

on  
view

U WEEKEND

# Female artists

celebrate their passion for the arts

By Kelly Puente  
Staff Writer

**M**OVE OVER Lilith Fair, Long Beach has its very own women's festival.

You may not see such big-name acts as Sarah McLachlan and the Indigo Girls, but what the 6th annual Women's Art and Music Festival does have is a colorfully diverse lineup of artists and performers, providing women with an opportunity to express their talent while engaging in some good, old-fashioned female bonding.

In honor of National Women's History Month and International Women's Day (March 8) the festival will be held Saturday at the 2nd City Council Art and Performance Space in Long Beach.

From art installations, cultural dances, music, comedy and poetry, this year's lineup is an eclectic collection of female artists who share one thing in common: a passion for the arts.

The celebration will feature such acts as r&b/doo-wop singer Vicky Tafoya, Vybration, a 6-part a cappella with beatbox, PoetRoniGirl, 14-year-old violin virtuoso Aishu Venkataraman, a fashion show and an appearance by the original Freedom Writers from Wilson High School.

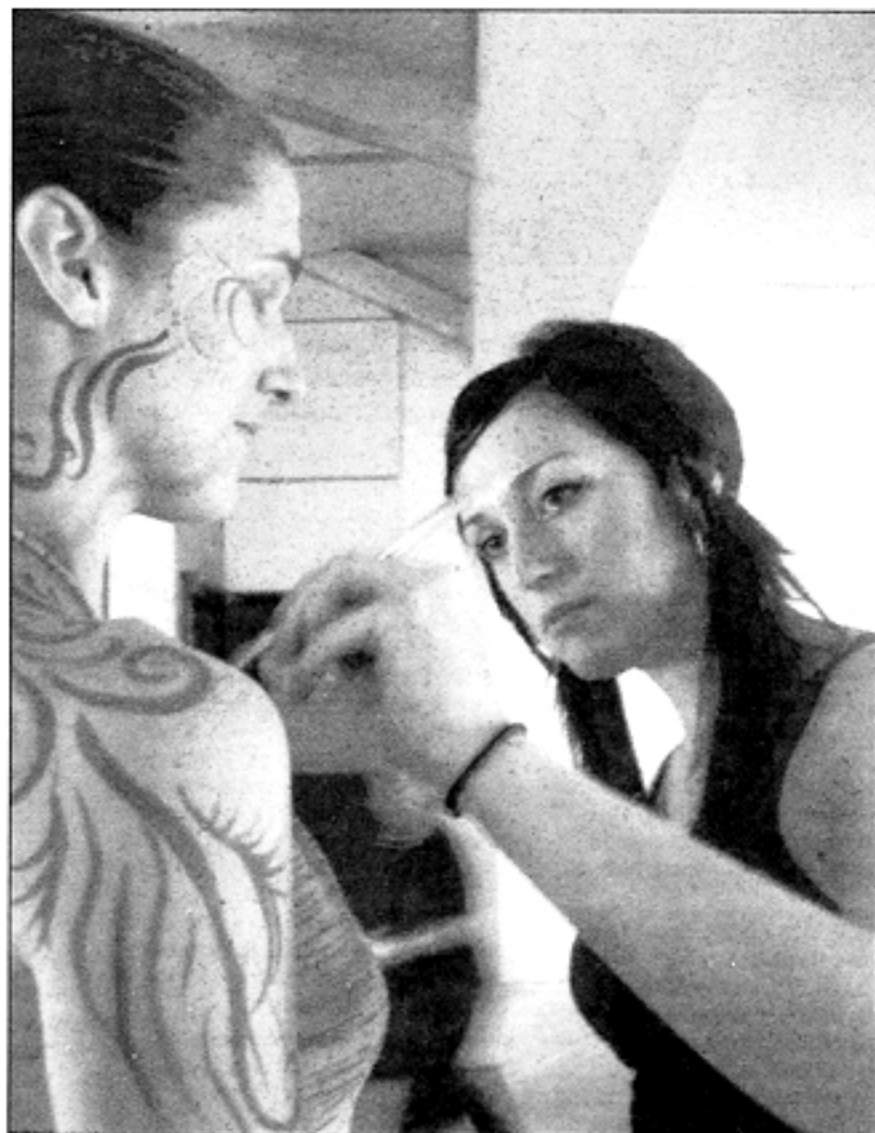
There will also be 30 pieces of art on display, ranging from installations, oils, photography and Mandala, a form of Eastern art composed of geometric shapes.

The festival was founded in 2002 by Cheryl Bennett, executive director of 2nd City Council art gallery. Bennett says her inspiration came largely from a friend who was a single mother and an artist.

"She had so much talent," says Bennett. "But because she was a single mom, her parents wanted her to give up art to pursue a full-time job. I kept thinking, what a loss."

Inspired by the young artist's struggle, Bennett decided to organize a call to action, to create more opportunities for female artists to display their work and gain experience.

"I think it's harder for



Artist Justine Serebrin will paint body art at the festival.

women artists," says Bennett. "We still have a lot of traditional roles. We have to be caregivers, homemakers, nurturers, on top of creating art. Sometimes our needs take a back seat."

Bennett hopes the festival will make the struggle for women artists a little easier, but she also emphasizes that the festival is family oriented, and not just exclusive to women.

In addition to the diverse lineup of performers, this year's festival is more youth oriented, says Bennett, with a photography exhibition by teenage girls living in group foster care, a performance by students from Long Beach Renaissance High School for the Arts and a children's art workshop.

## A whole lot of shaking going on

Dancer and choreographer Jennifer Sarreal, adds her own

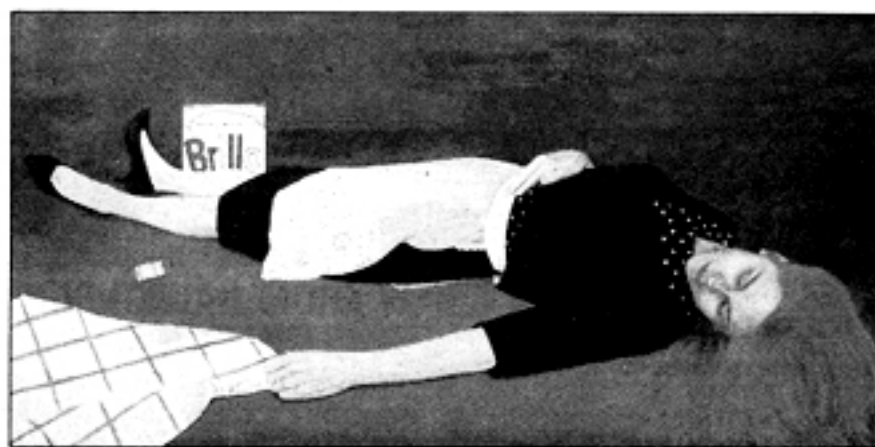
brand of diversity with an eclectic fusion of classical and tribal belly dance, hula, Filipino and Muslim folkdances, hip-hop and West African dance.

Accompanied by drums, Sarreal will also perform a traditional Tahitian dance called "ote'a."

The 23-year-old Long Beach native, who got her start hula dancing at age 8, says she loves to mix different styles of dance with different genres of music as a message of cultural awareness. She credits her ability to perform so many different types of dances to her passion for learning the origins of dance.

"Like all art, dance is a tangible expression of the soul," says Sarreal. "It's an expression of love for the music."

In 2003, Sarreal founded Island Beat Entertainment, an event and entertainment dance company based in Long Beach which holds free dance events and multi-cultural conferences,



"Death of a 20th Century Housewife," an oil on linen by Lola Scarpitta, will be among the works on display at the Women's Art and Music Festival.

## 6TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S ART AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

**Where:** 2nd City Council Art and Performance Space, 435 Alamos Ave., Long Beach  
**When:** 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday  
**Admission:** Free  
**Information:** (562) 901-0997

Having graduated from Cal State Long Beach in May 2006 with a degree in cultural anthropology, the young dancer hopes to combine her studies in dance and anthropology in graduate school.

"Dancing is not just a form of entertainment in many other parts of the world," she says. "It's a sacred form of art that binds people to tradition."

## A few laughs, too

Also performing at the festival is comedian Jackie Kashian. Kashian says she got her start in 1985 after heckling Sam Kinison in a Wisconsin nightclub.

More than 20 years later, Kashian is going strong with regular national tours and a stand-up special on Comedy Central.

When she first broke onto the scene in the mid 1980s, the Wisconsin native says women comedians were scarce.

"You definitely see more women in comedy today," she says. "Some people think that women aren't raised to be funny; we're raised to be supportive. But more women are breaking out of this mold. Now we get to be the funny

ones."

Artist Justine Serebrin will be performance painting at the festival using women's bodies as canvases. She plans to paint bikini-clad models and a few brave volunteers willing to bare a little skin.

What first started as face painting eventually developed into full-body art, says the 22-year-old artist. She creates intricate, abstract designs on her models using an array of colors and special, skin-safe paint.

"Women sometimes have a hard time finding their inner beauty," says Serebrin. "I hope my models feel strengthened when they see their body as a beautiful object of art. They become the art."

Serebrin doesn't limit her body art exclusively to model-perfect physiques. She paints women of all shapes and sizes, using the contours of their bodies as a guideline.

Growing up with a mother and grandmother who were both artists, Serebrin says her affinity toward art came natural, as well as her association between art and female empowerment.

The artist currently attends Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles and hopes to turn her love of body painting into a full-time career painting at functions and festivals.

"I feel lucky to be a part of such a positive celebration," says Serebrin. "There's an amazing energy that women have when we come together."

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