UC SANTA BARBARA

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Persistence and ‘Perspectives’

Celebrating the achievements of today’s generation of female media artists who use technology in their work, a first-ever event is bringing leading women from across the STEM disciplines to UC Santa Barbara.

Virtual reality pioneer Jacki Morie, renowned composer, performer and sound artist Joan La Barbara and artist Victoria Vesna, a professor in UCLA’s Department of Design and Media Arts are among the presenters in “New Perspectives: Innovations by women intersecting science, media and sonic arts,” taking place at UCSB Feb. 8–10.

The three-day gathering is the inaugural conference of the Alliance of Women in Media Arts and Technology (AWMAT), an organization launched at UCSB only a year ago to empower women to succeed in STEM, with special emphasis on media arts, technology and engineering. The group — and the conference — are the brainchild of Lena Mathew, a student in UCSB’s Media Arts and Technology graduate program.

“As a woman in the technology field, I am always a minority,” said Mathew, who is pursuing her Ph.D. “I started AWMAT to give women in the audio and visual arts, science and engineering the opportunity to come together to engage, collaborate and learn from each other. And I wanted to develop a conference because conferences are a major source for cutting edge research, particularly in science and engineering.”

“New Perspectives” will feature dozens of talks, presentations, workshops, installations and performances — many of which are free and open to the public — by women technologists, engineers, artists and musicians.

“Media arts and technology is considered a STEM discipline and just like with the other STEM disciplines, women are in the minority,” said JoAnn Kuchera-Morin, a professor of media arts and technology and of music, and founder/director of UCSB’s AlloSphere Research Facility. “One of the biggest reasons for the large gender gap is a lack of mentors or support for women in technology fields. It is important that women leaders in the various areas of technology lecture and/or perform for the upcoming women in the field. AWMAT provides a means for women to be inspired by or learn from each other, thus improving gender equity in the media arts and technology sector.”

Kuchera-Morin will address the conference Thursday afternoon, then give a free, public demo in the AlloSphere starting at 5:15 p.m. on the second floor of Elings Hall.

Additional public events offered as part of “New Perspectives” include art exhibitions running from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Feb. 9 and 12–5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 10, in Music 1410; and a poster session Friday, 3:30–4:30 p.m. in the Elings Hall lobby. A free concert, featuring multiple performers, will take place 7–9 p.m. Friday in Music 1145. Tickets for Joan La Barbara’s show, 7 p.m. Saturday in Karl Geiringer Hall, are $25 general admission or $20 for UCSB students.

“This conference, I believe, will speak for itself with such pioneers as Joan La Barbara, stellar artists and performers such as Mari Kimura and Victoria Vesna, and trailblazing researchers such as Jacki Morie,” said Kuchera-Morin, herself a noted researcher, creator and electro-acoustic composer. “Our long-term goal is to formalize our AWMAT community nationally and internationally. Informal alliances already exist, through important international arts festivals such as Ars Electronica and the International Society for Electronic Arts Symposium, as well as conferences such as SIGGRAPH and ACM-SIGMM. These events are held yearly and they are beginning to feature a strong women’s component.

“Formalizing AWMAT across these and other conferences in media arts, science and engineering,” she added, “will facilitate an International Alliance of Women in Media Arts and Technology, empowering and accelerating women into this STEM research/practice community.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.