

## LA JOLLA LIGHT

# A Woman's Point of View: UC San Diego art exhibit has work by 7 trailblazing female artists in La Jolla



'Know Your Servant' by Martha Rosler is part of the exhibit, "Stories That We Tell: Art and Identity," through March 3, 2018 at UC San Diego's University Art Gallery. (Courtesy)

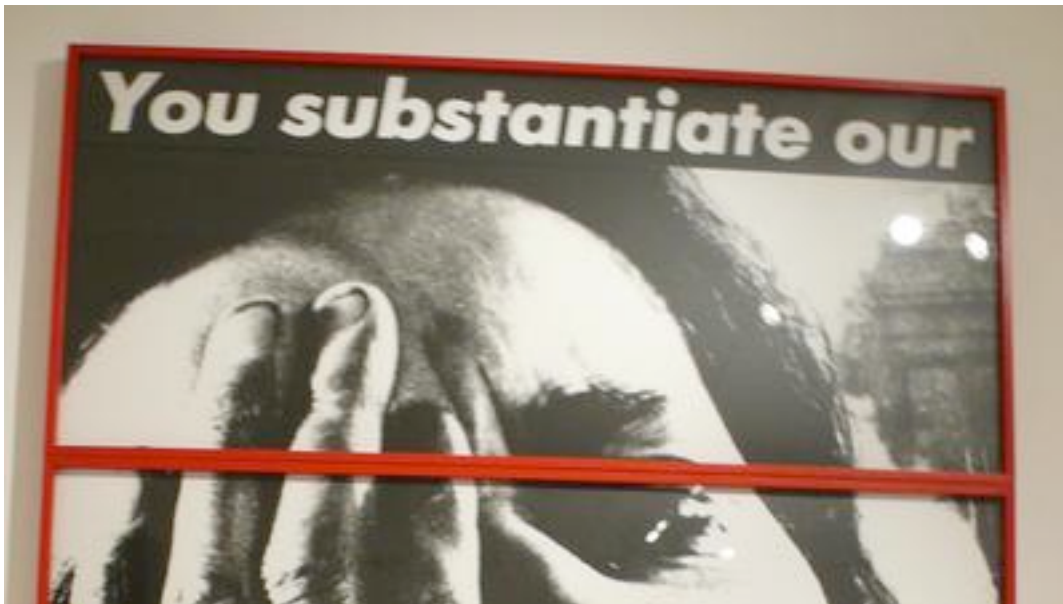
By **Will Bowen**

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Celebrating the 50th anniversary of its founding, the [UC San Diego](#) Visual Arts Department is presenting a series of retrospective exhibitions at the University Art Gallery (UAG), located in the Mandeville Complex on the UCSD campus. The goal of the two-year series is to open a dialogue on the past and possible future of the

department and to reconsider its role in the community and the art world at large.

The latest show, "Stories That We Tell: Art and Identity," runs through March 3, 2018 and features the work of seven groundbreaking female artists, all of whom have been affiliated with the department over the years, but have never shown together.



A work about men by Martha Rosler is part of the exhibit, "Stories That We Tell: Art and Identity," through March 3, 2018 at UC San Diego's University Art Gallery.  
(Courtesy)

Eleanor Antin, Barbara Kruger, Faith Ringgold, Martha Rosler, Miriam Shapiro, Lorna Simpson and Carrie Mae Weems have created an assortment of works in varied media that explore the issues of identity, gender and race.

"Collectively, these artists have rebelled against the older modernist paradigm of femininity and productivity, patriarchy and voyeurism that has permeated Western visual culture," explained show curator Tatiana Sizonenko, Ph.D. "This exhibition exposes, tests and contests the institutional and aesthetic structures, and deep-seated prejudices that have confronted women and people of color.

"Additionally, the work challenges the modernist division of the high arts from the minor arts of decoration, and invites a much more inclusive aesthetic that celebrates the stories and experiences of a much wider and more diverse range of people."



'100 Boots' by Eleanor Antin is part of the exhibit, "Stories That We Tell: Art and Identity," through March 3, 2018 at UC San Diego's University Art Gallery.

(Courtesy)

The opening reception began with introductions by Visual Arts Department chair Jack Greenstein. "It is easy for us to forget just how much these artists put themselves on the line to produce this groundbreaking art during the times in which they worked!" he told the crowd.

Antin, a former UCSD visual arts professor and one of the artists, was asked to speak about her experiences. "Back in those days, we were known as an 'experimental' department," she said. "We were the first to have performance art and video art as part of the curriculum. All us teachers juggled two careers — one as a professor and the other as an artist.



'Natalia' by Miriam Shapiro is part of the exhibit, "Stories That We Tell: Art and Identity," through March 3, 2018 at UC San Diego's University Art Gallery.  
(Courtesy)

"I recall challenging one of the graduate students, Carrie Mae Weems, who is an artist in this show. She brought in some very pretty photographs of her subject matter. 'Your photographs are beautiful,' I told her, 'but why don't you do something different with the camera. Do something that no one has ever done before!' That was the creed of our department in those days!"

Walking through the exhibit, you'll come across a huge image of a woman's face hanging on the north wall. She's obviously in pain, and the source of her pain? Men!

Across from that, on the west side of a partition in the middle of the room, is an arrangement of 21 small, black-and-white photographs revealing hands in different positions. The work affords an appreciation of body language and the beauty of this body part.

On the other side of the partition is perhaps the very first work of "conceptual art," titled "100 Boots" (1971-1973), created by Antin. It consists of a series of black-and-white photographs of numerous pairs of

tall black boots lined up in conspicuous places, like at a Border Patrol checkpoint just before the San Onofre Power plant on I-5, or under a stretch of SDG&E power lines out in the back country.



'The Nurse & the Hijackers' by Eleanor Antin is part of the exhibit, "Stories That We Tell: Art and Identity," through March 3, 2018 at UC San Diego's University Art Gallery. (Courtesy)

You turn to consider another work of Antin's works, which consists of a homemade political movie from 1977 titled "The Nurse and the Hijackers." It was made using small cardboard characters and sets. The jetliner set made for the movie, filled with passengers and crew, is on display. Antin was known for making films about "sub" personalities, which she created for herself, like "The Nurse" or "The Russian Ballerina," Eleanora Antinova!

In the video room there is a highly amusing set of tongue-in-cheek dances that Antin(ova) filmed of herself and a partner. These well-choreographed dances in old, silent movie-style, are my favorite work in the show.

On the gallery's back wall is a very large and colorful work of cutout collage art that shows a cheerleader in a dramatic poise, called "Natalia,"

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by Miriam Shapiro. On the south wall, you'll find a series of large text pages consisting of words from the diary of a woman from Tijuana who was a maid in La Jolla, created by participating artist Rosler.



'Stories That We Tell: Art and Identity' is on display through March 3, 2018 at UC San Diego's University Art Gallery. (Will Bowen)

One can think of this as an early work of "Postmodern Art" (1975) which, instead of looking at the usual object of our visual desire — royalty, models or movie stars — it celebrates the periphery, the margins of society, or the subaltern, as a way to pull the thread that deconstructs the truth of social forms.

Also by Rosler, there are three large color photographs of a female mannequin in a store window who is modeling vacuum cleaners and household items. These images vividly point out gender stratification and the sexual division of labor, which even after the sexual revolution, the women's movement and the feminist credo, you still see everywhere today!

Lastly, there is a very beautiful quilt made by artist Ringgold, which consists of pictures and text depicting her life course, and a series of

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photographs by Weems, featuring a woman in her bedroom, in various states of dress, contemplating different questions about relationships.