

Women in Art
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Since being at California Institute of the Arts I have had experiences of tension between making art and being female. Often, work will have the term “feminist” attached to it even though the concepts behind it and the materials that have histories and symbols attached to them are not inherently feminist. I always had issues with this because I am more thinking of philosophical concepts where feminism isn’t necessarily in the forefront of my mind. My body and the work I make should not be a political statement unless it is stated to be so. I find myself drawn to the quote in the chapter *Unburying Histories: The Future(s) of Feminist Art*, by Theresa Chavez within the book *From Site to Vision: the Women’s Building in Contemporary Culture* for this reason, which states, “I am an artist. I am a woman. Neither excludes the other, nor are they mutually inclusive. (RG)” (Chavez 392).

From my experiences and opinions of females and women in art I have found that spaces for women in art have always been problematic between either their structure or within their mission statements. As feminism evolves with each generation the structures in which it exists should also change. I find this problem with many woman art groups happens mostly because there isn’t one feminism nor is there any one type of feminist. I completely understand that it isn’t easy to make an inclusive feminist group that supports it’s members because of this fact. Within the same book as stated above, it is expressed what the original dream for the Women’s Building which, “...was described as ‘a special place where women can learn, work, explore, develop their own point of view and share it with everyone. Women of every age, race, economic group, lifestyle and sexuality are welcome.

Women are invited to express themselves freely both verbally and visually to other women and the whole community” (Linton 11). I find the idea versus practice of these structures very similar to the ideas of Communism where in theory it’s amazing, but because of the nature of where we are as a society the structure can only be seen as utopic and something that can be worked towards, but never achieved. The formatting of this exploration into what I see as the future of Women’s art building/group/community/etc. is inspired by Judith Brown’s text *How to Start a Group*. I’d like to figure out a way to create a new version of the Women’s Building that is more non-woman inclusive, specifically trans, gender fluid/queer, queer bodies, and pretty much every type of person that is not supporting a cis-gendered male patriarchal stance either in art or politically.

“1. Getting Your Friends Together.”

Being at Cal Arts, your peers are your friends. To be in a feminist art community it is important to connect to those that are in the same boat as you. Finding female and queer artists that feel that same weight of the patriarchy within the art process is the first step to building the group you would want to be to make feminist strides in art.

“2. Calling a Caucus in a Male-female Group You Belong To.”

This group itself is Cal Arts. This caucus could be an art piece, a gallery night event, a club, etc. Personally, I feel like this step is a bit outdated, specifically because of the “male-female” part. I feel like we are in a space for intersectional feminism within the structure of Cal Arts that this step already happens when you go through step 1.

“3. Calling a Caucus in a Women’s Group you Belong To, Or Getting That Group To Deal With Women’s Liberation.”

Within this caucus the subject of discussion would be about the conflict of the body versus the artwork that the body makes. A female or feminine person making sculpture using industrial materials should not be a political statement.

“4. Finding Feminists From Your Friends.”

We have such an extensive emailing system that finding people from your métiers and from others that can be beneficial to adding others to your arsenal of feminist artists.

“5. Placing Ads In Newspapers.”

We are constantly bombarded with posters of what’s going on around campus, from shows to lost items to housing. This is our version of placing ads in newspapers. Our contemporary newspaper is social media. The numerous Cal Arts groups on Facebook can be the soapboxes for feminist arts.

“6. Special Work Meetings of Women.”

Working with others in the shops, hanging out with others outside of Tatum having a cigarette, sharing a studio space: these are all places where the conversation can begin and can from there evolve and thrive into something more.

“7. Distributing Literature.”

Once these conversations take place it is the best idea to collect the thoughts from these discussions and put them down into words. This collection of collaborative essays should be distributed as feminist literature. There is no one correct opinion so the best way to hit someone deep down in order to not push but

open the eyes of the other to feminism is to present a collection of opinions on the subject till one sticks.

Brown, Judith. "How to Start a Group." (1985). Rpt. in Redstockings Archive. 1-13.

Web.

Chavez, Theresa, Linton, Meg. "Unburying Histories: The Future(s) of Feminist Art.",

"Doin' It in Public: Feminism and Art at the Woman's Building.", From Site to

Vision: The Woman's Building in Contemporary Culture. Los Angeles: Otis

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