UC SANTA BARBARA

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Jim Logan

The Pines Piper

Growing up in Oakhurst, a tiny town near the southern entrance of Yosemite National Park, the only thing Shana Moulton knew about art was how to spell it. And then she went to UC Berkeley as an undergraduate, and her life took a wild turn — as an artist. She later earned a master's in fine arts from Carnegie Mellon University, and studied in Maine and Amsterdam.

And now she'd like to return the favor as a new assistant professor in UC Santa Barbara's Department of Art.

"I think the main thing I'm excited about is being able to influence or work with students who might have come from a similar situation that I did when I was a student," Moulton said. "In my case it was coming from a rural area, not knowing anything about art and having my mind blown up by my art professors. I think that's probably the most exciting aspect."

A performance artist whose work has appeared throughout Europe and the U.S., Moulton brings a kind of surreal whimsy to her projects. In her long-running "Whispering Pines" video series, Moulton performs as her alter ego Cynthia, an anxious housewife in search of fulfillment in a trippy, kitschy world.

Named for a mobile home park in Oakhurst, her "Whispering Pines 10" — a collaboration with composer Nick Hallett — is currently exhibiting online at the New Museum of New York. The video came from "bits and pieces" of her art education, an experiment that matured into an acclaimed work of art.

Indeed, as an artist who blends multiple media in her projects, Moulton said teaching at UC Santa Barbara, which is renowned for its interdisciplinary approach to research and scholarship, presents an opportunity to collaborate with other departments on campus.

The university's robust Department of Film and Media Studies, for example, holds particularly attractive possibilities for interdisciplinary work, she said.

"I'm excited to find different connections, because there's often a separation between film departments and art departments with video," Moulton noted. "They have their own separate histories, but there's also so many crossovers. Nowadays there are so many film festivals that incorporate both, so I'm definitely excited to reach out to them.

"I'm really looking to reach out to theater and dance also," she continued. "My performances have a DIY multimedia aspect to them, so their level of multimedia is going to be way beyond mine, but I'm hoping to learn some of that so that I can create classes that incorporate or maybe even co-teach with people from the theater department."

Collaborations aside, Moulton said introducing students to the arts remains one of the most intriguing aspects of her appointment. Arts funding in American public schools has been gutted over the past four decades, a dire situation that became strikingly clear when she taught in German schools.

"In Germany I could depend on the students having an arts education from primary school," she said, "because their education system is so great in that sense. I had almost no art education until I went to Berkeley. I'm excited to influence the students that might or might not know anything about art. I'm here to convert non-art majors to art majors."

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.