

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

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Jim Logan

## The Sisterhood of Art

Growing up in Spain, [Elisa Ortega Montilla](#) thought everyone celebrated International Women's Day on March 8.

"When I moved to the U.S., I was surprised that it wasn't a very well-known and celebrated day, especially among women," she said.

So Ortega, an artist and woodshop technician in UC Santa Barbara's [Department of Art](#), decided to do something about it. She organized and curated "March 8 by 8 Women," a multimedia exhibition on view March 9-13 in the campus's Glass Box Gallery. A planned reception for March 13 from 5 to 7 p.m. has been canceled.

"I wanted to create a space to fully celebrate International Women's Day by gathering women artists who live in California with international backgrounds whose work speaks to those experiences," said Ortega, who earned her MFA from UC Santa Barbara in 2019. "Especially in this political moment, when there are constant threats to multicultural values and women's rights, I think that it's our responsibility as artists to engage the community in critical thinking and alternative values."

The exhibition's artists include Daniela Campins, Yumiko Glover, Francesca Lalanne, Labkhand Olfatmanesh, Shirin Rastin, Maria Rendón, Celia Herrera Rodriguez and Cintia Alejandra Segovia.

"Through art, these eight artists respond to personal experiences and those of their communities in an intersectional approach to feminism that challenges viewers both critically and creatively," Ortega said. "With works that range from overtly political

to subtly poetic, they address issues of identity as well as larger global and social issues like exile, sexism and women's rights."

While the exhibition celebrates International Women's Day, Ortega said she also wanted "to create a space for sororidad, sisterhood and mutual support for creative practices and values, which can be inspiring to the viewers. I would love for people to appreciate the diversity in their approaches and mediums as well as the way they communicate their values and experiences. This exhibition brings together women who come from Iran, Mexico, Venezuela, Haiti and Japan, as well as one Chicana artist. I hope people are able to appreciate the diversity in their approaches."

In organizing the exhibition, Ortega said she was driven by a sense of responsibility to create events she wants to see in her community. And "8 by 8," she explained, speaks to her belief in women's mutual support and connection.

"I don't buy the idea of women who are jealous of each other and competitive," she said. "Most of my female friends and female artists support each other and help each other constantly, so my goal is to put together a show drawing on that reality.

"It's very exciting to be involved in an exhibition that brings together art, talent, passion, feminism and an international mindset," Ortega continued. "I hope the public feels inspired and touched and motivated to create their own actions."

"8 by 8" is sponsored by UCSB's MultiCultural Center, Professional Women's Association and Department of Art.

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## **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.