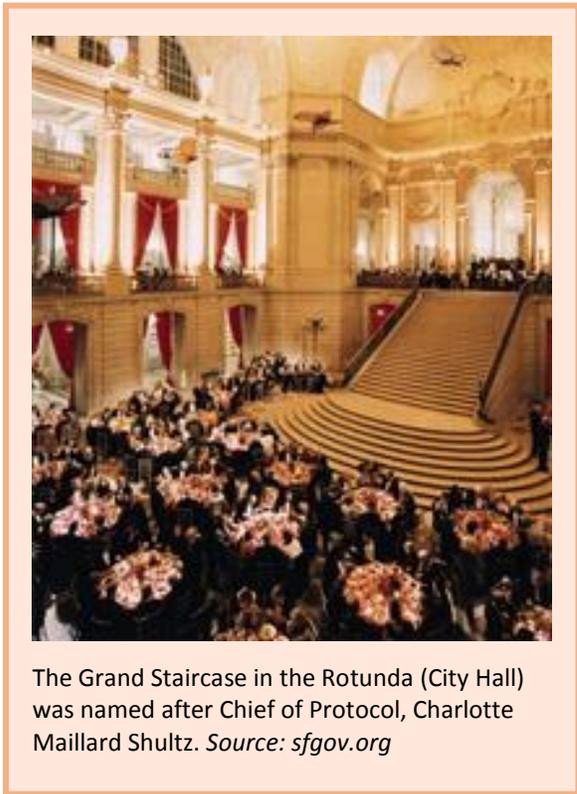
## Buildings



*Data Sources: the Office of the City Administrator, the City Administrator’s Real Estate Division, the Port of San Francisco, the Public Utilities Commission, the Recreation and Parks Department, San Francisco International Airport, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, and the San Francisco Public Library.*

The representation of women in City-owned buildings includes buildings, clubhouses, museums, recreation centers, community rooms, auditoriums, terminals, departure halls,<sup>7</sup> staircases, rooms, and other places open to the public. The data provided does not include conference rooms, which the Ordinance calls for but were not available in time for this report. There are 106 City-owned buildings and other spaces named after nonfictional individuals, of which 66 percent (70) are named after men, 14 percent (15) are named after women, and 20 percent (21) are named after both a man and a woman.<sup>8</sup> This category is 16 percentage points behind the Ordinance’s 30 percent goal. This would require the addition of 24 buildings and other spaces named after women.

Important to note is the significant percentage of buildings and spaces named after both a man and a woman. A large majority are part of the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital with 15 buildings named after the mixed-gender married couple Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, and Priscilla Chan, pediatrician.



The Grand Staircase in the Rotunda (City Hall) was named after Chief of Protocol, Charlotte Maillard Shultz. *Source: sfgov.org*

<sup>7</sup> Does not include spaces beyond the airport security check point.

<sup>8</sup> Includes married couples with both a man and a woman, families and other groups.

## Parks and Open Spaces



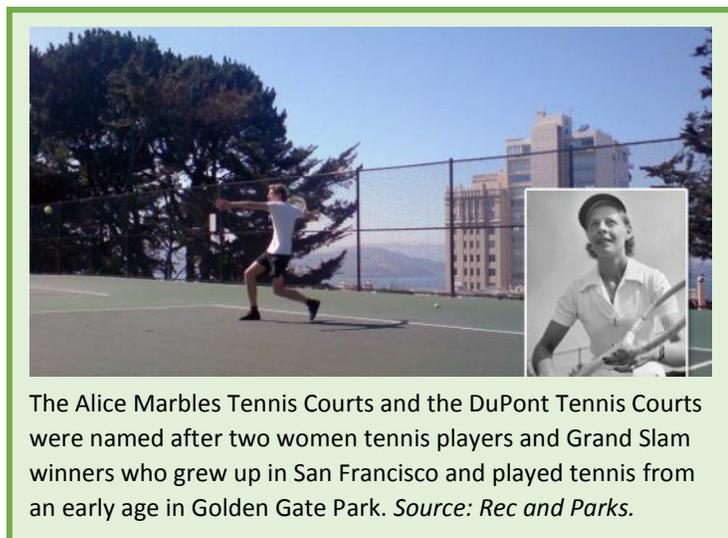
Data Sources: the City Administrator's Real Estate Division (RED) and the Recreation and Parks Department.

The representation of women in parks and open spaces includes public park sites, hills, gardens, playgrounds, tennis courts, benches,<sup>9</sup> squares, groves, maintenance yards, yacht harbors, piazzas, carousels, gates, stables, golf courses, trees, and plazas. In total, under this category there are 128 spaces named for historic individuals, with men comprising 77 percent (99), women comprising 22 percent (28), and 1 percent named after both men and women (1). This category is 8 percentage points behind the Ordinance's 30 percent goal of representation of women in the naming of public parks and open spaces. This would require the addition of 15 spaces named after women, which are especially underrepresented at public facilities and amenities.

There are 58 park sites named for nonfictional historic figures, of which 71 percent are named for men (41), 28 percent are named for women (16), and 2 percent are named for both men and women (1). There are 70 other outdoor facilities and special amenities, including gates, fields, fountains, and benches, of which 85 percent are named for men (58) and 18 percent are named for women (12).

## Conclusion

This report establishes a baseline from which to measure progress. The overall representation of women in City property averages to 13 percent, well below the Ordinance's 30 percent goal, with public art and street names requiring the most attention. Future reports should include additional forms of art and conference rooms, which were not available at the time of data collection. Meanwhile, local efforts to increase women's representation in public art are underway with the creation of the artistic depiction of Maya Angelou that will be installed in front of the San Francisco Main Library. Similarly, many organizations are rallying to change spaces named after historic figures who committed immoral actions and name these after civic heroes instead. This report should encourage naming authorities to promote gender equity and other forms of diversity when deciding who to recognize in the future.



<sup>9</sup> Benches included have been proposed to and approved by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Commission.

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