UC SANTA BARBARA

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SHE-DEN

In January 2017, millions of women across the United States peaceably marched to advocate for policy reform and human rights. In October, #MeToo went viral, with stories of sexual assault and harassment prompting a nationwide conversation.

A newly formed artists' group at UC Santa Barbara — the UCSB Womanhouse Collective — is highlighting those and other issues in "SHE-DEN," an intersectional, multimedia group exhibition surrounding themes of women in contemporary art and culture.

The show opens Monday, March 5, in the campus's Red Barn Project Space. A reception featuring live performance art and music will take place from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday, March 9th. Admission is free for self-identified women. The show continues through March 16.

"As granddaughters and daughters of first- and second-wave feminists, we inherited a world of possibility and privilege and yet we are still second-class citizens," said Maiza Hixson, a founding member of Womanhouse.

Added Elisa Ortega, another founding member: "Women still do not control the same amount of political power and wealth [as men do]. The glass ceiling persists. Sexism is as alive in academic institutions as it is elsewhere and with this exhibition we create a platform for women to express themselves and explore real issues affecting UCSB students' and, by extension, women's lives."

According to Hixson and Ortega, the women-identified artists featured in the exhibition are responding to recent social upheaval generated by the women's movement with works that critique sexism and engage a variety of feminist themes. The exhibition they noted, is dedicated to trailblazing women-identified artists throughout history, and its title is both a playful critique of the man cave and a reference to the art historical precedent set by artists Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, who founded Womanhouse at CalArts in 1972.

"When Womanhouse was founded the aim was to create a feminist space for female artists to create art installations and performances and to learn in a more democratic and collaborative context," Ortega said. "As their goal was then, we in 2018 still need to create spaces where we can express our experience of being women in a still male-dominated society."

The collective is composed mostly of women-identified master of fine arts students at UCSB as well as some undergraduate students from the campus's art department. "We decided to create a collective during one of the meetings to organize the feminist show when we realized that as women artists we needed to have a space to share, to feel understood and to be organized," Hixson said.

Womanhouse will host quarterly activities for women and plans to bring the "SHE-DEN" exhibition to venues beyond UCSB. They also are working on a large Grid Group Piece with more than 100 10-inch square pieces by women from the UCSB community and elsewhere.

The Red Barn Project Space gallery, located in Building 479, is open Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by appointment. "SHE-DEN" is sponsored by the UCSB Art Department and Multicultural Center.

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.