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Dozens of Museums Will Be Filled With Feminist Art Ahead of US Presidential Election

The Feminist Art Coalition has coordinated with museums nationwide to display feminist art in anticipation of the 2020 election

By Sarah Rose Sharp | November 5, 2019



"Stigmata" (2011) by Linda Stark, from the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; purchase made possible through a gift of the Paul L. Watis Foundation. (all images courtesy of BAMPFA)

When life gives you Trumps, it's time to make feminade. The next United States presidential race will come crashing to a close one year from today. In anticipation of the year of politicking and public platforming, a new initiative spearheaded by a group of feminist curators announces its debut: the Feminist Art Coalition is up and running. The project, which seeks to slate a fall season of intensive cross-institutional programming centering around the theme of "feminism" in its most expansive definition, was the brainchild of Apsara DiQuinzio, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and Phyllis C. Watis MATRIX Curator at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. It quickly expanded to a steering committee made up of Vic Brooks (EMPAC-RPI), Henriette Huldish (MIT List), Anne Ellegood (ICALA), and Rita Gonzalez (LACMA).

"The whole project is an attempt to be strategic and collaborative and collective in our institutional attempts to create a strong cultural network and groundwork, in order to inspire civic engagement and critical discourse and participation in the fall of 2020, leading up to the presidential election," said DiQuinzio, in a phone interview with Hyperallergic. "It was inspired by the Presidential election of 2016. Pretty much my despair afterward — and also the Women's March, because I felt that was an incredible cultural response that was kind of organic and grassroots."

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"Glass Castles" (2017) by Deborah Roberts, Tang Teaching Museum collection.

At the launch of the coalition, some 50 organizations have committed to programming in line with FAC's agenda — diQuinzio was quick to emphasize that the list is growing by the day, and all non-profit art institutions are welcome to join, particularly those outside major art centers. Some participating organizations are still determining their programming, but most already have a dazzling lineup. Highlights include *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century*, a major survey curated by DiQuinzio for BAMPFA that will explore recent feminist practices in contemporary art; *Lorraine O'Grady: Both/And* curated by Catherine Morris and Aruna D'Souza at the Brooklyn Museum, which will be the first comprehensive retrospective of feminist performance artist Lorraine O'Grady; a Judy Chicago retrospective curated by Claudia Schmuckli at the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco; and *Witch Hunt*, curated by Connie Butler and Anne Ellegood at the Hammer Museum and ICA LA, which will showcase the work of 15 international artists committed to examining social and political constructs through the lens of feminism. These are just a few of the retrospectives, surveys, symposiums, and performances that will centralize feminist perspectives and concerns in the cultural consciousness leading into election season 2020. But while early reporting on the initiative framed the programming as "female-first," DiQuinzio is eager to emphasize that the point here is *feminism*, which is an issue that should rightly concern people of all genders.

"It is not meant to be only female projects, at all," DiQuinzio said. "It's super gender-equivalent. It's a project that's inspired by feminism, or feminist-oriented or -inspired initiatives, and we're letting each organization define that for themselves." In some cases, institutions already had programming on the calendar that fit the bill, and in others, institutions developed new programs to participate in the coalition. The Henry Art Gallery at University of Washington, Seattle, is devoting its entire footprint to FAC-related programming, including a monographic exhibition of works by Diana Al-Hadid; a site-specific installation by Math Bass; an experimental essay film by Bambitchell (the artistic collaboration of Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell), *Bugs and Beasts Before the Law* (2019); and three additional exhibitions drawn from a feminist and social justice reading of the Henry's permanent collection.

Once FAC gathered its working group and landed a 2017 Andy Warhol Foundation \$50,000 curatorial grant, BAMPFA hosted a Feminist Curatorial Practices roundtable convening that helped to coalesce and organize ideas for the upcoming year of feminist boosterism in the arts. One imagines that ever more cultural institutions will be clamoring to join the ranks of the Whitney, the Walker Art Center, MFA Boston, and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard, and participate in a 2020 season of feminist glory.

"We hope to affect change," said DiQuinzio. "The goal is mostly to shed light on larger cultural feminist issues, spark public dialogue, and to inspire civic engagement leading into the presidential election."

"And if that could contribute to electing a woman, that would be awesome," she added slyly.