

# STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

## Visualizing a New Landscape for Artists



Center for Scholars & Storytellers  
University of California, Los Angeles

Developed in partnership with:  
Concept Art Association  
BRIC Foundation

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BRIC  
FOUNDATION



CONCEPT ART  
ASSOCIATION



CENTER FOR  
SCHOLARS &  
STORYTELLERS

UCLA



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STORYTELLERS

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# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Center for Scholars & Storytellers (CSS) partnered with the BRIC Foundation and the Concept Art Association (CAA) to explore the race/ethnicity and gender identity of concept and visual development artists across animated movies, animated, television series, live-action movies, live action television series, and gaming.

Using publicly available data collected by the Concept Art Association, we examined both the race/ethnicity and gender identities of artists within their network who were involved in a critically acclaimed or top box office creative project that was released between 2018-2022 in the Western world. This report aims to provide initial data on the diversity landscape of concept and visual development artists in order to begin to start a conversation about a category of industry professionals that have not yet been considered with respect to equity and inclusion.



# INTRODUCTION

## from BRIC & CAA

The [Concept Art Association](#)'s mission is to elevate artists and educate the public about their role in the entertainment industry. One of the ways that they do that is through an annual red-carpet show, the Concept Art Awards.

Every year they spend weeks going through all the top films, shows, and games and then researching to find as many artists as possible that worked on those projects, to invite them to submit their art to the show. They started to realize that they might be the only ones tracking over the past five years who is working on what size of projects, who is getting promotions, and just in general- who are the artists working in entertainment vs. working in an industry segment like live-action, animation, or games.

Together with the [BRIC Foundation](#), whose mission is to increase representation for women and people from historically excluded groups in the entertainment, media, and tech industries, they have worked with the [Center for Scholars & Storytellers](#) at [UCLA](#) to commission this study to codify, analyze, and report on this data, specifically around the gender and racial makeup of artists working in entertainment.



We are thankful for Dr. Yalda Uhls' Center for Scholars and Storytellers at UCLA team, and our Project Lead, Lindsay Roberts, for taking this dataset and turning it into what we hope will be a report that shines a light on where we are as an industry, and where we need to invest and grow as we strive for representation and inclusion.



**Nicole Hendrix**

*Co-Founder and Executive Director  
of the BRIC Foundation  
Co-Founder of Concept Art  
Association*



**Rachel Meinerding**

*Co-Founder of Concept Art  
Association*



**Alison Mann**

*Co-Founder of the BRIC  
Foundation*

# INTRODUCTION from CSS

Over the past several years entertainment industry leaders have pioneered efforts to increase diversity and inclusion, and audiences continue to demand stories that reflect the truth and complexity of their experience. CSS's reports on **authentically inclusive representation in film (AIR)** and its impact on box office returns have demonstrated that diversity and inclusion at all levels of film-making have a major influence on the commercial success of creative projects.

This culture shift has led to increased talent diversity and some gains in race/ethnicity and gender representation for behind-the-screen roles. These industry gains in diversity and inclusion, however, have been less evident in certain creative fields.

While women have made progress in representation for film directors and writers, television show leads, creators, directors and writers, a 2019 report from The Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (AAI) in partnership with Women in Animation found that women in the animation industry, specifically, are still vastly underrepresented.



## VISUAL DEVELOPMENT ARTIST

A visual development artist is an artist that works specifically in animation to visually create a world with characters for television series, movies, and other media.



## CONCEPT ARTIST

A concept artist is an artist in live action or games who works to visually create a world with characters for television series, movies, games and other media.



This report considers race/ethnicity and gender diversity among concept and visual development artists. Our findings support the conclusions of AAI's report and also illustrate that the diversity landscape is similarly bleak for visual development artists in not just animation, but also live action, movies, television, and gaming.

At the Center for Scholars & Storytellers, we believe in using data to support content creators and industry leaders in their effort to produce authentically inclusive content. CSS's partnership with **BRIC** and the **Concept Art Association** is grounded in our shared belief that authentically inclusive content starts behind and off the screen.

This report is the first of its kind in that it visualizes the diversity landscape of development artists across the entertainment industry. Our objective is to initiate systematic inquiry into DEIAB efforts and outcomes in a field that has failed to move the needle on diversity at a rate equivalent to its peers. Being the first, this study has several limitations that we discuss throughout the report. We hope that our findings contribute to and advance research on diversity among visual development artists in addition to other under-examined, off-screen creative roles.

We would like to thank both the BRIC and Concept Art Association teams for their collaboration and for their commitment to the pursuit of representation and inclusion for artists in the entertainment industry.



**Lindsay Roberts,**  
**MA**



**Alisha J. Hines,**  
**PhD**



**Yalda T. Uhls,**  
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# MAIN FINDINGS

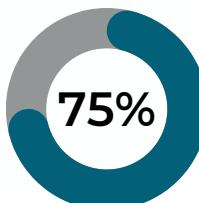
The aim of this report is to shed light on the diversity and representation among concept and visual development artists throughout animation, live action, and gaming from 2018-2022.



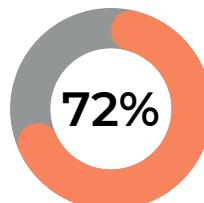
1.

## RACE AND GENDER DIVERSITY

Overall, concept and visual development artists who worked on creative projects between 2018-2022 were mostly White and male.



WERE WHITE



WERE MALE



2.

## DIVERSITY ACROSS PRODUCTION TYPES

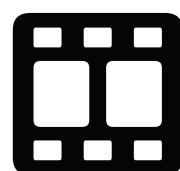
When examining individuals based on production type (i.e. animation, live action, and gaming), the above finding held true. All production types were primarily staffed with White and male artists.

86%  
MALE



Gaming had a  
higher than  
average  
percentage of  
male individuals.

80%  
WHITE



Live action had a  
higher than  
average  
percentage of  
White individuals.



3.

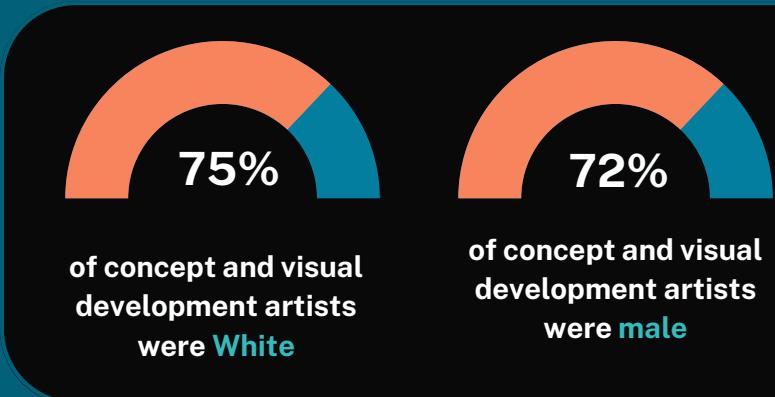
## CALL TO ACTION

Diversity among concept and visual artists does not seem to be increasing at pace with other entertainment industry roles. There have been slight improvements over time for gender representation in these industries, but not for race/ethnicity.

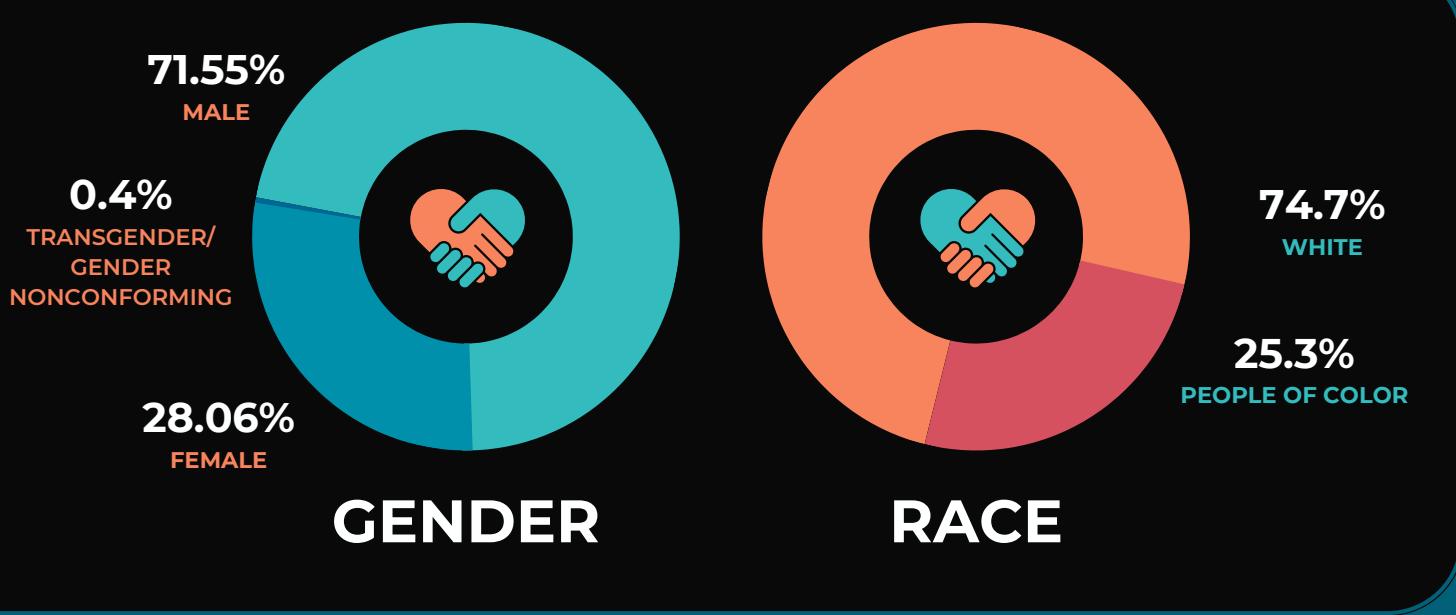
1.

# RACE AND GENDER DIVERSITY

**Overall, concept and visual development artists who worked on creative projects between 2018-2022 were mostly White and male.**



Our study shows that women, people of color, and other minorities remain drastically underrepresented in the field of concept and visual art. Overall, the overwhelming majority of concept and visual development artists from 2018-2022 were White.



**The percentage of White individuals was not only larger than any race percentage in this sample, but it was also larger than all the other groups combined.**

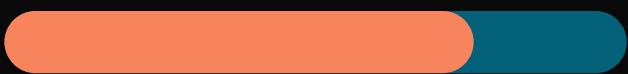
**Note:** Among artists included in our sample 74.1% were White, 11.5% were East Asian, 6.9% were Latinx/Hispanic, 2.7% were Black, 1.4% were Southeast Asian, 1.2% were South Asian, 1.1% were Middle Eastern, 0.4% were Other, 0.3% were Native American/Indigenous, 0.3% were Mixed race/Bi-racial, and 0.1% were Not recognizable.

**Note:** In our dataset, concept and visual development artists from 2018-2022 were mostly male. Of the artists included in our sample, 71.5% were male, 28% were female, and less than 1% of the sample were gender non-conforming or transgender.

## 2.

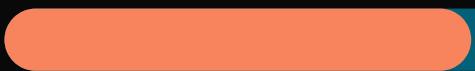
## DIVERSITY ACROSS PRODUCTION TYPES

BETWEEN 2018-2022: ACROSS LIVE ACTION, ANIMATION AND GAMING



**75.4%**

of conceptual and visual development artists were White.



**75%**

of conceptual and visual development artists were male.

No matter the type of production, artists included in our sample were still mostly White and mostly male.

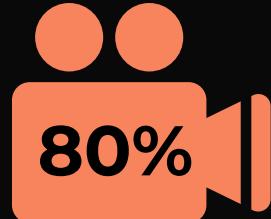
For some production types, White artists and men were **vastly overrepresented**.



Pixar's *Soul* (2020) won Annie Awards for Best Animated Feature, Character Animation, Production Design, and Storyboarding in an Animated Feature Production.



Gaming had a **higher than average** percentage of male artists.



Live action had a **higher than average** percentage of white artists.

Despite these differences, White artists and male artists were still **over two-thirds** of the total sample of artists across all of the production types.

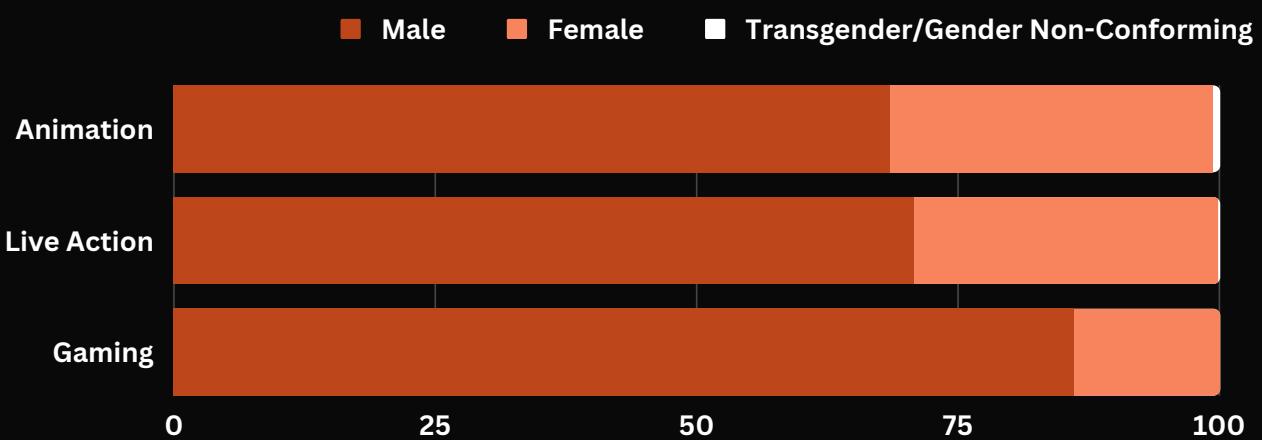
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# DIVERSITY ACROSS PRODUCTION TYPES

## PERCENTAGE OF WHITE AND POC ARTISTS BY PRODUCTION TYPE



## PERCENTAGE OF ARTISTS OF EACH GENDER BY PRODUCTION TYPE



White artists and male artists are drastically overrepresented in these fields.



*Flora & Ulysses* (2021) was nominated an Annie award for Best Character Animation in a Live Action Production.

*The Mandalorian* (2019-) won an Annie award for Best Character Animation in a Live Action Production.

# OVER TIME

2022

34.4%  
women

9.8%  
women

2018

The slow but positive progress in diversity and inclusion across the entertainment industry is less evident in the field of concept and visual art.

Transgender and gender non-conforming artists accounted for less than 1% of the sample during both 2018 and 2022.

♂ ♀ ♂ ♀ ♂ ♀ <1%

## COMPARISON OF GENDER

■ 90.2% male

■ 0% transgender/gender nonconforming

■ 9.8% female

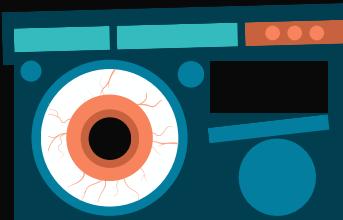
2018

■ 65.4% male

■ 0.1% transgender/gender nonconforming

■ 34.4% female

2022



KENNY LEONCITO,  
ILLUSTRATOR ON  
WENDELL & WILD

"When people create diverse and inclusive stories, they invite their audience to witness an ever expanding pantheon of heroes they can admire but also empathize with. By hiring multicultural talent, there is a chance to provide a sense of nuance and truth to those legends and project them from the screen and into people's hearts. I'm so glad to have been able to work on Wendell & Wild, and contribute my own truths and visions to such a colorful and haunting fairytale - a fairytale where queer and poc storylines take center stage."

# OVER TIME

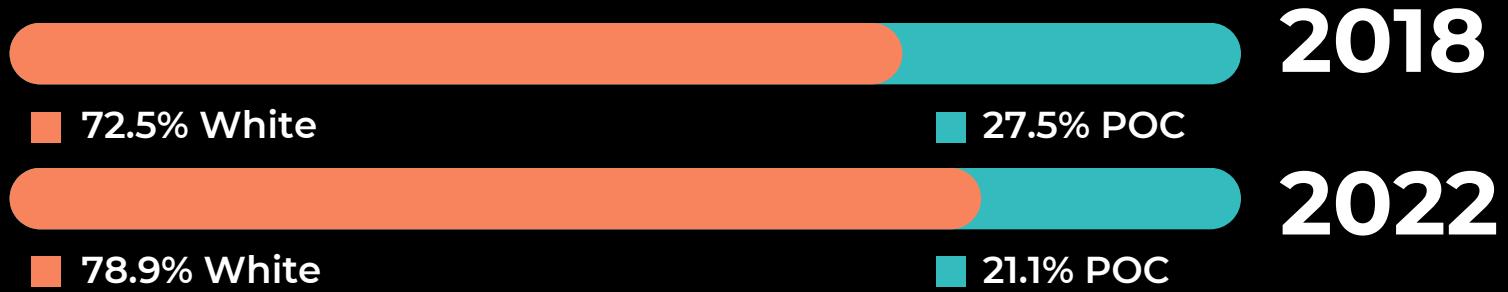
Across the years considered for this report, we identified some progress in gender representation, however we see regression where racial diversity is considered.

Despite an increase in representation for women, racial diversity actually decreased between 2018 and 2022. POC concept and visual development artists decreased by about 6% when examining our sample of artists from 2022.

## DECREASE IN POC ARTISTS



## COMPARISON OF RACE



“Being a Black male working primarily in live action costume, my experience within the concept artist community has been a storied one mixed with feelings of personal triumph juxtaposed by creative dissonance. This is due to feeling isolated in the face of great successes. It is important for everyone to see themselves represented visually within their workspaces and I have strived to make that playing field more evenly distributed to inspire the next wave of up and coming artists.”

PHILLIP BOUTTÉ, 9B COLLECTIVE

# METHOD

**We conducted a content analysis of artists across animation ( $n = 971$ ), live action ( $n = 978$ ), and gaming ( $n = 269$ ) from 2018-2022.**

The data is not mutually exclusive as some artists were a part of multiple projects and production types throughout our sample's timeframe.

**Materials:** The Concept Art Association provided a dataset of artists that were employed between 2018 and 2022 ( $n = 3,941$ ) of critically acclaimed and top box office projects. This list of top projects was compiled from publicly available online sources such as IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes, the Annie Awards, and PC Gamer.

**Sample:** We found publicly available photos from IMDb, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and ArtStation of roughly 58% of these artists ( $n = 2,274$ ) that we then coded according to race/ethnicity and gender based on an existing detailed manual from CSS. We also surveyed individuals included in the original sample provided by Concept Art Association to give them the opportunity to self-identify their race and gender. We received 70 responses from concept and visual development artists. In those cases, we identified each individual according to their survey response.

**Analysis:** Using a detailed manual, three research assistants were trained to identify the race/ethnicity (East Asian, Black, Latinx/Hispanic, Middle Eastern, South Asian, White, Native American/Indigenous and Other) and gender (male, female, gender non-conforming and transgender) of each of the individuals. To determine race and gender, we relied heavily on the physical features of an individual. For gender, we also relied on other context cues such as an artist's "About Me" or "Bio" section where they may use their pronouns or refer to themselves as gender non-conforming or transgender. The research assistants compared their work before and during the coding process to ensure they agreed on categorizations. If there were disagreements, the research assistants worked together to resolve them.

The following report relies heavily on physical features of an individual to determine their race/ethnicity and gender identity. We recognize that these features may not always accurately depict one's race/ethnicity or gender. This is a limitation of the study.

# LIMITATIONS

While our initial dataset included 3,941 concept and visual development artists from 2018-2022, our final sample included 2,274 artists. The original sample was limited based on our ability to find publicly available photos for artists and the survey responses we received. As previously stated, due to the limited public information available, artists were coded mainly by physical appearance. The dataset also is not a comprehensive list of all concept and visual development artists during this time period and was focused specifically on projects released in the Western world. These limitations suggest continued research and data collection in this field.

# FUTURE RESEARCH

As a result, we will survey concept and visual development artists at the upcoming [2023 BRIC Foundation Summit](#) about not only their race and gender, but also about other demographic factors (i.e., disability, neurodiversity, etc.) that contribute to diversity among artists in animation, live action, gaming, series and movies/feature films.

This survey will allow us to:

- (1) more accurately understand concept and visual development artists' diversity
- (2) generate recommendations for interventions that will advance diversity among this group.



Insomniac Games's *Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart* won an Annie Award for Character Animation in a Video Game.

3.

## CALL TO ACTION



Diversity among concept and visual artists **is not increasing at pace** with other entertainment industry roles. There have been slight improvements over time for gender representation in these industries, and regression for racial/ethnic diversity.

We challenge leaders in the live action, animation and gaming industries to extend their commitment to **advancing equity and inclusion** in entertainment by seeking out, nurturing, and investing in diverse artists.



# THANK YOU

To the BRIC Foundation and Concept Art  
Association for partnering with us on this project  
To the research assistants from CSS, Hiral  
Kotecha and Taylor Eng  
To all the concept and visual development artists  
who participated and will participate in our survey

# THANK YOU



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