Alien She is the first exhibition to examine the lasting impact of Riot Grrrl on artists and cultural producers working today.

A pioneering punk feminist movement that emerged in the early 1990s in reaction to pervasive and violent sexism, racism and homophobia in the punk music scene and in the culture at large, Riot Grrrl had a pivotal influence. The movement inspired many around the world to pursue socially and politically progressive careers as artists, activists, authors and educators. Emphasizing female and youth empowerment, collaborative organization, creative resistance and DIY ethics, Riot Grrrl helped a new generation to become active feminists and create their own culture and communities that reflect their values and experiences.

This exhibition focuses on seven people whose visual art practices were informed by their contact with Riot Grrrl. In various ways, they have incorporated, expanded upon, or reacted to Riot Grrrl's ideology, tactics and aesthetics. Many of them work in multiple disciplines, such as visual art, music, documentary film, new media, curation, writing and performance - a reflection of the movement's artistic diversity and mutability. Each artist is represented by several projects from the last 20 years, including new and rarely seen works, providing an insight into the development of their creative practices and individual trajectories.

Alien She's historical section is designed to be plural and open-ended; this is a living history, not a sealed past. By representing numerous voices and experiences, rather than outlining one single definitive story, we hope it will reflect the multiplicity that was such an integral part of the original movement. Toward this end, a sampling of the Riot Grrrl movement's vast creative output is included here. Hundreds of self-published zines and hand-designed posters were solicited from institutional and personal archives through open calls, word-of-mouth and invitations - similar to the way Riot Grrrl expanded. Music playlists represent different Riot Grrrl scenes internationally, guest curated by musicians, DJs and label owners. Video interviews and an ongoing, online Riot Grrrl Census provide an expanded oral history.

The exhibition's title, Alien She, is a reference to a Bikini Kill song of the same name. The lyrics are about the negotiation of normalized gender roles, the uneasy line between feminist critique and collectivity, and the process of coming to a feminist consciousness, with the repeated refrain, "She is me, I am her." More broadly, Alien She conjures the possibilities of identity, self-determination and subversion. In the face of alienation and bigotry, Riot Grrrl fostered community, action and creation. This exhibition provides a view into the passion and diversity of the original Riot Grrrl movement, and highlights how these ideas have broadened, evolved and mutated in the work of contemporary artists.

Ginger Brooks Takahashi’s collaborative project-based practice is an extension of feminist spaces and queer inquiry, akin to Riot Grrrl’s methods of building community and nurturing alternative forms of information distribution. Projet MOBILIVRE-BOOKMOBILE project involved transforming an Airstream trailer into a traveling exhibit of artist books and zines. Over the course of six years, the Bookmobile collective visited numerous (often remote) sites in the United States and Canada, including community centers, libraries and universities. Their motive was to bring artist publications to a wider audience and to demystify bookmaking by holding workshops. The project is represented with a map of its tour routes and creative and political influences drawn by Brooks Takahashi for both this exhibition and a newly released publication on the Bookmobile’s history. The collaborative art journal LTTR highlighted and celebrated radical feminist and genderqueer artists and work, with the aim of building a “context for a culture of critical thinkers.” Since the mid-1990s, Brooks Takahashi has made music and performed with friends, starting with her college bands, playing at cooperatives, punk houses and Riot Grrrl conventions, to the internationally known queer dance music act MEN. Brooks Takahashi produced two new sculptures for Alien She: Feminist Body Pillow, a pile of stuffed T-shirts from the artist’s collection, hand-printed by her and various co-conspirators with utopian symbols, new proverbs, and sardonic declarations, and There is a group, if not an alliance, walking there too, whether or not they are seen, consisting of driftwood and worn work boots. The title of the latter comes from a text by the philosopher Judith Butler. Brooks Takahashi lives in North Braddock, Pennsylvania.
Tammy Rae Carland produces photographs, collages, experimental videos, and publications*. Carland was a key member of the thriving underground music, art, and Riot Grrrl scenes in Olympia, Washington, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She co-founded a nonprofit art gallery, produced zines such as I (heart) Amy Carter**, and in 1997 co-launched Mr. Lady Records and Videos**, an influential distribution company dedicated to queer and feminist culture. Her photo series Archive of Feelings documents personal items that have had a strong imprint on her. From this series, One Love Leads to Another catalogs Carland’s collection of mix tapes made by old lovers and friends, providing a portrait of her inner circle. The importance of community is also apparent in Vaguely Dedicated, a grid of dedication pages torn out of feminist books, often addressed, sometimes cryptically, to the author’s romantic partner, sister, family, mentor, or cohort. In keeping with the 1960s feminist slogan “The personal is political,” one sees how Carland’s politics filter into her life through domestic, everyday items assembled for Sisterhood is Powerful. The Lesbian Beds series portrays lesbian couples through large photographs of their unmade beds. Politics also permeates the ongoing series I’m Dying Up Here, in which Carland investigates how female comedians reclaim an abject position for the sake of comedy. The power of the stage—presented as empty, forlorn, waiting to be inhabited and transformed—becomes the subject in the selection displayed here. This series originated in Carland’s performances from the late ‘80s dressed as a little girl, whose photo documentation was used for the cover of Riot Grrrl band Bikini Kill’s Pussy Whipped album. Carland lives in Oakland, California.

* A video by Carland is on view on the Joanie 4 Jackie monitor in Miranda July’s section of Alien She, and a photo series by Carland is in the journal LTTR #3 in Ginger Brooks Takahashi’s section.
** Some of Carland’s zines and Mr. Lady albums and event posters are on view in the archive section of the exhibition.
Miranda July is a filmmaker, artist, and writer. As a teenager in Berkeley, she co-authored the fanzine *Snarla* and performed in underground music clubs. In 1995 she dropped out of film school and moved to Portland, Oregon, where she started the video chainletter project *Big Miss Moviola* (later renamed *Joanie 4 Jackie*), which she "imagined would be the start of a revolution of girls and women making movies and sharing them with each other." The project helped generate a network and community of like-minded artists and aspiring filmmakers, encouraging women to tell their stories and giving a voice to those who are often silent. July’s own surreal and earnest style of storytelling, found in her performances, video art, feature-length films, audio recordings, and fiction writing, similarly provides a platform for seldom-heard perspectives and intimate experiences, from Michael Loggins’s list of fears in *Nest of Tens* to the frustrations of a 12-year-old Olympic swimmer and the ambitions of her mother in *Atlanta*. July’s characters navigate familiar worlds with sincerity and, at times, bewilderment, as they strive to find connection. July’s practice, in both form and content, pushes through communication barriers to bring people together. The participatory website *Learning to Love You More* and new mobile app *Somebody™* share the same ambition. *LTLYM*’s co-creators posted assignments that more than 10,000 people around the world voluntarily completed, from "Take a picture of strangers holding hands" to "Write down a recent argument." Much like *Joanie 4 Jackie*, *Learning to Love You More* equalized the roles of audience, artist, and curator. *Somebody™* is an app and public art project in which strangers deliver messages between friends***. July lives in Los Angeles.

* Some of July’s zines and event posters are on view in the archive section of *Alien She*.
** A new website archiving the *Joanie 4 Jackie* project will be released in connection with this exhibition. joanie4jackie.com
*** *Somebody™* can be downloaded from the iTunes app store or at somebodyapp.com.
Faythe Levine is a documentary filmmaker, illustrator, photographer and curator whose work is, as she writes, "in service to creating a world I want to live in." As a teenager in the Seattle area in the early 1990s, she was deeply influenced by the local Riot Grrrl and activist scenes. Her research-based films and photos document groups committed to DIY independence and a handmade aesthetic. Her ongoing photo series Time Outside of Time, presented for the first time in Alien She, follows intentionally created, off-the-grid communities across the United States. Levine’s film and publication Handmade Nation: The Rise of DIY, Art, Craft, and Design tracked the burgeoning American independent craft movement and its many makers. The project emerged out of Levine’s heavy involvement with this community, as a founder of the Midwest fair Art vs. Craft and as a curator and owner of multiple galleries and boutiques supporting this kind of work. Her latest documentary and book Sign Painters explores the trade of traditional hand-lettering. The authors provide snapshots into the life and work of sign painters across the nation and the flux this industry has undergone in competition with commercial sign production. Levine lives in Milwaukee.
Allyson Mitchell creates sculpture, installation, performance and film. In the mid-1990s in Toronto, Mitchell was heavily influenced by Riot Grrrl zines and bands, and co-founded the fat activist performance troupe Pretty Porky and Pissed Off*. In her work, Mitchell approaches pop culture and her own autobiography through a queer and feminist lens. The altered t-shirt diptych Women’s Studies Professors Have Class Privilege / I'm With Problematic is part of her ongoing series Creep Lez, an effort to use queer theory as a sculptural material. The artist, who teaches Women’s Studies at York University, asks, “How do we both resist and reconcile our participation in oppressive systems?” Mitchell’s Ladies Sasquatch sculptures are also guided by a revolutionary objective. The works embrace what she terms a “feral sexuality” outside prescriptive, heteronormative notions of beauty and lust and toward a “queer utopian dream world.” The Feminist Art Gallery (FAG), documented in a new video created for Alien She, is steered by the same impulse. Housed in the owners’ converted garage, FAG does not rely on government or corporate funding to sustain itself. This financial independence allows its co-founders the freedom to showcase raucous, experimental work. Lesbian Herstory Archives is a celebration, memorial and documentation of key writings, feminist presses, bookstores and libraries instrumental to Mitchell’s life and work, named after the eponymous alternative archive in Brooklyn. Mitchell lives in Toronto.

* Some zines by Mitchell and PPPO, titled double double, are available for reading in the archive section of Alien She.
L.J. Roberts uses toy knitting machines, industrial looms and laborious hand-stitching to construct room-sized installations, tender portraits, banners and quilts. Roberts embraces craft, a term many associate with “undesirable traits – the feminine, the amateur, the anti-intellectual, the ethnic, the non-white and the lower or working class,” in order to elaborate a queer, trans, feminist and activist culture. As a teenager in suburban Detroit in the 1990s, Roberts was sent to a reform boarding school that was intolerant of their genderqueer identity. Much of the artist’s work, such as the hand-woven barbed wire fence We Couldn’t Get In. We Couldn’t Get Out., draws on their personal experience of confinement while also signaling the larger discrimination immigrants, queer and transgender people face. Although Roberts was not directly involved with the original Riot Grrrl movement, they identify with and found inspiration in its DIY, feminist spirit and through mentors connected to Riot Grrrl like Tammy Rae Carland. The merging of activism and craft in AIDS activism of the 1980s has also had an influence on Roberts’s practice. Mom Knows Now, one of their earliest works, is a giant knit banner Roberts illicitly hung down a church steeple in Vermont; it is a coming out and a declaration. Empowerment and assertion are similarly evident in Roberts’s Jacquard-woven banners like Gay Bashers Come and Get It and Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves, some of which have been used in street protests. Roberts lives in Brooklyn.
Stephanie Syjuco works in sculpture and installation, often employing craft and lo-fi methods. Her practice, informed by the open source and copyleft movements, encourages her audience to participate as collaborators, producers and distributors. As a teenager in San Francisco in the mid-1990s, Syjuco attended Women’s Action Coalition meetings and felt inspired by the Riot Grrrl ethos of that moment. One aspect of Riot Grrrl that was particularly appealing to her was the movement’s support of alternative information sharing networks like zines, mixtapes and flyers. For her piece **FREE TEXTS**, Syjuco produces tear-off tab flyers listing URLs where one can find unsanctioned downloads of critical texts, in an effort to create a dialog around how information and culture are shared in our current moment. For the work’s realization in Alien She, Syjuco included texts considered important by the other exhibiting artists. **Proxy Audio Manifestation (Total Bootleg Collection)** displays all of the artist’s illegally downloaded music as physical objects simulating CD cases, replete with low-resolution album cover images grabbed from Amazon.com. These digital/analogue retranslations of the “original” objects point to the shift in distribution of cultural products. The handmade, limited-edition artworks can be purchased for the affordable price of $9.99, the same cost as a mass-manufactured album. Syjuco’s **The Counterfeit Crochet Project (Critique of a Political Economy)** also revolves around the notion of a “bootleg.” Through the website counterfeitcrochet.org, Syjuco solicits crafters from around the world to make copies of signature designer handbags. The participants modify the designs as desired, adding another democratic layer. As Syjuco notes, **The Counterfeit Crochet Project** inserts a parallel production line, which both diverts and shares similar territory with the standard factory production line and “outsourced” labor. Syjuco lives in San Francisco.

* Syjuco is included in the *Handmade Nation* slideshow and publication, located in Faythe Levine’s section of Alien She.*