Artists included:
Kim Boekbinder
Gaza Bowen
Len Davis
Elizabeth Dorbad
Mildred Howard
Lucien Kubo
Willie Little
Douglas McClellan
Amalia Mesa-Bains
Adia Millett
Monty Monty
Alison Saar
Betye Saar
Flo Oy Wong
Maggie Yee
Within the framework of art history, assemblage art begins with the seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting, which, turning its back on the saints, invested the common object with enigmatic mystique.

—Sandra Leonard Starr

The learner must be led always from familiar objects toward the unfamiliar—guided along... into the mysteries of life.

—Charles Willson Peale; mission statement Museum of Jurassic Technology

This collaborative exhibition was part of Assemblage + Collage + Construction: a collective view from multiple Santa Cruz venues organized by the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History with funding by the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County.

Acknowledgements
I owe deep appreciation to Leslie Fellows for her outstanding performance in offering more than some assembly required. I’d like to thank all the participating artists: Kim Boekbinder, Gaza Bowen, Len Davis, Elizabeth Dorbad, Mildred Howard, Willie Little, Douglas McClellan, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Adia Millett, Monty Monty, Alison Saar, Betye Saar, and Maggie Yee. My sincere thanks go to all the Sesnon staff and the generous museum and gallery loans: Orange County Museum of Art, and Gallery Paule Anglim. The Sesnon exhibition was made possible by support from the Charles Griffin Farr Fund and the University of California, Santa Cruz.

—Shelby Graham
Curator’s Statement — Shelby Graham

The art of assemblage is a fusion, not only of materials but also of the issues explored from cultural, religious, theoretical, and scientific sources. Assemblages can also be viewed as an extension of Duchamp’s “Fountain” (1917) and other ready-made sculptures, shared with the Surrealist’s linguistic play of Man Ray’s “The Gift” (iron with nails, 1921), and Meret Oppenheim’s “Object” (fur-lined tea cup, 1936). Joseph Cornell (1940-70s) was able to harness the concept of the cabinet of curiosities, a collecting practice dating back to mid-sixteenth century showcasing investigations of the natural world, and distill it within small theatrical boxes. Many artists have paved the way for contemporary artists to use common objects in a museum setting, juxtaposed or altered for new meaning.

Objects retain personal or historical stories, assembled objects possess a complex story, found objects transmit time and place, discarded objects hold rejection, preserved objects carry pride or prejudice, familiar objects stimulate memory, weathered objects show endurance, violent objects invoke fear, and juxtaposed objects compose a new context. Objects brought together by an artist’s sensibility work as a palette, intermixing to tell their story. I applaud artists who assemble familiar objects loaded with associations.

Every exhibition is an assemblage: a collection of persons or things, a gathering. This gathering seeks to offer more than a collection of compatible objects. These assemblages allow for deep stories to be exposed, charged with memory, contradictions, stereotypes, and questions. The title, Some Assembly Required: race, gender, culture, applies to manipulation of the objects as well as the ideas associated with them. Each artist has engaged issues of race, gender or culture, or combines approaches to these subjects. Culture, in this context, can mark how objects travel from one place to another and take on new meaning or conjure up past narrative histories. How are race and gender assembled in a world complicated by culture and globalization? What new dialogues are generated by showing these works together?
Betye Saar

Betye Saar was born and raised in Los Angeles. During visits to her grandmother, she saw Simon Rodia’s Watts Towers being built, which had a profound impact on her use of discarded items in her work.

Betye Saar’s work has been exhibited extensively, including solo shows at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and at the Whitney Museum in New York City.
**Traveling Exhibition Proposal**

**Some Assembly Required: race, gender, culture**

Participation Fee: $5,000 plus incoming shipping (shipper TBD by institution)

Number of artists: 15

Number of works: 35 (for larger venues number of works can be increased at no additional shipping cost)

Space required: 1000 square feet or larger (variable dimensions)

---

**Adia Millett** received her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. Millett continued her postgraduate career as a resident at the Whitney Museum’s Independent Study Program, followed by the Studio Museum in Harlem’s studio program. Her work has been featured in venues such as the Barbican Gallery in London and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. During her UCSC visiting artist residency, Millett created five changing installations for the Sesnon Gallery where visitors could walk into an assemblage of objects. For each venue in the traveling schedule, she will create a new installation.

**Willie Little** is a multimedia installation artist and storyteller. His work is a cultural testament to Southern rural traditions, family dynamics, and identifies with universal experiences that cross racial and socio-economic lines. His work has been exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and in many other cities including Philadelphia, Detroit, Dallas, Kansas City, Atlanta, Charlotte, and Sante Fe and overseas in numerous countries including Germany, Belgium, and South Africa.

**Dr. Amalia Mesa-Bains**, is an educator, artist and cultural critic. Her work, primarily interpretations of traditional Chicano altars, resonates both in contemporary formal terms and in ties to her community and history. As an author of scholarly articles and a nationally known lecturer on Latino art, she has enhanced understanding of multiculturalism by addressing major cultural and demographic shifts in the United States.

**Douglas McClellan** is emeritus art faculty at UCSC and taught drawing, painting, and assemblage from 1971–1986.

**Alison Saar**
The work of Alison Saar addresses humanity in the broadest sense. Through the use of archetypal images, Saar reaches out to audiences from backgrounds as culturally and ethnically diverse as her own.