

**5/15/18 Council file No. 18-0242 by visiting: <http://www.lacouncilfile.com>**

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**Jerri Allyn**

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Posted in group: **Clerk-PLUM-Committee**

Mailed, Attached, in body of email

**FROM: Jerri Allyn**, Artist Educator, Project Manager, MA Art and Community  
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15 May 2018

**TO: Holly Wolcott**, City Clerk and **Shannon Hoppes**, Executive Officer  
Room 395, City Hall, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. [clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org](mailto:clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org)

**Council file No. 18-0242**

**RE: *Feminist Art raises issues, invites dialogue, and ultimately transforms culture***

**Dear City Clerk Wolcott,**

**I am writing support of the Cultural Heritage Commission's and LA Conservancy's Historic-Cultural Monument nomination for The Woman's Building: A Public Center for Women's Culture (WB).** A graduate of the Feminist Studio Workshop, a two-year program for women in the arts, accredited by five colleges, I received a Masters degree in Art and Community from the WB via Goddard College. Here I quote Suzanne Lacy, my graduate Professor and internationally renowned artist: *"The need to dramatize women's issues in the 70's was the meeting ground for activists and artists, and their common goal, the immodest desire to change the entire fabric of society. In educational centers such as the Woman's Building, artists learned how to use political strategy in their performances, and activists learned the fine arts of theatricality and image making for their protests."*

In art school, my training was all about form and style. At the WB, we were asked: What did we want to say? And to whom - who was our audience? This rocked my world: I was waitressing my way through art school. I wanted to talk about the conditions for working women and my audience were fellow waitresses, kitchen cooks and owners. At the Woman's Building, I co-founded The Waitresses with Anne Gauldin, a public art collective who perform in restaurants, the streets and other public sites.

I want to underline the scores of women who graduated from Woman's Building programs and have made productive contributions, in a variety of fields. I, myself, have been grant funded for over 20 years, publicly presenting projects about socially concerned issues. In 2015, as Artist in Residence in San Pedro, I launched *Hidden in Plain Site: Creative Referendums to Human Trafficking* with an Artist Team. This included a series of exhibitions and events which addressed this phenomenon in several locations throughout the Port City. We also aligned with Kamala Harris's network of organizations taking legal action. I have just been funded for another series of bus bench posters as Artist in Residence with CAST/The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking – about youth coerced into the commercial sex industry - again with a focus on what we can do to intervene – and legal actions we can support.

The Woman's Building had many education programs, shops, and a robust program of exhibitions and public events: performance art, video screenings, writer's events, theatre. The WB housed the Women's Graphic Center and LA Women's Video Center. 1) **The Smithsonian American Art** decided the WB was important enough that they house archives - on the East Coast. 2) In 2011, Pacific Standard Time, a Getty Foundation initiative, funded over 50 institutions to put Southern California on the cultural map. ***Doin' it in Public: Feminism and Art at the Woman's Building***, hosted by the Ben Maltz Gallery / Otis College of Art and Design, proved to be one of the exhibitions most attended and reviewed by the press. 3) **The Getty Research Institute** determined the WB was important enough to house another set of archives, oral herstories, a wide range of printed works, writer's broadsheets, and over 100 video artworks - on the West Coast.

There are over **150 oral histories available on the Woman's Building Channel on YouTube** - from the Founders to those who participated - that speak to the effectiveness of the programs on women's lives:

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=the+woman%27s+building+otis+college+la+ca](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=the+woman%27s+building+otis+college+la+ca)

While the site closed its doors – (we like to say because we got the job done) – the 501.c3 has continued to mount projects. Thus, the WB continues to be a vibrant inspiration to the next generation of diverse, feminist artists. The most recent project opened in **May 2017: *Animating the Archives: The Woman's Building***, at **Avenue 50 Studio** gallery in Highland Park. Fifteen artists presented an exhibition, performances, readings and band event – inspired by 1970s and 1980s artists:

<http://thewomansbuilding.org/AnimatingTheArchives.html>. You can find out more about the WB on the website: <http://thewomansbuilding.org/index.html>

Unfortunately, our national leadership has set an example of divisiveness and bullying. Whether you support Washington or not, its hard to deny an increased atmosphere of intolerance for difference – and a decline in reasoned debate - across the country. **Perhaps more than ever we need a Woman's Building. Please support this nomination.**

Sincerely ... in admiration of your work, Jerri Allyn

PS. In closing: The Woman's Building is part of a grassroots Community Arts Movement, that was woven into the movement for social justice and equity in the 1960's and 1970s. More than 40 years later, community cultural centers have come of age and are here to stay. When I graduated, I worked as the Continuing Education Program and Outreach Coordinator at the WB, screening 100 women's and multi-cultural organizations, reaching-out to develop the under-represented presence among WB employees and students.

Perhaps more than ever we also need these sites to be nominated as Historic-Cultural Monuments (if not already): Self Help Graphics and SPARC; the Lesbian Gay Bisexual, Trans and Questioning Center; Watts Tower Art Center and Art + Practice in Leimert Park; a Visual Communications-Asian American & Pacific Islander media artists and the Chinese American Museum. Since that time, cultural centers have sprung up that represent immigrants from the Middle East.

The WB is part of a movement of community art organizations that continues to evolve and give voice to the breadth of Angelinos that make up this vibrant city. We've got a foot in the door, and we're not walking away. We are continuing to strive for more seats at the table.

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*"I am not nearly so interested in what monkey wo/man was derived from, as I am in what kind of monkey s/he is to become." Loren Eiseley*