

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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UC San Diego Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Visual Arts Department



“Extensions of Photography” Opening Reception, Photo by Farshid Bazmandegan

The UC San Diego Department of Visual Arts kicks off a two-year program in the University Art Gallery (UAG) to celebrate its 50th anniversary with [“Extensions of Photography: A Visual Arts Faculty, Emeritus Faculty and Alumni Exhibition,”](#) running through Dec. 9. Two related events will be held to inaugurate the celebration, including a panel discussion from 6:30-8:00 p.m. on Nov. 3 at the University Art Gallery and the “Artists & Language” reception from 3-5 p.m. on Nov. 4 in the Seuss Room at the Geisel Library.

“Extensions of Photography” is part of a series of exhibitions entitled “VISUAL ARTS @ 50: ART INTO LIFE” that pays homage to the pioneering role of the Division of Arts and Humanities’ Department of Visual Arts in shaping art over the past half century. Renowned performance artist, poet and former chair of the department, David Antin, who recently passed away, is just one example of this influence. The exhibition focuses on faculty and alumni, past and present, who gave new definition to the art of photography and what artists do with photographs.

“The UC San Diego Visual Arts Department has been a force in contemporary art since its foundation,” stated Jack Greenstein, chair of the department. “Ours was perhaps the first department in which there was a quorum of conceptual artists, and their vision and practices shaped the program from the bottom up.”

“Extensions of Photography,” curated by Tatiana Sizonenko (Ph.D. in Art History ’13), features 22 UC San Diego-affiliated artists and was conceived and directed by a committee of current and emeriti faculty, graduate students and alumni. The exhibition is the first of eight installations in the UAG directly related to the principle of “Art into Life.” It is intended to engage both the campus and local community in the anniversary celebration.

Sizonenko explained that the exhibition was conceived as a pendant to “The Uses of Photography: Art Politics, and the Re-invention of a Medium,” an exhibition of UC San Diego-affiliated artists currently on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD).

MCASD curator Jill Dawsey expressed surprise that there has never been an exhibition of works by this constellation of groundbreaking artists at UC San Diego.

“With the exhibition, I originally planned to focus on artists who were there during the earliest years of the department and through the 1970s, but I decided to take the exhibition up to 1985 in order to include the radical work of artists like Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson, who represent a second moment in the reinvention of documentary that took place at UC San Diego,” explained Dawsey.



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Over its 50-year history, the University Art Gallery developed a national and international reputation for its innovative and insightful presentation of emerging artists. Other exhibitions on campus also celebrate the history of the art gallery and the seminal importance of language and writing for the artists of the Department of Visual Arts. For example, “A Retrospective Space: UC San Diego’s University Art Gallery,” co-curated by Sizonenko and Emily Goodman, (Ph.D. in Art History, ’16), draws from the UAG’s archival sources—exhibition posters and announcements. According to Greenstein, the show demonstrates how the gallery’s reputation may be traced to the prescience of the gallery in exhibiting new forms of art and giving voice to diverse and underrepresented artists. The exhibition runs through Dec. 16 in the Ida & Cecil Green Faculty Club.

“Artists & Language: Celebrating 50 Years of UC San Diego’s Visual Arts,” an exhibit also curated by Goodman showcases the importance of writing and the written word for visual arts faculty and alumni. The exhibition of original works of art, artists’ books and unique archival pieces from UC San Diego Library’s Special Collections runs through Jan. 4 on the main floor of Geisel Library. Through Dec. 5, the first floor of the library will feature “VisArts@50,” an exhibition of print publications from visual arts faculty and graduates.

Upcoming visual arts anniversary programs in the art gallery include: “Harold Cohen, Creating Computational Creativity,” honoring the memory of Professor Emeritus Harold Cohen, a pioneer in computing and the arts; and “Making Communities: Art and the Border,” a large multimedia exhibition highlighting the depth of border-related art practices from Visual Arts alumni and faculty. A full listing of the 2016 fall exhibitions for “VISUAL ARTS @ 50” can be found on the Department of Visual Arts [website](#).

UC San Diego’s [Department of Visual Arts](#) is ranked 13th in the nation for fine arts, according to *U.S. News & World Report*, with high-ranking specialties in multimedia and sculpture. The [Division of Arts and Humanities](#) jumped 10 points this year to #23, according to U.S. News and World Report’s Global Universities rankings.

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