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From Protest to Policy: Women's Social Movement Activities in Los Angeles, 1960-1999

UCLA Center For the Study of Women

Timeline for WSMALA Women and the Arts in Los Angeles 1960-1999

“From Protest to Policy: Women's Social Movement Activities in Los Angeles, 1960-1999,” a multi-year research project by the UCLA Center for the Study of Women examined the how grassroots advocacy has shaped gender-related public policy in the arts, employment, healthcare, and higher education through an analysis of local women's groups in Los Angeles between 1960 and 1999. During this period, women's community groups organized around gender-based problems their members encountered in their lives, their families, and their neighborhoods. The following timeline represents the key events in the development of the feminist arts movement in Los Angeles from 1960-1999.

- 1960 Founding of Tamarind Lithography Workshop, Inc. (TLW)** - Tamarind Lithography Workshop, Inc. was founded in Los Angeles by June Wayne.
- 1967 *Recorded Images / Dimensional Media* Exhibition** - Dextra Frankel curated the *Recorded Images / Dimensional Media* exhibition at California State College, Fullerton October 20 – November 12. While selecting artworks for this show, Frankel visited the studio of then little-known artist, Judy Chicago, and decided to feature her art in the exhibition. The event marked the beginning of professional relationship between Frankel and Chicago. Subsequently, Frankel granted Chicago a solo show, which took place at Fullerton, on October 3, 1970.
- 1968 *25 California Women of Art Show*** - Curated by Josine Ianco-Starrels, the *25 California Women of Art* show took place at the Lytton Gallery of Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It was the first West coast exhibition to focus exclusively on women artists.
- 1970 LACWA Protests *Art and Technology* Show at LACMA** – The Los Angeles Council of Women Artists (LACWA) organized to protest the exclusion of women artists from the important *Art and Technology* show at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). An analysis of the museum's exhibition record revealed that, at the time, of 53 one-artist shows hosted by the museum, only one was dedicated to a woman, photographer Dorothea Lange. LACWA pressured the museum to exhibit women's work and served as a networking agency for female artists. It collected testimonies from women artists, which were turned into statistics and served as the basis for political demands.

- 1970 Fresno Feminist Art Program Founded** - Judy Chicago founded a feminist art education program at California State University Fresno, where she taught art classes for women. The Fresno Feminist Art Program was the first of its kind in the US. Partly because of the development of this program, the women's art movement in southern California "undertook the creation of feminist art education as a high priority . . . The emphasis on education distinguishes the west coast women's movement from that in New York, for example, which focus[ed] more on the needs of professional women artist to advance their careers" (Wilding, 2).
- 1971 Women Artists Represent 1% of Art on Display at LACMA** - Los Angeles Council of Women Artists (LACWA) statistics show that, at the time, less than 1% of the art on view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art is by women.
- 1971 West-East Bag Founded** - West-East Bag (WEB), an international network of women artists, is formed by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro with Lucy Lippard, Marcia Tucker, Ellen Lanyon, and others. By 1973, WEB boasted representatives in twenty states and eight foreign countries.
- 1971 The Ad Hoc Women's Art Committee Women's Art Registry Founded** - The Ad Hoc Women's Art Committee's Women's Art Registry, the first slide registry of women's art, was developed by Lucy Lippard with support from West-East Bag. The registry was created in an effort to inform and disseminate information about art made by women; art that the Ad Hoc Women's Art Committee felt was systematically excluded from the mainstream art world.
- 1971 "Joan of Art" Seminar Series** - June Wayne created the series by offering a ten class seminar titled "Business and Professional Problems of Women Artists." Wayne created the series as an attempt to inform and educate women artists about professional practices in the art world and build a community of women artists. Wayne only taught the series once and did not ask for monetary compensation for her time. Instead, she insisted that the women who took the classes develop and teach their own seminar, with the same "payment" model.
- 1971 Feminist Art Program Teams with California Institute of the Arts (CalArts)** - Judy Chicago and students joined Miriam Schapiro at CalArts, expanding the Feminist Art Program - the first of its kind within an institute of higher education. The Women's Design Program at CalArts founded by Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, with graduate assistant Suzanne Lacy, was a counterpart to the Feminist Art Program.
- 1972 21 Artists: Invisible/Visible Exhibition** - Dextra Frankel curates the *21 Artists: Invisible/Visible* show at Long Beach Museum of Art. The exhibition showcases the work of women artists in California and makes a pioneering effort to discern a specifically feminine subjectivity in contemporary art. The show was organized

with assistance of Judy Chicago, who made visits to women artists' studios and helped to select artworks for the show.

- 1972 ASCO Protests Against the Underrepresentation of Latino/a artists at LACMA** - Chicano artists' group ASCO, founded by Patssi Valdez, Willie Herron, Gronk and Harry Gamboa Jr., "signs" or vandalizes the Los Angeles County Museum of Art protesting the exclusion of Latino and Latina artists in the museum's collections.
- 1972 Womanhouse Art Installation** - Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, and their students at the CalArts' Feminist Art Program develop *Womanhouse*, the first large-scale public feminist art installation, a collaborative art environment exploring gender construction of domestic space. *Womanhouse* served as a model for a unique space managed and controlled entirely by women.
- 1972 The West Coast Conference of Women Artists** - The West Coast Conference of Women Artists held at *Womanhouse*, called together by the Los Angeles and San Francisco chapters of the international group of women artists, West-East Bag (WEB).
- 1972 Ablutions Performance** - in June of 1972, Suzanne Lacy, Judy Chicago, Sandra Orgel and Aviva Rahmani perform *Ablutions* in Laddie Dill's studio, located in Venice area of Los Angeles. Informed by discussions and consciousness-raising sessions at Fresno's Feminist Art Program, it was one of the first performances to address the issue of rape.
- 1973 Nationwide Emergence of Women's Cooperative Galleries and Exhibition Spaces** - Women's cooperative galleries and exhibitions spaces opened across the U.S. such as Soho 20 in New York; Artemesia and ARC in Chicago; and *Womanspace* in Los Angeles.
- 1973 Hollywood Toilet Bowl Festival** - On June 13 Florynce R. Kennedy, a Harvard University professor, organized the "Hollywood Toilet Bowl" festival to protest the treatment of women in the media.
- 1973 Founding of the Woman's Building** - The Woman's Building was a non-profit public art and educational center focused on showcasing women's art and culture. It existed in Los Angeles from 1973 to 1991. The founding of the Woman's Building in Los Angeles in 1973 was the culmination of several years of activity by women artists who were energized by the feminist movement in this country. This activity included protests of major museums for their exclusion of women artists, the opening of gallery spaces dedicated to the work of women, the founding of the first feminist art education programs (in 1970, by Judy Chicago at Fresno State College and in 1971 by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro at California Institute of the Arts), and the first large scale public feminist art installation, *Womanhouse*. In 1973, artist Judy Chicago, graphic designer Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, and art historian Arlene Raven founded

the first independent school for women artists, the Feminist Studio Workshop that was housed at the Woman's Building. The Woman's Building took its name and inspiration from a structure built by Sophia Hayden for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago to house exhibitions of cultural works by women from around the world.

When the Woman's Building first opened in 1973, it occupied the site of the old Chouinard Art Institute near MacArthur Park. The facility was home to galleries, theater companies, Sisterhood Bookstore, Womantours Travel Agency, a coffeehouse, and the offices of the National Organization for Women. In 1975, the Woman's Building moved to a building on North Spring Street, near Chinatown. At that time, the organization began to generate its own programming, so the entire three floors of the reconverted warehouse were filled with artistic activities. In 1981, the Woman's Building underwent major organizational change as a shift occurred in the cultural and economic climates of the United States. By that year, the organization's founders had all left to pursue other projects, and a "second generation" of FSW graduates would carry the organization through the next decade. That year the FSW closed, as the demand for alternative education diminished. Until its closing in 1991, the Woman's Building was an internationally recognized symbol of the vitality and substance of women's creative achievements.

- 1973 Founding of Feminist Studio Workshop** - Judy Chicago, Arlene Raven, and Sheila de Bretteville found the Feminist Studio Workshop at The Woman's Building, the first independent feminist art school in the U.S. The FSW focused not only on the development of artmaking skills (in visual arts, writing, performance art, video, graphic design and the printing arts), but also on the development of women's identity and sensibility, and the translation of these elements into their artwork. Central to the founders' vision was the idea that the arts should not be separated from other activities of the burgeoning women's community, and the three looked for a site for their school that could also be shared with other organizations and enterprises. Hundreds of women came from across the United States (and from as far away as Canada, Mexico, Holland and Switzerland) to attend the FSW.
- 1973 *The Great Ladies Exhibition*** - Judy Chicago's exhibition of series of paintings entitled *The Great Ladies* (begun in the Fall of 1972 and completed in the Summer of 1973) coincides with the opening of the Woman's Building. The show takes place at the women's cooperative gallery Grandview, housed in the Woman's Building.
- 1975 Founding of the Los Angeles League for the Advancement of Lesbianism in the Arts (LALALA)** - Initiated by Arlene Raven, this project culminated in exhibition and celebration at the Woman's Building.
- 1975 Relocation of the Woman's Building to Chinatown** - The Woman's Building relocates to 1727 N. Spring Street in Los Angeles. Tenants include

Womanspace; Feminist Studio Workshop run by historian Arlene Raven, designer Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, and artist Judy Chicago; the co-op galleries Grandview 1 and 2; Sisterhood Bookstore; the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organization for Women.

- 1976 Formation of Feminist Art Workers** - Cheri Gaulke, Nancy Angelo, Candace Compton, and Laurel Klick form Feminist Art Workers, a performance group known for staging performance events in the public space.
- 1976 Women Artists: 1550-1950 Exhibition-** The *Women Artists: 1550-1950* takes place at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from December 21, 1976 to March 13, 1977 (then travels to other cities). Organized by LACMA in response to LACWA's protests against the exclusion of women from major exhibition, this show was curated by Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris. It surveyed the long history of art by women and introduced American audience to works by Rosalba Carriera, Artemisia Gentileschi, Angelica Kauffmann, Rachel Ruysch and Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun.
- 1977 Founding of the Magazine *Chrysalis: A Magazine of Women's Culture* -** *Chrysalis: A Magazine of Women's Culture*, was established at the LA Woman's Building by Sheila de Bretteville, Kirsten Grimstad, Ruth Iskin, Arlene Raven and Susan Rennie. Contributing editors include Mary Daly, Lucy Lippard, Audre Lorde, Linda Nochlin, Gloria Orenstein and Adrienne Rich.
- 1977 Formation of the Waitresses** - Jerri Allyn and Anne Gauldin form the Waitresses, a performance collective that performed in public spaces (mainly in restaurants). They focused on four areas of interest: work, money, sexual harassment, and stereotypes of waitresses / women, such as mother, servant, and sex object.
- 1977 *By Our Own Hands: The Women Artists' Movement, Southern California, 1970-1976* Published** - Faith Wilding's early comprehensive study of women's art movement in California, *By Our Own Hands: The Women Artists' Movement, Southern California, 1970-1976*, is published by Double X.
- 1977 Formation of The Natalie Barney Collective** - The Natalie Barney Collective (eventually reduced to the two core members, Arlene Raven and Terry Wolverton) formed to embark on the Lesbian Art Project. Initiated to explore lesbian sensibility in contemporary art, the project eventually led Wolverton to develop an influential performance piece *Oral Herstory of Lesbianism* (1979).
- 1977 Creation of Lesbian Art Project** - The Lesbian Art Project is created by the Natalie Barney Collective with the purpose of exploring lesbian sensibility in art. By winter of 1978, the Natalie Barney Collective consists of just two core members, Arlene Raven and Terry Wolverton, who serve as the sole directors of the Lesbian Art Project.

- 1977 Annual Meeting of The Women's Caucus for Art** - The Women's Caucus for Art (originally formed at the College Art Association's 1972 meeting in San Francisco) holds its annual meeting in February in Los Angeles to survey to the state of women's studies in art. The meeting is accompanied by a major exhibition of women's art organized in cooperation with the Woman's Building.
- 1978 The Lesbian Creators Series** - The Lesbian Creators Series was initiated by Arlene Raven after the Natalie Barney Collective disbanded, brought lesbian artists to speak at the Woman's Building.
- 1978 Founding of *High Performance Magazine*** - *High Performance* magazine was founded by Linda Frye Burnham in LA, providing women performers with increased print exposure.
- 1979 National Tour of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*** - Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* goes on national tour of U.S. museums, prompting both controversy and awareness of feminist art.
- 1985 The *Postcard Project: Celebrating Our Heroines*** - The *Postcard Project: Celebrating Our Heroines* was a successful community activity initiated by Cheri Gaulke at the Women's Graphic Center and funded by the California Arts Council. The *Postcard Project: Celebrating Our Heroines* ran from 1985-88.
- 1989 Georgia O'Keeffe Retrospective at LACMA** - Major retrospective of Georgia O'Keeffe's work sponsored by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- 1990 *All But the Obvious: A Program of Lesbian Art Exhibition*** - Pam Gregg curates *All But the Obvious: A Program of Lesbian Art* at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions.
- 1994 *Bad Girls Exhibition*** - New York City's New Museum of Contemporary Art and the Wight Gallery at the University of California, Los Angeles exhibit *Bad Girls*, a two-part exhibition of feminist art.
- 1996 *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's 'Dinner Party' in Feminist Art History Exhibition*** - *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's 'Dinner Party' in Feminist Art History*, curated by Amelia Jones, exhibited at UCLA's Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center.
- 1998 *The F-word: Contemporary Feminisms and the Legacy of the Los Angeles Feminist Art Movement Symposium*** - The symposium *The F-word: Contemporary Feminisms and the Legacy of the Los Angeles Feminist Art Movement* organized by the Feminist Art Workshop (FAWS) at CalArts. Original participants in *Womanhouse*, the CalArts Feminist Art Program, and the Women's Design Program joined current CalArts faculty and others in addressing feminist art legacies and strategies for the future.