



feral feminisms

## Critical Interventions in Rape Culture

issue 8 · spring 2019

### #silence=violence OR ... Centuries of Activism Insisting on Justice

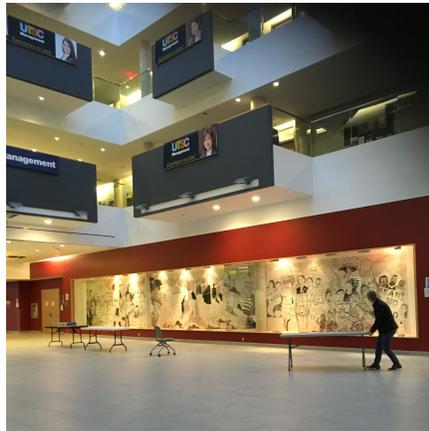
Feminist Art Gallery

*#silence=violence is a collaborative installation made by the Feminist Art Gallery as commissioned by the University of Toronto's Doris McCarthy Gallery in response to the University of Toronto Sexual Violence Policy implemented in January 2017. Two murals depict the activists that have put pressure on institutions of education, law, government, and the media to address the conditions of toxic masculinity, white supremacy, colonialism and other inequalities that breed and even encourage sexual violence and other oppressions. These activists flank the centre mural that depicts the university and the complicated relationships that individuals have as insiders, outsiders, perpetrators, survivors, and policy makers.*



*#silence=violence is an installation made by the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG) as a collaboration between artists Heidi Cho, Deirdre Logue, Allyson Mitchell, and Morgan Sea. The installation was commissioned by the University of Toronto's Doris McCarthy Gallery to contribute to the ongoing discussion of sexual violence in the Canadian context, particularly, on university and college campuses. The work is in part a response to the University of Toronto's Policy on Sexual*

*Violence and Sexual Harassment*, which was implemented in January 2017. This policy is the product of Bill 132, the *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act*, which was passed by the Ontario government in March 2016, and requires workplaces, campuses, and communities to address sexual violence and harassment. Publicly assisted post-secondary institutions were instructed to have their own stand-alone sexual violence policies that would undergo review every three years.



FAG writes in the artist statement accompanying the installation: “In anticipation of this policy, and with the knowledge that this policy and the process of its creation and implementation will be flawed and its outcomes fraught, still we have hope that because of centuries of activism insisting on justice for survivors and the annihilation of rape culture, the most marginalized people will move from margin to centre.” (“FAG Feminist Art Gallery” 2017).

This collaboratively-made installation includes two large murals that depict the movements and individual activists that have put pressure on institutions of education, law, government, and the media to address the conditions of toxic masculinity, white supremacy, colonialism, and other structural inequalities that breed and even encourage sexual violence and other forms of oppression. These activists flank the centre mural that depicts the university itself and the complicated relationships that individuals and communities have as insiders, outsiders, perpetrators, survivors, and policy makers: a collective body that comes together with the project of learning and problem solving that has great potential to decolonize curriculum, center survivors and support those who are most marginalized. Unfortunately, this is most often not the case and it is up to “us” to stay vigilant to hold together, make space for voices to make change, and insist on socially just accountability in structured and everyday ways.

The title, *#silence=violence*, honours the student-driven movement to end sexual violence on university campuses that is happening right here and now. *#silence = violence* is also a call to action that is multi-pronged and useful as it flags the connections between censorship, suppression of information, complacency, and fear that allow for the abuse of power to continue as seemingly unchangeable.





This project preceded the establishment of the Sexual Violence Centre that was opened at the University of Toronto Scarborough in the spring of 2017. The mural is intended to be hard-hitting in its critique of how the University of Toronto and all Ontario post-secondary institutions have proceeded in creating sexual violence policies. Public meeting times and student consultations have been made inaccessible and unavailable to many, thereby continuing to foster mistrust of the institution for survivors seeking to create fair, just, and productive policies. The mural seeks to disrupt the image of the benevolent educational institution and give credit to the survivors and activists upon whose work and voices these policies are predicated but not centred. The mural works to illustrate how feminist critiques of institutions are unproductive when positioned as “us” vs. “them” and instead recognizes that we are all part of institutions and thus must act as agents in their reform/accountability/transformation. The mural was installed in the winter of 2018 at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. It was positioned in a high-traffic atrium across from a popular coffee shop and just outside of a large lecture theatre. During the installation, students were lining up beside #silenceisviolence while they waited to write their winter exams. This is the public that #silenceisviolence was intended for. We hope the mural addresses ambivalence, fears of complacency, and the widespread confusion of how to act and make change in the present moment.

#### Works Cited

- “FAG Feminist Art Gallery #silence=violence.” 2017. Doris McCarthy Art Gallery, Mar 1, 2017 to Jun 4, 2017. Accessed November 20, 2018.  
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- Legislative Assembly of Ontario. 2016. Bill-132, *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act (Supporting Survivors and Challenging Sexual Violence and Harassment)*., 41  
Parliament of Ontario, 2016. <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-41/session-1/bill-132>.

#### Feminist Art Gallery

Artist collaborators: Heidi Cho, Deirdre Logue, Allyson Mitchell, and Morgan Sea  
Research and concept collaboration: Mandi Gray  
Further consultation: Ellie Ade Kur and Anonymous Lawyer  
Photographer: Cat O’Neil  
Community print partner: Park Agency Print Shop



MORGAN SEA is a cartoonist from the prairies. Her practice blends fantasy and queer theory to create trans feminist comics and art. Past projects include 40 episodes of Tranzister Radio, a show celebrating trans activism and art. Sea studied video and performance at Concordia and ACAD. She currently lives in Toronto with her girlfriend and three cats, while completing an MFA at OCAD University.

HEIDI CHO is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Toronto. She self publishes comics and zines about being a queer Korean navigating family and mental health. Her work has appeared in C Magazine, Shameless and Peak Magazine. She has interned with FAG Feminist Art Gallery and Red Dress Productions. She is currently working on a graphic novel about intergenerational trauma and healing.

DEIRDRE LOGUE holds an MFA from Kent State. Exhibitions of her work have taken place at Plug In Institute in Winnipeg, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Images Festival in Toronto, and the Berlin International Film Festival. Logue has contributed over 25 years to working with artist-run organizations. She is currently the Development Director at Vtape and co-directs the F.A.G.

ALLYSON MITCHELL is an artist working in performance, installation and film, resulting in a coven of lesbian feminist Sasquatch, a room-sized Vagina Dentata, and a utopic library of political knowledge. Her collaborations with artist Deirdre Logue include the F.A.G. and *Killjoy's Kaslte: A Lesbian, Feminist Haunted House*. Mitchell is a professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at York University.

MANDI GRAY intersects research, activism, art, and humour to critically examine sexual violence. Mandi's writing about her own sexual assault and subsequent legal battles have appeared in Now Magazine and Toronto Star. She recently produced a feature length film titled *Slut or Nut: The Diary of a Rape Trial*. Mandi is currently completing her PhD in the Department of Sociology at York University.