

## Oakland Museum of California

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# OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ANNOUNCES *HELLA FEMINIST: AN EXHIBITION*, EXPLORING THE MULTIFACETED HISTORY OF FEMINISM IN THE BAY AREA AND BEYOND

*Hella Feminist* Will Combine Historical Artifacts, Thought-Provoking Art, and Interactive Elements to Expand and Challenge Visitors' Understanding of Feminism in this Timely and Original Exhibition

*Exhibition on view April 25 – August 23, 2020*

(OAKLAND, CA) January 7, 2020 — In April 2020, the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) will open *Hella Feminist*, a major exhibition **combining art and historical artifacts that will explore the diverse individual and collective stories of feminism**. Organized by **Carin Adams, Erendina Delgadillo, and Lisa Silberstein**, the exhibition takes on this complex topic by exploring the powerful yet lesser-known stories about feminism in the Bay Area and California over the last 100 years, as well as the timely issues that our society faces today.

Bringing together historic objects from the Museum's collection such as posters, pins, and photographs, alongside newly commissioned works by artists, *Hella Feminist* will **take inspiration from** the idea that discrimination against all elements of identity (gender, class, race, sexual orientation, physical ability, education, age, etc.) is interlinked and that no element can be addressed in isolation. The exhibition aims to **challenge, provoke, and inspire visitors to reconsider and expand their understanding of feminism** and its complicated history.

"*Hella Feminist* will highlight the lesser-known elements of feminist histories—particularly the **experiences of people of color**—but also **demonstrate how mainstream feminism at times made harmful compromises that were exclusionary**," said Erendina Delgadillo, co-curator of the exhibition. "During the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the passing of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which guaranteed and protected white women's constitutional right to vote, we thought it was especially important to reflect on the less discussed parts of this history," added Carin Adams, the other co-curator of the exhibition. "By looking back at history while inviting contemporary artists to comment on the present, *Hella Feminist* invites visitors to **consider a future where feminism looks beyond gender-based inequality** to the intersection of multiple aspects of identity."

The exhibition will be divided into three sections, **Mind, Body, and Spirit**, corresponding to how feminism is experienced in each of these areas. Visitors will enter the exhibition through a long hallway filled with **a variety of undergarments from the Museum's extensive collection**, many of which have **never been displayed to the public before**, including corsets, stockings, petticoats, and underwear from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The garments will be punctuated with dress forms, mannequins, and leg molds, inviting the viewer to confront idealized female bodies of the past. Other highlights of the exhibition include:

**In the "Mind" section** – which sets the social and political contexts (laws, social expectations, policy, popular culture) that feminism addresses:

- **Kate Schatz and Miriam Klein Stahl**, the creators of the bestselling books *Rad Women Worldwide* and *Rad Girls Can*, will create a site-specific installation featuring **300 papercut portraits of a diverse array of women and nonbinary people** from Oakland, Berkeley, and the East Bay. Each portrait will be numbered, and a corresponding zine produced especially for the exhibition will tell viewers about who each person is and what kind of work they do for themselves, their community, their family, and their survival. The installation will also include audio interviews with the featured individuals.
- A section representing and exploring the four waves of feminism.

**In the "Body" section** – which addresses the ways that female/femme bodies have been judged, restricted, regulated, and celebrated:

- **Angela Hennessy's sculpture *The Black Hole***, made from hair that folds in and onto itself and drops into darkness. This sculpture explores questions about black bodies and their visibility.
- **Historic abortion rally posters, birth control handbooks, and other materials** relating to pregnancy, birth, and motherhood.
- Ephemera about sex education over time.
- A sampling of diverse **sex toys from Feelmor** Oakland, owned by **Neena Joiner**.
- **Contemporary artwork by Xandra Ibarra**, including *She's on the Rag*, a print series made from menstrual blood, and documentation from Ibarra's performances as a hyper-sexualized, hyper-racialized version of herself.
- A **"Scream into the Void" space** where visitors can express their frustrations, anger, despair, exhaustion, and other emotions caused by a world that continues to be inequitable and unjust by screaming into darkness.

**In the "Spirit" section** – which explores female and nonbinary individuals who turn to the mystical, the metaphysical, and the spiritual in order to find strength and power:

- A "Nourishment" area for which the OMCA has invited three practitioners – an herbalist; Jessica Lanyadoo, astrologer; and Ines Ixierda, holistic healer – to **create healing take-aways and spiritual interactives** (e.g. information about herbal remedies, exploration of how planetary activity may affect emotions, and ideas for intention setting or spell casting).
- **Tanya Aguiniga's installation *Museoexclusion Exorcism***, commissioned for the exhibition, which is a symbolic exorcism through which OMCA will commit to focusing future efforts on female and femme-identifying perspectives through its programming and exhibitions.
- **Judy Chicago's *Butterfly for Oakland* (1974)**, a slide projection documenting Chicago's pyrotechnic display on the western shore of Lake Merritt, commissioned by OMCA and intended as a symbol of female freedom.

“Feminism is a loaded word that can be both empowering and challenging,” said **Lori Fogarty, Director and CEO of OMCA**. “*Hella Feminist* aims to **explore the nuances of the term and related movements, activities, and historic events**. As with much of our programming, the Museum is taking a global issue and investigating it on a local and regional scale to encourage our audiences to rethink, redefine, and confront a complex and timely topic.”

In addition to *Hella Feminist*, many of OMCA’s other upcoming exhibitions in 2020 focus on female artists, including *Dorothea Lange: Photography as Activism*, opening in February 2020, and *Edith Heath: A Life in Clay*, opening in June 2020. Overviews of these exhibitions follow below.

*Hella Feminist: An Exhibition* is supported in part by the Oakland Museum Women’s Board.

## **UPCOMING**

### **Dorothea Lange: Photography as Activism**

***Gallery of California Art***

***Beginning February 29, 2020***

Experience the iconic life and work of Dorothea Lange, world-renowned documentary photographer, with an expanded installation of her works in the Gallery of California Art. Through the lens of her camera, Lange documented American life with riveting photographs that captured some of the most powerful moments of the 20th century. Drawn from Lange’s personal archive, which was gifted to OMCA over 50 years ago, and in response to the popular 2017 exhibition *Dorothea Lange: The Politics of Seeing*, a number of newly added photographs will illustrate the power of photography as social activism. See how Lange’s work continues to resonate with millions and inspire new generations of artists and activists.

### **Edith Heath: A Life in Clay**

***Great Hall***

***June 27, 2020–January 3, 2021***

Trailblazer. Rebel. Revolutionary. Discover the story of Edith Heath, founder and designer of Heath Ceramics. Heath transformed the ceramics industry, creating dinnerware from California clay for “Sunday best” and everyday use. Driven by the power of good design, and a commitment to her craft, Heath’s vision continues to live on through her stoneware and tile over 70 years later. Durable, not delicate, simple, yet stylish, Heath Ceramics is an icon of American design.

## **ABOUT THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA**

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) tells the many stories that comprise California, creating the space and context for greater connection, trust, and understanding between people. Through its inclusive exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and cultural events, OMCA brings Californians together and inspires greater understanding about what our state’s art, history, and natural surroundings teach us about ourselves and each other. With more than 1.9 million objects, OMCA brings together its multi-disciplinary collections of art,

history, and natural science with the first-person accounts and often untold narratives of California, all within its 110,000 square feet of gallery space and seven-acre campus. The Museum is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year as a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California's dynamic cultural and environmental heritage for visitors from the region, the state, and around the world.

### **VISITOR INFORMATION**

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) is at 1000 Oak Street, at 10th Street, in Oakland. Museum admission is \$16 general; \$11 seniors and students with valid ID, \$7 youth ages 9 to 17, and free for Members and children 8 and under. There is a \$5 charge in addition to general admission pricing for special exhibitions. OMCA offers onsite underground parking and is conveniently located one block from the Lake Merritt BART station, on the corner of 10th Street and Oak Street. The accessibility ramp is located at the 1000 Oak Street main entrance to the Museum. [museumca.org](http://museumca.org)

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