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Andrea Bowers

*Whose Feminism Is It Anyway?*

February 18 – March 26

Opening Thursday, February 18, 6-8pm

“Whose Feminism Is It Anyway?” continues my interest in making work about activists who dedicate their lives to social justice through direct action and nonviolent protest. This exhibition begins a new project that documents trans women activists committed to direct action and civil disobedience.

This project is inspired by an archive of political graphics, spanning the late 1800's through today, that I have been collecting for 10 years. I began collecting these agitprop images because they illustrate women who embody progressive and radical left politics often in a social realist style. As the collection has grown I have become acutely aware of the absence of trans women from recorded political history. With this project I want to insert representations of trans liberation into these past histories and simultaneously create new graphics and images in support of the current trans feminist movement.

The centerpieces of the exhibition, a collaboration with artist and organizer Ada Tinnell are three large-scale full-length photographs of the American activists, Cece McDonald, Johanna Saavedra, and Jennicet Gutierrez, all of whom are trans women of color. Incorporating classic activist symbols such as hammer, wings, bricks, guns and banners, I recast these figures in images drawn from sources that include Walter Crane's IWW illustrations, Cuban International Women's Day posters and a French Situationist flier. Cece McDonald is photographed wearing wings and a hammer standing over a giant crane on Sunset Blvd. as a nod to movement building and a city in transition.

Also included in this show are 2 large-scale marker on cardboard drawings representing images from this archive of powerful women. DIY political posters inspire the material choices. In a new graphite drawing in the style of early 20th century lithography and woodcuts, I used one of the photos of Cece as the subject. It is my hope that representations of these art works can also be recycled and repurposed by the activists for movement building. A group of photorealist graphite drawings depicts individuals marching at several Trans Latina Coalition protests occurring over the last year where activists blocked traffic at major intersections in Los Angeles as a symbol of outrage against the murder of transwomen. Over 70% of hate motivated murders are committed against trans women, and 80% of those are trans women of color. I designed and printed the political posters held by the protesters in these drawings. *Crazy Bitches* is an 8 foot long colored pencil drawing recreating an ornate, orange mum pattern from a sheet of gift wrap. Imbedded in the flora pattern is a text appropriated from a pamphlet distributed by the material feminist group, Some Crazy Bitches.

Inspired by the political graphics from the early 1900's in which ribbons with slogans are a repeated motif, is a new sculpture titled *Goddess (Power of the Common Public)*. I have an ongoing interest in highlighting the important role of the tradition of women's crafts in political movements. Ribbons with embroidered political slogans appear throughout the show. Composed of the wings worn by McDonald and ribbons embroidered with feminist and trans liberation slogans, this sculpture is a union of the two ideologies.

In the gallery's adjacent space, *Roundtable Discussion*, a single channel video is projected onto a large, 13 foot long screen comprised of ribbons similar to those employed in *Goddess...*, replacing the slogans with the voices of contemporary activists. During the production of the exhibition, I arranged a roundtable discussion with Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, Cece McDonald and Jennicet Gutierrez at Otis College of Art Graduate Studios for the Graduate Public Practice Program. The video records a conversation reflecting key issues of our time including gender, black liberation, the prison industrial complex, immigration, among others. The programming of these types of events in the curriculum of art acts as a reminder of arts compatibility with activism.

This work continues my interest in undermining the tradition of the male gaze in art and advertising. I tried to create images that represent women through a feminist lense while allowing these women the freedom to reclaim and determine their sexuality and voice. The feminist movement is momentarily fragmented over heated debates about the inclusion of transgender women. This project takes the political position that for the advancement of feminism, the movement must embrace Transfeminism. This work participates in conversations that have led to recent strides in trans visibility allowing for a fresh form of sisterhood between trans and non-trans women. Trans liberation is critical to building a culture free of sexism, misogyny and male-centeredness. Aesthetics, labor and craft are used throughout the exhibition to show respect to the activists and issues presented.

Andrea Bowers lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions includes: *In Situ 1- Andrea Bowers*, Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris, 2014, *#sweetjane*, Pomona and Pitzer College Museum of Art, Claremont, 2014, *Transformer (with Olga Koumoundouros)*, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, 2013 and *The Weight of Relevance*, Wiener Secession, Vienna, traveled to The Power Plant, Toronto, 2007, and ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2008. Bowers' work is held in the collections of The Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles, MoMA, New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Center, Washington DC, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Museum Abteiberg, Moenchengladbach, Germany, among others.



*Trans Liberation: Ni Una Mas, Not One More (Jennicet Gutierrez)* features Jennicet Gutierrez, a co-founder of Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement whose recent action went viral when her interruption of President Obama at the White House brought visibility to the torture and violence of trans undocumented women in detention centers.



*Trans Liberation: Beauty is in the Street (Johanna Saavedra)* was inspired by a Situationist graphic from Paris, 1968. Johanna Saavedra, who migrated to the U.S. from Guadalajara, Mexico, is a well-respected activist and Northwest Co-chair of the Trans Latina Coalition bringing attention to unjust conditions and violence faced by trans women in ICE detention centers.



*Trans Liberation: Visibility is not enough (Cece McDonald)* is based on an IWW poster designed by Walter Crane honoring the Paris Commune. In this photo Cece McDonald wears wings and a hammer standing over a giant crane on Sunset Blvd. as a nod to movement building and a city in transition. Cece was incarcerated in a men's prison for defending herself against a racist, transphobic assault in July 2012. While imprisoned she educated herself on issues of transmisogyny, the prison industrial complex and the intersections of racism, patriarchy and classism, and became a leader in the movement for trans liberation.