

# L.A. Stories

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

To better survey the manifold sites of postwar art in Los Angeles, *Artforum* invited art historians **THOMAS CROW** and **ANDREW PERCHUK**, curators **MAURICE TUCHMAN** and **ALI SUBOTNICK**, and gallerist **HELENE WINER** to join in conversation with artists **JOHN BALDESSARI**, **HARRY GAMBOA JR.**, and **LIZ LARNER**—a group whose experiences span five decades and some of the most vibrant, vital scenes in the city. Critic and scholar **RICHARD MEYER** and *Artforum* editor **MICHELLE KUO** moderate.

**Michelle Kuo:** We all know the myth: “The Cool School,” coined by Philip Leider himself in these pages [Summer 1964]. Leider was speaking of a “new distance,” a remove, which he saw manifested in the adamant surfaces of the work of the Ferus Gallery artists and which came to stand for L.A. culture as a whole. But how might we attend to art in LA now, without reducing it to the same clichés about regional or even outsider production that persist, rather astonishingly, in many exhibitions, in much of the literature, and certainly in the market?

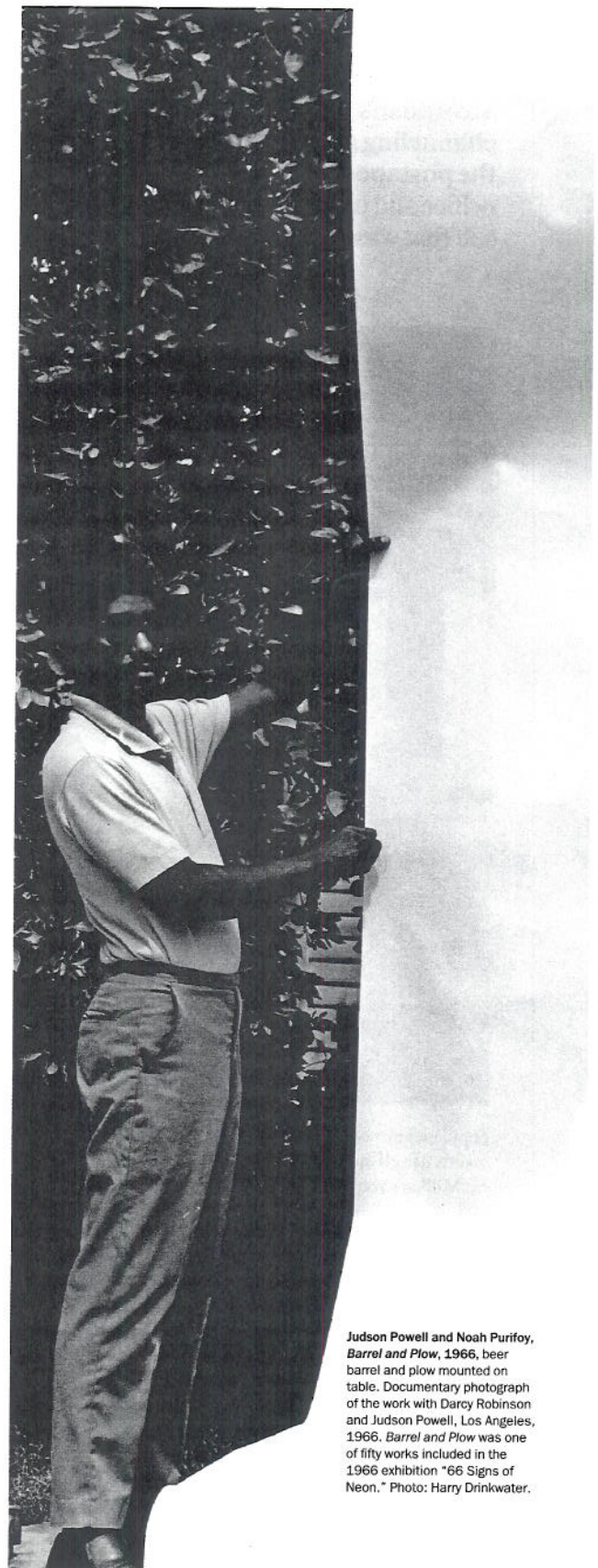
How might we attend to the relationship—if any—between the city and the art produced there in a meaningful way? How can we deal with both the underrecognized and understudied art produced in LA historically and the great prominence of more recent art made in the city, without lapsing into old categories of “importance” or “center/periphery”?

**Andrew Perchuk:** I was recently in Venice for the Biennale, where the “Venice in Venice” project presented a group of Los Angeles artists from the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s. Most of the New York and European curators, dealers, and writers I encountered had never heard of many of the artists, including someone like Mary Corse, one of the major artists to emerge from the 1960s. I kept having to spell her name. Talking about more recent art, though, I am not sure Los Angeles needs a compensatory move, as since the 1980s it has produced as many artists of international standing as anywhere.

**Richard Meyer:** When I first arrived in LA to teach art history at USC and I was asked to develop courses on California art and contemporary art in Los Angeles, this struck me as boosterism. Or, indeed, as a compensatory symptom. But then I learned just how rich and wide the history was. My question is: Could the same excavation of art-historical and contemporary riches have implications for rethinking the history of postwar art elsewhere? Might a model of creative and scholarly site specificity—rather than of regionalism—be applied to post-1945 art?

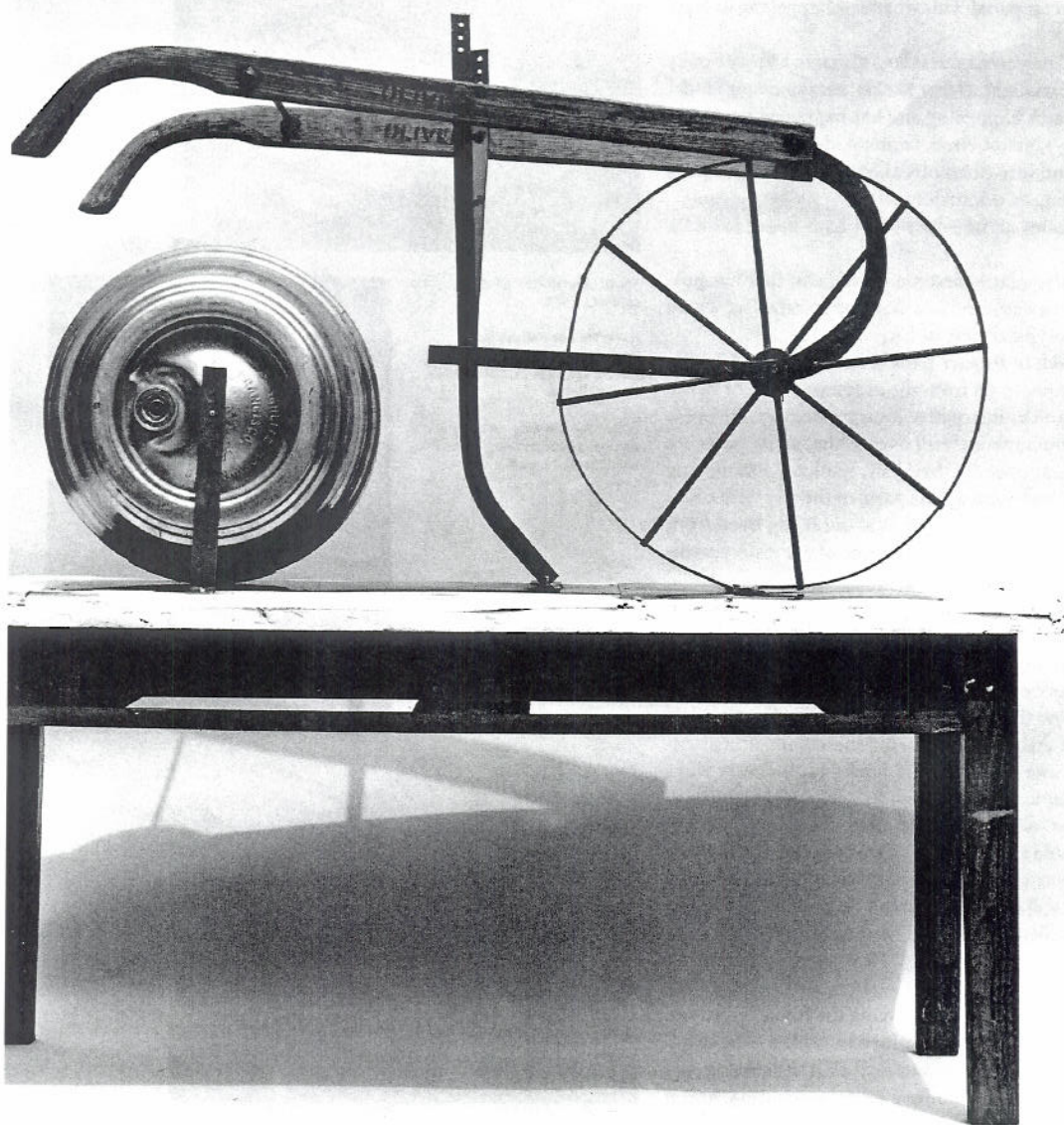
**Thomas Crow:** It would be an intriguing exercise to put the shoe on the other foot and mount a reassessment of art in New York as a regional scene. We might account for the expansive, liberating gesture in the painting of the 1950s as compensation for enduring cramped living conditions. Pop art might be explained by proximity to Madison Avenue advertising agencies and the television networks on Sixth Avenue; the crisp lines of Minimalism a response to the raggedness of a decrepit and decaying infrastructure. Exactly parallel pop-sociological hypotheses have constantly distorted discussions of art in Los Angeles, while New York art hasn’t been subjected to this reductive treatment as a localized phenomenon.

**John Baldessari:** Of course everybody you talk to is going to give a different narrative, and that’s what history is. When I got to CalArts, I very consciously wanted to provide an alternative for students—so they wouldn’t get this idea that art in Los Angeles is only about plastics



Judson Powell and Noah Purifoy, *Barrel and Plow*, 1966, beer barrel and plow mounted on table. Documentary photograph of the work with Darcy Robinson and Judson Powell, Los Angeles, 1966. *Barrel and Plow* was one of fifty works included in the 1966 exhibition “66 Signs of Neon.” Photo: Harry Drinkwater.







and light and space, you know. There are other ways to do art. And so I purposely never invited any LA artists to CalArts to speak, other than Ed Ruscha and Bob Irwin. But I was doing a lot of exhibiting in New York and Europe, so I would bring a lot of European and New York artists up to CalArts.

One of the students asked whether she could open up a gallery in one of the classrooms, and we had no budget, but I was able to give her some money. When artists would come from Europe and New York they would often have shows in the gallery. Its name was just the classroom number: A402. I remember Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf asking me, “What is this Gallery A402? It’s the only gallery showing any interesting artists in Los Angeles!” And it’s true. A lot of Europeans and New York artists had their first shows there in that little student gallery before they were in any commercial shows.

**Maurice Tuchman:** It’s hard to believe how skimpy the support system was in Los Angeles at the time. The collectors really didn’t have a high profile; the galleries—of course everybody knows about Ferus. I promoted that as much as anyone. But there was Dwan, Nicholas Wilder, David Stuart, Felix Landau, and Rolf Nelson. And Everett Ellin was one of the very first. Nevertheless, all of this amounts to a hill of beans compared with what was happening in New York at the time.

**Ali Subotnick:** One issue with LA and how it’s been perceived and talked about in history books and exhibitions is that it’s always the heaven/hell, dark/light, Helter Skelter, sunshine/noir model posed. There has to be another way to look at what’s happening and has happened here.

**Helene Winer:** Indeed, we are talking about a very romanticized, fictional idea of Los Angeles that did enter into artists’ views of themselves and into decisions about their work, at least during the ’60s. Yet there was not a lot of theorizing or discussion.

**John Baldessari:** I hate being called a Los Angeles artist—just like I hate being called a Conceptual artist.

**Harry Gamboa Jr.:** Los Angeles coexists as a highly volatile desert environment that has produced globally seductive mirages and myths. All freeways lead to a dizzying spiral effect where it is still possible to catch a glimpse of a nonstereotypical view of LA.

**Richard Meyer:** Harry, your comment sent me back to Reyner Banham and his *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* [1971]: “Simply to go from the oldest monument to the newest [in LA] could well prove a short, boring and uninformative journey, because the point about this giant city, which has grown almost simultaneously all over, is that all its parts are equal and equally accessible from all other parts at once.” Obviously, Banham was writing well before the Getty was built on high in Brentwood—not all the parts of the city “are equal and equally accessible.” But Banham’s larger point, it seems to me, is about being freed from the weight of traditional history and monumentalism. Is this the “glimpse of a nonstereotypical view of LA” from the freeways that Harry mentioned?

**Andrew Perchuk:** Banham’s view of Los Angeles had a strong element of myth, which led to the brilliant riposte by Peter Plagens in *Artforum*: “The Ecology of Evil” [December 1972]. Nevertheless, the major cities that grew exponentially after World War II—Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, Mexico City—took Los Angeles as more of a model than cities like New York or London. Too little attention has been paid to how the experience of this new city form has impacted art production. Ed Ruscha has said that driving leads to a different manner of attention, a different way of looking, than being a pedestrian. His photo books explore new ways of perceiving the city, presenting new modes of depiction.

**Maurice Tuchman:** My God, it’s amazing that Peter—he’s a friend of mine—could go on about how much he detested it but never for a second would think of living anywhere else. My favorite image of LA is actually the title of Gavin Lambert’s *The Slide Area*, his collection of short stories about Los Angeles, published in 1959. It’s still that: There aren’t deep roots, you know, and it’s a fabulous metaphor, in a way better than Peter’s fantastic “ecology of evil.”

**Richard Meyer:** I agree with Andrew, and with Banham, who wrote, “I learned to drive in order to read Los Angeles in the original.”

**Thomas Crow:** With the Banham-inspired network idea of LA—driving the freeway system, an endless grid of streets across the alluvial flats, scattered semiurban nodes—the usual tendency is to look for these aspects to appear mimetically, somehow, in the art. Ruscha’s *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* [1966] is regularly taken as a paradigm for this condition, as if it

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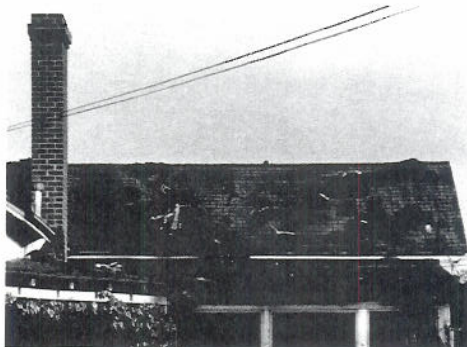
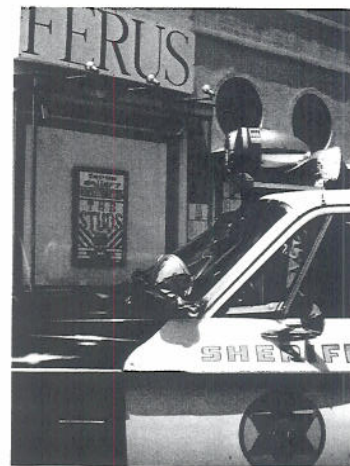
**—Thomas Crow**



Above: John Baldessari with students, 1973.

Right: The Los Angeles Police Department in front of the Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles, 1965. Photo: Charles Brittin.

Below: Bas Jan Ader, *All My Clothes*, 1970, black-and-white photograph, 11 x 14”.





were depicting just some random stretch of Pico or Western and not a circumscribed and storied precinct of rolling topography that dramatically stands out from its surroundings. Ruscha's linear deadpan plays *against* his subject, not with it.

Wide geographic dispersion has been a fact of life for LA artists, to be sure, but it affects first of all how artists organize their lives. It can lead to a tightness of face-to-face coterie culture as easily as it can to an expansive, scanning point of view.

**Andrew Perchuk:** Yes, one of the fascinating questions is how artists organized their lives. At the beginning of the era we are discussing, in the 1950s, two very different models in particular presented themselves. The hard-edge painters, whose work was receiving little attention and who felt a sense of isolation, with everyone around them painting like an Abstract Expressionist, created a kind of imaginary community—that is, most of them didn't know each other very well and lived far apart, but they saw affinities in one another's work and self-consciously created a movement. By contrast, the ceramic sculptors at Otis [College of Art and Design]—Peter Voulkos, John Mason, Paul Soldner, Ken Price, et al.—spent nearly all their waking moments together, moving around the city, looking at the modern architecture going up, going to jazz clubs, visiting galleries, and setting up a model for art production where what transpires outside the studio is as important as what happens inside.

**John Baldessari:** The real difference is that we're horizontal and spread out in LA. Bob Rauschenberg had a great line; he said: "LA is thirty-five miles by thirty-five miles by seven inches deep."

Because of the geography, you don't socialize much, you have to play phone tag, whereas in New York you can walk down the street and bump into six artists very easily and go have a drink or coffee. You're always talking back and forth, and we don't have that. The chances I'm going to walk out of my studio and bump into an artist are pretty remote. Besides, in LA we don't walk anyway. Double jeopardy.

**Thomas Crow:** These last comments point to a fundamental consideration about understanding art in LA, which is far from being a unique city in its physical arrangements. Think about the Bay Area. Yes, San Francisco has its picturesque density, but an artistic life there will entail regular movement to the East Bay, Marin, down the peninsula, maybe up to Davis; i.e., plenty of driving across dramatically varied terrain. The nature of LA urbanism won't yield specific art-historical answers easily. Key figures like Walter Hopps, Wallace Berman, Bruce Conner, George Herms, and Richard Diebenkorn cross between north and south, but the aggregate trajectories of the two California regions remain markedly different.

What LA provides as a laboratory is a chance to build a new, fuller model of historical understanding around a lot of art that is intuitively fresh and strong, made in a more typical, late-twentieth-century edge city and not encrusted in stale critical vocabularies. It would be difficult to duplicate those conditions elsewhere, a fact that for me obviates worries about regionalism, center/periphery, or any other obsolete comparative perspective. As we saw it, when Andrew and I arrived at the Getty Research Institute in 2000, it's like Everest; you just have to climb it because it's there.

**Helene Winer:** It's true, there has long been an East/West divide that the artists associated with certain attitudes and intentions. I first became aware of this with the Topanga groups versus the Beach artists, i.e., Herms, Berman, Ed Kienholz versus Billy Al Bengston, DeWain Valentine, Ed Moses, Price. Ruscha and Joe Goode stayed in the basin, around Hollywood and West LA, an area that had been the location of painters of the hard-edge era and then Bill Leavitt, Bas Jan Ader, Guy de Cointet. Later generations made their decisions based on these already established distinctions and associations. The last Chouinard [Art Institute] generation split between the Venice of Bengston and Price and Downtown, where Jack Goldstein, Tom Wudl, Hirokazu Kosaka, and others found storefronts or warehouse spaces. Subsequent generations extended the borders toward Pasadena and east of Downtown.

**Thomas Crow:** Helene, you rightly bring in the necessity of seeing the various semilocalized scenes as being in a dynamic relationship with one another over time. The Ferus artists in Venice became something of a closed club by the later 1960s, with less convincing aspirants like the Dill brothers following along. The geographic axis between Immaculate Heart College in eastern Hollywood and the old Chouinard Art Institute directly south in MacArthur Park centered the Ader, Leavitt, Ruppersberg, van Elk cohort, along with, to some degree, Goldstein.



Above: Joe Goode and Ed Ruscha, Griffith Park, Los Angeles, 1968. Photo: Jerry McMillan.

Below: Wallace Berman at his home, Beverly Glen, CA, 1956. Photo: Charles Brittin.



Above: Paul Soldner, Peter Voulkos, and John Mason at Soldner's MFA exhibition, Los Angeles County Art Institute, 1956.



Right: Ed Kienholz shooting a gun in his studio, Los Angeles, 1962. Photo: Marvin Silver.







Sister Corita Kent, *things go better with*, 1967, silk screen on paper, 23 x 35".

**"The punk scene in LA was as male dominated as the Ferus Gallery. If it weren't for Exene and Poison Ivy, all there was for a girl to do was look cool and watch the mosh pit spin." —Liz Larner**

With them, the Venice artists' organic relationship to amateur tech and craft pursuits gave way to a more knowing and conceptual grasp of the mass entertainment coming out of the studios they passed every day.

It might be asked, why Immaculate Heart? Which leads to the figure I fear will be underestimated in this whole "Pacific Standard Time" exercise: Sister Corita Kent. If we're looking for immediate responses to the Watts rebellion, the antiwar and antipoverty movements in LA art, we need to look to her repurposing of Pop. Ger van Elk was attending Immaculate Heart when his Dutch schoolmate Bas Jan Ader arrived in California, and Ader's early work, though he enrolled at Otis, is unmistakably marked by Corita's example. Mike Kelley was looking to her graphics while still a teenager in Detroit and would later come back to it with his banners.

Another strand of this lies in van Elk being in LA in the first place because his father, a renowned animator in the Netherlands, had been hired by Hanna-Barbera studios to paint backgrounds for the likes of *Scooby-Doo*, all of which bears on Ader's overlooked drawing skills and penchant for sight gags.

**Richard Meyer:** I wonder about the broader issue of art-historical memory and erasure. Every reclamation project, including "PST," is predicated on exclusions and blind spots no less than on expansions and rediscoveries. This was a painful and complex part of the "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution" exhibition that Connie Butler heroically curated at LA MOCA in 2007. Many women artists active in the feminist art movement—including in Southern California—were not included in the exhibition, even as a good number of those in the show were not participating in the women's movement at the time.

But what this critique of "WACK!" missed was the broader effect on the art world—including commercial galleries, art fairs, magazines, and other museums—that the exhibition helped to instigate. In other words, what mattered was not only the inclusions and exclusions of the checklist. What also mattered was that a major museum was mounting a large-scale survey of feminist art and claiming it as a movement no less important than Conceptual art or Minimalism to postwar art and cultural history. It would be great if "PST" achieved something like the same effect in terms of remapping art since 1945.

**Andrew Perchuk:** "Pacific Standard Time" comprises more than sixty museum exhibitions, which together include the work of some 1,350 artists, and Sister Corita's work will actually be featured in four of these shows. This points to what I think is one of the more interesting aspects of "PST": that artists will be presented in a variety of contexts. Asco, for example, will be in six museum exhibitions—as part of shows that explore pluralism in the charged political climate of the 1970s, California Conceptualism, "Mexicanidad" within modernist and contemporary art in Los Angeles, strategies of communication between artists and their publics, and the artists' groups and art spaces that sustained and exhibited Chicano art. Nevertheless, Richard is absolutely right that artists, even quite important artists, will not be included in "PST." I think it would be a positive outcome if, as in the case of "WACK!," people mounted counterexhibitions or wrote articles on artists who are not included. It would, in fact, be disappointing if people thought that this one project, however large, adequately explained art in Los Angeles from 1945 to 1980—and that, therefore, this chapter of art history was closed.

## PAUL MCCARTHY

Whenever I showed in New York, the reviews would point out that I was from California, making it clear that I was an outsider. One review mentioned no less than four times that I was from California and that I was a bad boy: "An aging bad boy hippie."

When I moved to LA from San Francisco in 1970, I stayed in somebody's backyard in the Valley. I remember when I woke up the first morning: The sky was brown and I looked over a chain-link fence down a hill. I could only see about one hundred feet. It was August and the smog was bad, but there was something great about being in the suburbs, in the middle of the smog. I liked Downtown, East LA, Hollywood, and the beach. The sun was always out and the palm trees were always there, and at the same time there was something fucked-up about it. LA just felt freakish. I don't know another term for it. The Manson murders had just happened. The schizophrenic nature of Finish Fetish, McCracken and Bell, side by side with Kienholz and Altoon, pink balloons and death.

In San Francisco, the hipness and the politics were right there. But in LA, you were never clear as to what the situation was. There was no focus, no center, only confusion; the smog blinded your eyes. It was a quagmire, a soup.

I immediately began making pieces that seemed to be about mapping and orientation. I drew a straight line across LA and tried to walk it. I took a photograph every mile down Sunset Boulevard looking out the front windshield of a car. A lot of pieces became about plotting, sequential photographs to plot space, disorientation and being lost. At the time, I don't know whether I connected these pieces to LA. I realized later that often artists who came to the city from someplace else would make pieces about mapping and location.

I was also drawn to LA because of Hollywood. In school in the '60s, I had been exposed to experimental film—Brakhage, Warhol, Conner, VanDerBeek. But I had this idea, idealism, that the future of art film would be connected to Hollywood; that non-narrative film, experimental film, would subvert the whole thing. I thought experimental film would go from 8 mm to 35 mm. I was interested in the underbelly of Hollywood, the dirty grime of B movies.

When I was at school at USC, one of the first pieces I did was to knock a hole in the wall of my studio and declare it a film. I thought it was interesting—that if you're in a dark room and you knock a square hole through the wall, the view through the hole to the outside is similar to viewing a film. The outside becomes a projection into the inside.

I worked with a group called Tie Line, which believed that future media would be decentralized through the use of and access to computers. At one point they had been connected to Stewart Brand, the author of the *Whole Earth Catalog*. With Tie Line, I worked to acquire public access on cable television, primarily Santa Monica cable. Once we got public access we produced cable programming, including artists' videos.

At the time, around 1973–74, programming cable TV was still difficult and the audience was small. So in 1976 I started a radio program with other artists, John Duncan and Nancy Buchanan, on KPFA. It was a weekly program called *Close Radio*, and it ran until 1979. We invited artists to make works for the radio. And we never gave an explanation for any of the pieces. We never had interviews. It was a kind of art space. We produced and presented over a hundred programs.

The original program was Wednesday mornings. Eventually we worked into Wednesday evenings and then Thursday or Friday evenings, getting better time slots as our listeners grew in number.





Suzanne Lacy, *Maps*, 1973. Performance views of a Happening created for Allan Kaprow's class at the California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles, 1973.



**John Baldessari:** In one way "Pacific Standard Time" is good. . . . I just hate to have the California feeling: Mother always loved you better.

## RADICALS

**Richard Meyer:** LA was and is a key site for different branches of radicalism. Have Chicano or feminist movements, for example, changed our perceptions of art in LA, or has LA changed our perceptions of radical art and activism?

**Harry Gamboa Jr.:** The term *radical* was an official governmental epithet under COINTELPRO that effectively neutralized dissent and creative acts during the '60s and '70s and into the '80s. My late-twentieth-century experiences with Asco in East LA were in the eye of that storm. Performing in the streets was interspersed with threats of official violence and other punitive actions.

*Decoy Gang War Victim* is an Asco image that I photographed in 1974. It shows a young man stretched out, seemingly lifeless, across an East LA street lighted by road flares emitting reddish sparks and by the bluish hue of mercury vapor lamps. The resulting 35-mm color slide was delivered to various local TV stations and accompanied by the notice that the "last gang member" had been killed, thereby ending violence in the barrio. The image was televised by at least two TV stations. The project was a response to the incendiary tabloid-style journalism of the two major Los Angeles newspapers, which often listed the names, addresses, workplaces, and gang affiliations of victims or their family members in an effort to maintain high levels of reciprocal gang violence, thus selling more newspapers. The desired effect of *Decoy Gang War*



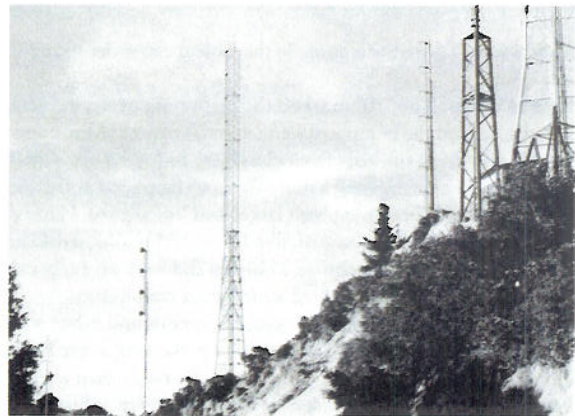
David Hammons making a body print in his Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974. Photo: Bruce W. Talamon.

But finally the end came. Supposedly, we had more FCC violations than any program in the history of KPFK. In fact, I don't believe that was true at all. There were incidents, though. We had given four programs in a row to *Slash* magazine, which was the punk magazine in LA, and they put on a number of live concerts in the studio and damaged the station's piano. John Duncan did a Reichian exercise naked in the hallway of the radio station, live. One of the artists had me pull the plug on the radio station. It was called *Dead Air*. (Another person we invited to participate was Gene Youngblood. I was interested in his *Expanded Cinema* book. He gave a talk on media, and the station was OK with that.)

The radio station hated *Dead Air*. That we had pulled the plug and that there was nothing on the radio for a period of time—that it was just blank—they saw as a total waste of airtime, of course. And then the last program was a live performance by Chris Burden. For an hour, he asked people to consider sending him money and gave his address. It used to be a violation of the FCC to ask for money on a public radio station; the station could ask but an individual couldn't. That was the last straw: We were kicked off the air the next day.

But at the time, we had really high listener ratings. *Close* had become a popular program on all of the Pacific radio stations. When I questioned the station manager about why we were being kicked off, she simply said: "We're not interested in your audience." Coming from an alternative public radio station, it was pretty funny. It was not her cup of tea.

The tapes belonged to the station, which was another problem. I asked the station manager, "What happens to the tapes?" And she said: "You can take them with you. We don't want them!" So I walked out with them. □



View of *Close* Radio's transmission towers, Los Angeles, 1976. Photo: Paul McCarthy.





*Victim* was to generate a pause in the violence in order to rob the newspapers of their daily list of victims.

**Helene Winer:** The '70s marked the beginning of the influence of CalArts and [UC] Irvine, which changed the complexity and sophistication of the exposure that art students were getting. It also drew students from elsewhere to LA for art. Artists like Kaprow, the Antins, and Baldessari were instigating a more rigorous emphasis and discourse. The diversity of the art in the LA orbit was becoming both larger and less aligned. I later discovered that there were many artists whom I did not know of, like David Hammons, working in a very isolated fashion. This was true of Bruce Nauman as well—he did have an early exhibition at LACMA in 1972 but remained relatively uninvolved with the art community.

**Ali Subotnick:** The whole scene with Hammons and other relatively unknown black artists in LA is the focus of the "PST" show we're presenting at the Hammer Museum: "Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles." They basically made their own community and exhibition sites because they weren't embraced by the mainstream, white art community.

Because of the landscape in LA, it's incredibly easy to disappear. You have to make an effort to stay part of the dialogue and remind people you're alive. But those disappearing acts can be incredibly fruitful.

**Michelle Kuo:** This ability to disappear may have allowed artists to think about pacing production over the course of a career, messing around with their oeuvre—as when, John, you burned your work; or I think of John Knight, who seems strategically and compellingly slow.

**John Baldessari:** John Knight would be slow anywhere. He's very anal. And John did live in New York for a while you know, on Fifth Avenue. Well, it's been a slow haul. I remember the first review I read of any LA artist in New York was about Billy Al Bengston. He was trashed. This was genuine hostility, because the attitude was: "Anyone from LA is a lotus-eater, they don't have to suffer like New York artists." But of course, that wasn't necessarily the case.

**Michelle Kuo:** How did you see critique and Conceptual art in the context of other models of politics and protest, other kinds of oppositional public spheres in LA at the time?

Above: Asco, *First Supper (After a Major Riot)*, 1974, color photograph. From left: Patssi Valdez, Humberto Sandoval, Willie Herrón III, Gronk.

Below: John Knight, *The Artist's Museum: MMX*, a work in situ, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), October 2010, engraving on Lac du Bonnet granite. Photo: Brian Forrest.





**John Baldessari:** It's weird—I never knew the Asco artists, for instance. I think it's due to the geography; you don't have the chance to socialize. LA is a series of city-states. There are communities here I haven't been to even now. I was living in the Venice/Santa Monica area, and that's where most of the artists were at the time. You might hear something, but I never met anybody. We all knew about Watts Towers, of course, as a landmark, but even then you were always warned about being careful when going down to see it because you're in South Central and blah-blah-blah. "You're taking your life in your own hands," they would say.

**Thomas Crow:** Another context that comes to mind is the early history of LACE [Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions], which Harry knows deeply. It was one place where the East Side, the Hollywood punk scene, and the CalArts sensibility all interacted—sometimes explosively, as at the Gronk-Jerry Drevla opening party in 1978.

**Liz Larner:** The punk scene in LA was as male dominated as the Ferus Gallery, and if it weren't for Exene and Poison Ivy, all there was for a girl to do was look cool and watch the mosh pit spin.

#### MATERIAL CONDITIONS

**Michelle Kuo:** From euphoric embrace to strident opposition, how have artists interacted with technological media, materials, and industrial models in LA? For example, can we rethink the tacit association of Finish Fetish or Light and Space with industries in the Sun Belt? Perhaps what calcified into stereotype may in fact be seen as a post-Minimal investigation of materials and perception that was historically and geographically specific. Can we understand the interest in, say, assemblage, radio, film, and digital video in new ways as well?

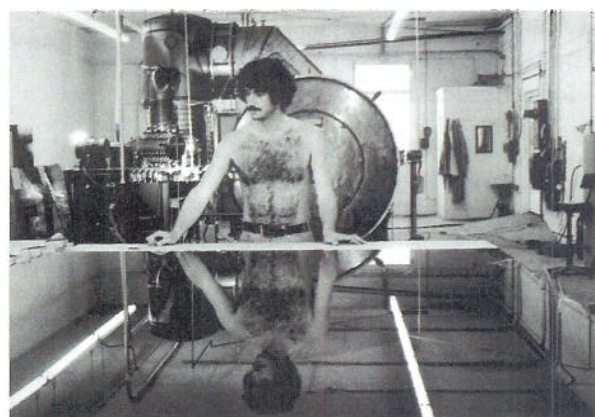
**Andrew Perchuk:** One of the interesting things about the region is that once large-scale factory production had moved on, a great deal of specialized light industry took its place. This gave artists access to a great variety of industrial production, and most of it was not directly tied to aerospace or the auto industry. One of the really significant differences between artists on the two coasts is that while Flavin bought his fluorescent tubes at the hardware store, and Andre did the same with his fire bricks, artists like Craig Kauffman, DeWain Valentine, Judy Chicago, and Larry Bell went into the shop or factory and helped develop new materials and techniques. This gave rise to terms like *Finish Fetish*, the idea that LA artists were seduced by technology and shiny surfaces and there was not a lot of deep thinking behind that. I think this may be the most pernicious stereotype about LA art, and it was never accurate. Instead, Robert Irwin tells the story of first meeting Frank Stella. He points out to Stella that all his paintings of geometric figures have wobbly edges that distort the geometry, and he asks Stella whether the wobbly edges bother him. Stella answers that it doesn't matter, that your mind just cancels out the imperfections. Irwin says that at that moment he realized all New York art was conceptual, while on the West Coast they were concerned with perception. I think that Irwin and other LA artists saw a lot of idealism in New York Minimalism, and that the supposedly perfect surfaces of LA art were necessary if you wanted people to attend to the actual conditions they were experiencing.

**Michelle Kuo:** Fabrication and perception are two ways to look at highly localized material conditions—horizons of possibility for making and seeing. Andrew, it's interesting to think of the "perfect" surface as courting the imperfection of physical experience. (Judd, though, courts this combination, too.) And to see McCracken's leaning planks, for example, as recognizing instability or gravity in a way that counters any East Coast "idealism." Many of those sites of experimentation also come from printmaking and other new work with multiples in LA in the late '60s and early '70s.

Liz, I wonder what you think about the presence of specific materials and technical processes—perhaps one could call it the material condition—of LA?

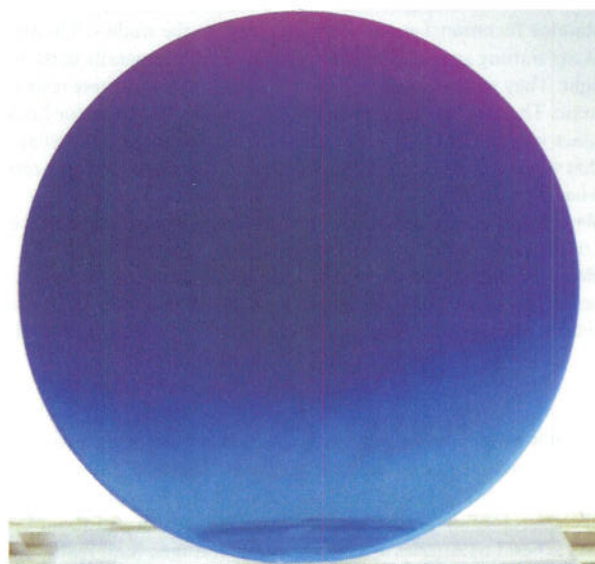
**Liz Larner:** The special-effects side of Hollywood, as well as the aerospace industry and bomb making—for the military, of course—made a number of materials locally available for artists. This situation is shifting, though, as these industries are either moving or have moved out of LA proper, and special effects are hardly physical these days. I was recently approached by the Burbank Green Alliance to help get their new program, the Artist Reuse Collective, going. What is interesting to me is how quickly artists' materials are changing. I don't see this as specifically regional, though.

I've always thought of Donald Judd as a Finish Fetish artist.



Above: Larry Bell in his studio, Venice Beach, CA, 1969. Photo: Malcom Lubliner.

Below: DeWain Valentine, *Blue-Violet*, 1978, cast polyester resin, 70 x 70".



**"The ceramic sculptors at Otis spent nearly all their waking moments together, setting up a model for art production where what transpires outside the studio is as important as what happens inside."**  
—Andrew Perchuk



**"LA is a movie town.  
And there's nowhere to hide."**

**—John Baldessari**

**John Baldessari:** Finish Fetish seemed to be the only way that you were allowed to see a thing. I thought there were a lot of other ways to do art. I could understand the reason for it, because you had hot-rod culture out here and lowriders, and you don't have any bad weather like the East Coast so you can have these pristine cars. And as a case in point, I was teaching in a community college south of San Diego and having LA artists come down and lecture. And there was this great hot-rod designer, Ed "Big Daddy" Roth. I thought, Well, he's not an "artist"—but in my mind he's an artist and he's a part of the culture, so I invited him to come down. And I remember he created a big spectacle—he drove down in a hearse! And it was standing room only. He had twice the crowd of any artist we'd get. So this is the influence of hot-rod and car culture, and that's where all that Finish Fetish came from.

**Michelle Kuo:** Maurice, the apotheosis of all this '60s interest in materials would seem to have been the "Art and Technology" show you curated at LACMA in 1970–71, which paired artists with industrial facilities or corporations. How did you conceive of the relationships between the artists and the engineers?

**Maurice Tuchman:** I got the idea from visiting the studios. The artists were interested not only in car crafting and making surfboards, but more generally in the way these processes captured light. They were crazy about these new materials, all these resins that turned out to be killer-toxic. They loved it! And they had a tremendous respect for Lockheed Martin and the aerospace industry, the manufacturers of different stripes, as well as think tanks like RAND. And that was really what gave rise to the idea of doing an artist-in-residence program, which was what the exhibition ultimately was.

**Michelle Kuo:** It also begs a political dimension, too, of course, because the involvement with Lockheed et al. raised such fury.

**Maurice Tuchman:** The killer blow was with Dow. When Dow's pesticides were revealed as being used as weapons against people, that was the end of the whole art-and-technology go-go years. Period. People freaked out, and of course then the artists themselves did too.

#### THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

**Michelle Kuo:** How have artists in LA understood the proximity to the centers of institutional cinema and television—and can we think more carefully about the effects in terms of performance, theatricality, and the critique of mass culture, from Conceptual art to now? Adorno, of course, formulated the phrase *culture industry* in and about LA!

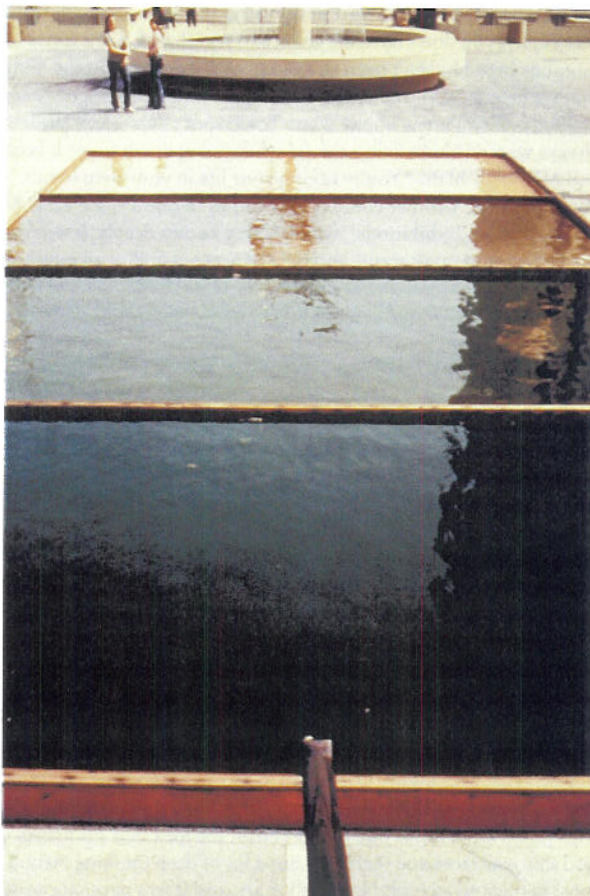
**Liz Larner:** Los Angeles artists like Kenneth Anger, John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha, Alexis Smith, William Leavitt, Stephen Prina, Larry Johnson, Diana Thater, Doug Aitken, William E. Jones, and Morgan Fisher, just to name a very few, have been reimagining Hollywood and TV over the years, exploding concepts of narrative (beginning, middle, and end), gender tropes (troupes and troops), eye lines (eyeliner) . . .

**John Baldessari:** LA is a movie town. And there's nowhere to hide.

I thought, working with Hollywood production stills, that these were images that people already have in their head so I could begin to play with those.

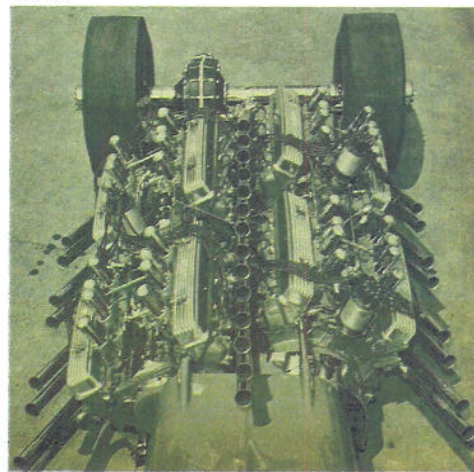
The proximity of the movie industry and art is quite close, and as has been pointed out, you have access to people who put together props for Hollywood. So it's very easy to get things produced—phase 2 of Don Judd phoning the order out to the producer. It's no secret—as you mentioned, a lot of the early sculptures of Claes Oldenburg and Jeff Koons and even me, we just used the existing services that are here, and I don't think you have so much access to that in New York even today.

**Helene Winer:** This aspect of LA was of great interest to me when I was organizing exhibitions at Pomona College, which will be revisited in a show this fall. So much art fed off the forms, skills, people, and products specific to film and TV. All the animators, screenwriters, actors,



Above: Helen and Newton Harrison, *Notations on the Ecosystem of the Western Salt Works with the Inclusion of Brine Shrimp, 1971*, mixed media. Installation view, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. From "Art and Technology," 1970–71.

Below: Tommy Ivo's four-engine Buick drag car. Illustration from *Hot Rod* (December 1961).





directors, musicians, and background and set painters made for a uniquely intense community that was concentrated in the West LA area, beyond which there was a kind of “bridge and tunnel” relationship to greater LA.

**Liz Larner:** And sculpture and painting have a specific relationship to filmmaking through materials. In filmmaking there are jobs called “painter” and “sculptor”; these jobs were usually in the production or special-effects departments of films and TV. They still are, but the jobs are rapidly becoming digital. There were surfers who shaped boards and carved waves, some of whom were artists and some of whom worked in the film industry. They all used the same materials and were likely to get them from the same sources—I’m thinking of McCracken and Kauffman now. What Disneyland has to do with this is fiberglass, the bronze of the 1990s—Jennifer Pastor, Paul McCarthy, and Charles Ray come to mind. This has to do with the artist’s hand, with facture and surface as mitigated through a material that was used by many in the same region to very different ends. The use of these materials by artists reveals something that is hidden in that monster or mountain we see on the screen.

**Michelle Kuo:** Liz, this seems to dovetail with the notion of spectacle or fantasy in LA: the way in which a specific material history, a history of facture and substance, can shed light on the relationship between tactile objects and screen projection. This relation between the thing or surface and the projected image is at the heart of so much contemporary art, and it seems to be a problem that has been specifically worked out in LA. Think of Krofft Enterprises’ special effects for Oldenburg’s *Ice Bag* [1969], and of course all of the experimentation in plastics.

On another note, Kienholz seems vitally important to discuss in this context—and in the frame of our discussion about assemblage, Berman, etc. The work almost seems melancholic, a retrenchment in visceral materials precisely during the advent of the ephemeral and virtual. **Thomas Crow:** My take on Liz’s meaning is that the proximity—via the movie and television studios—of the old means and devices of illusion did not translate into yet more virtual effects as art, but rather in their demystified use in generating experiences that were concrete, even visceral. The scrounging Kienholz definitely showed the way. McCarthy’s repurposing an actual sitcom set thrusts its strange reality into the viewer’s face. As Andrew noted earlier, the wide distribution of technical skills across the LA population—fostered by the entertainment business, the mass of engineers and ex-military techs, and the cultivation of year-round recreational pursuits like surfing and custom-car design—made the translation of technical expertise into art more a matter of practical object demonstration than of mystifying effects. In its way, it was a workingman’s aesthetic. A coterie location like Venice Beach, with back-alley mechanics, board shapers and glassers, Bondo and lacquer virtuosi at every turn, put artists in a kind of competition with these peers in combining maximum utility with maximum elegance. I remember hearing Billy Al Bengston say that his paintings were “built to last.” No wonder Irwin couldn’t comprehend Stella’s baggy canvas corners.

I would nominate as one of the great works of LA sculpture in the 1960s the dragster built by minor sitcom actor Tommy Ivo in 1961. Each wheel had its own engine, a Nailhead Buick V8, so called by hot-rodders for the small size and vertical placement of its valves. Though it was discontinued in 1966, no other engine had the ruggedness and above all the look—narrow cross section and vertical rocker covers—that “TV Tommy” wanted. The quad Showboat, engines and pipes chromed to the hilt, slicks front and back, was actually slower than his very successful two-engine dragster—but what a quintessentially Pop object.

**Michelle Kuo:** Repurposing and even invention are key to understanding these kinds of objects and instruments. But perhaps the older binaries of illusion and embodiment, the visceral and the virtual, no longer hold.

Can we more closely examine the idea of a move toward concrete, embodied experience in terms of specific sites of making and action? Of repurposing and jerry-rigging? How has the situation changed? I’m reminded of Nancy Holt’s caricatured “LA artist” in her and Robert Smithson’s *East Coast, West Coast* video [1969]: “I don’t care about all this ‘systems’ stuff. I’m out here *doing* it.”

**Ali Subotnick:** Llyn Foulkes, for instance, reuses, recycles, and repurposes all the time. He’s had a dead cat, a dead possum, and a fetus in his assemblage works. He built his *Machine* in the late ’70s in part so he wouldn’t have to rely on a band to make his music: The *Machine* is a gorgeous red and brass object that includes found horns,

*continued on page 339*



Top: William E. Jones, *Is It Really So Strange?*, 2004, still from a color video, 80 minutes.

Center: Liz Larner, *RWBs*, 2005, aluminum tubing, batting, fabric, ribbons, wire rope, padlock, keys, 82 x 117 x 117".

Left: Llyn Foulkes, *Machine* (detail), 1978–86, bulb horns, cowbells, xylophone, string bass, cymbals, flexophone, drums, other accessories. Photo: Iva Hladis.







## NOTES

1. Robert Horvitz, "Chris Burden," *Artforum*, May 1976, 24–31.
2. Kristine Stiles, "Burden of Light," in *Chris Burden*, ed. Fred Hoffmann (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 30; Robert Storr, "Immanent Domain," in *Chris Burden*, 39.
3. For another account of Banham's *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (London: Penguin, 1971), see Nigel Whiteley, *Reynier Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 225–43.
4. Stuart Z. Perkoff, "The Venice Poems" (1957–58), as cited by Cécile Whiting in the epigraph to *Pop L.A.: Art and the City in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
5. Horvitz, "Chris Burden."
6. The gallery, which was at 669 La Cienega, was one of the most interesting at the time, according to Patricia Faure, another dealer active during these years. See oral-history interview with Faure, November 17–24, 2004, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.
7. This collection of citations is taken from the artist's descriptions of his works published in *Chris Burden: A Twenty-Year Survey*, exh. cat. (Newport Beach, CA: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1988), as are the other descriptions offered here. The pieces in question are (in order of mention): *Doorway to Heaven*, *Icarus*, *Dos Equis*, *Through the Night Softly*, and *Coals to Newcastle*. See also Hoffman, ed., *Chris Burden*, for a considerably expanded record and more documentation of the artist's work.
8. For a point of comparison, one might turn to *Evidence*, a book of photographs published in 1977 by Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel (New York: D.A.P., 2003). The work collects fifty-nine prints found in government and corporate archives by its two authors; all are left uncaptioned. The result is uncanny; the viewer seems to have entered a parallel universe where everything is familiar but nothing makes sense.
9. Though regulation of tailpipe emissions began in California in the late 1960s, catalytic converters were not required until 1975. See the South Coast Air Quality Management District, "The Southland's War on Smog: Fifty Years of Progress Toward Clean Air," <http://www.aqmd.gov/news/1/Archives/History/marchcov.html>.
10. Baum-Silverman opened on La Brea in March 1977, a few months before Burden's September show, and closed on December 31, 2007. See Suzanne Muchnic, "It Was Art That Stole Her Heart," *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 2007.
11. *Chris Burden*, 132, 340, 350.

## BURDEN PROJECT CAPTIONS

- Page 228. **The Baby Bullet 1928 Heath Racer.** From Gene Thomas, *Baby Bullet: Historic Documentation for the Aero-Historian* (The Thomas Studio, 1975). Photo: Roger Lorenzen.
- Page 229. **Bridge over the Metlac River designed by William Fairbairn in 1866 (unbuilt).** Illustration from Francisco Garma Franco, *Railroads in Mexico: An Illustrated History*, vol. 1 (Sundance Publications, 1985).
- Pages 230–231. **Burt Rutan's Quickie 1.** From *Sport Aviation Magazine* (October 1978). Photo: Jack Fox.
- Page 230. Inset: **Diagram showing frontal view of Bruce Rutan's Quickie 1** (Quickie Aircraft Corporation, ca. 1978).
- Page 232. **Ralph Wood, Causey Arch Railroad Bridge, near Stanley, Britain, 1725.** Photo: Rob Williams/Flickr, 2010.
- Page 233. **The Horten Ho 6, 1944.** Photo: National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.
- Pages 234–235. **The 1962 Lotus Elite.** Photo: Ashley Border, 2010.
- Page 234: **Diagram from Dennis Ortenburger's Lotus Elite Racing Car for the Road** (Coterie Press, 2002).
- Page 236. **Photomontage of Alberto Santos-Dumont's airship rounding the Eiffel Tower, Paris, October 19, 1901, n.d.** Artist unknown.
- Page 237. **Plans for Phil Bolger's Motorsailing Cargo Boat.** Illustration from *Boatbuilder Magazine* (January/February, 1995).

~UNDTABLE continued from page 249

drums, a keyboard, and a microphone all in one; Foulkes sits in the middle and plays and blows and sings. He also uses plastic water jugs as instruments. But a lot of that is merely making use of what's around him and not wanting

to invest in more waste when there are plenty of discarded objects available to him.

**John Baldessari:** The Yves Klein all-blue paintings show at Dwan gallery was a case of really seeing the work in person as being important. With Duchamp, I knew the work, so it wasn't so important for me to actually see it when Hopps did the Pasadena retrospective. With Klein, you really had to see the surface and those things, those materials. It just bowled me over. I just looked at those and said, "You can't do that," and then I thought, "Well, you better change your mind about something here."

**Richard Meyer:** I'm wondering about repurposing, customizing, and jerry-rigging as a creative response to the standardization of commodity culture and the culture industry, Hollywood, and patronage. I can't help but be struck by the fact that Tom's dragster designer was a "minor sitcom star" or that Foulkes says he is turning to music with his *Machine* now in part as an alternative to "billionaire real estate developers" who are collecting contemporary art.

**Harry Gamboa Jr.:** I've often said that the Hollywood sign is the ugliest example of graffiti on the North American continent.

During the '50s through the '70s, a constant presentation of absurdly intense anti-Mexican/anti-Chicano sentiment via films, TV sitcoms, news programs, commercials, and public-service announcements was officially enforced via public schools and augmented by extreme examples of police oppression. Toward the '80s, direct hatred was replaced by attempts to exclude Chicano social and political concerns from the national discussion.

Having grown up in an environment where tools of mass delusion and urban warfare resulted in many injuries, deaths, and loss of hope, it also proved to be an exhilarating challenge to many of my peers to gather objects, images, and moments in order to create something that might make an existentialist statement while scratching a hole in the jaded eye.

Why look at fading stars when there is an entire universe before you?

**Liz Lerner:** Harry, your comments bring to mind one of the gaping holes in LA MOCA's recent exhibition "Art in the Streets," and the upcoming Asco exhibition as rectifying this exclusion to some extent. What do you think about this?

**Harry Gamboa Jr.:** Gaping holes in Los Angeles are often temporarily fixed by filling them with a lump of hot asphalt and smoothing it over, so that everyone can rush past without ever having to look back. Rectifying requires a bit more work that is intrinsically human, involving acceptance, understanding, learning, and apparently forgiveness.

In 1971, at the corner of Whittier Boulevard and Arizona Street in East Los Angeles, LA County Sheriff deputies fired more than a hundred rounds of live ammunition into a group of peaceful Chicano demonstrators who were protesting police violence and the recent police killing of Ruben Salazar, the martyred *Los Angeles Times*/KMEX-TV news reporter. Many were wounded, and at least one person was killed. Collective fear was imposed by blatant oppression during the next few years, eliminating all public dissent. In 1974, Asco returned to that site and created a dinner party on a traffic island, *First Supper (After a Major Riot)*, that would dispel the fear and replace it with a celebration of liberation as the Chicano community was attempting to

assert its role in the American consciousness. The persistence of images in the larger context can now contribute to a broader understanding of a difficult period that somehow extrapolated unexpected fun out of conflict.

**Andrew Perchuk:** As Harry and others point out, it's very important not to whitewash Los Angeles's history. It was a segregated city and in many ways a very repressive environment. It has a long history of censorship: Berman was, of course, convicted of obscenity; the Huysman Gallery was closed by the John Birch Society—and the reuse of material often had a political dimension. The controversy over the 1966 Kienholz show is the most obvious example, but one of the most significant instances was what Noah Purifoy and Judson Powell initiated in the aftermath of the Watts rebellion. They and a group of artists—which included Arthur Secunda, one of the major early contributors to *Artforum*—collected the charred wood and burned metal in the days after the riots and created sixty-six sculptures, which they called *66 Signs of Neon* [1966]. The resulting exhibition toured the United States for three years, mostly in university and community art spaces. I think reconstructing these artistic networks is crucial and will be one of the major contributions of the show at the Hammer that Ali mentioned.

**Maurice Tuchman:** I was very close with Mel Edwards at the time, and when Watts erupted, it was a shock to everyone. Kienholz himself had a wry feeling about all this. In his work, the fury and the rage are much clearer than they were in person, where he was really a gentle giant.

The LACMA Kienholz show was certainly emblematic of an environment resistant to all forms of contemporary art. When I told the museum's Contemporary Art Council about the show, the opposition that I encountered was astonishing to me. In the case of Betty Freeman, for example, a really distinguished collector with a keen eye—she detested the idea so much that ultimately, when I had my way, she wouldn't talk to me for decades. This is the case when you're dealing with a board of trustees headed by what was then known as the Gang of Four, none of whom were sympathetic to twentieth-century art, let alone contemporary art.

So much tumult and so much intensity were going on in what seemed to be a placid Los Angeles. Kienholz had actually been censored a few years earlier at San Fernando Valley State College. But his *Back Seat Dodge '38* [1964] really touched this nerve, and there were so many other issues going on in America at the time.

**Ali Subotnick:** It is strange to think that the stakes of both politics and regionalism seem both lessened and heightened today. The Hammer is presenting the first LA Biennial since 1994 in collaboration with LAXART next summer. The whole idea of making a biennial with just local artists is absolutely regional; hopefully, we can make a show that presents LA artists without appearing too provincial. But to do it again in two years . . . will the well run dry? There are incredibly interesting artists delving into video, their own TV programs, engaging in role-play and method acting, digging into Hollywood history; but then we also have these schools that are preparing artists to have careers, rather than to take risks. There seems to be less room for experimentation today.

**Liz Lerner:** "Rectifying requires a bit more work that is intrinsically human, involving acceptance, understanding,





The scene at MoMA PS1. (Photo: Jacqueline Iannaccone/efi-studios.com)

"We discussed the female bodybuilders in the lobby, who posed against a blank scrim with a model sheathed in a 'wink-wink' step-and-repeat Zentai bodysuit. 'Is this ironic, or sincere?' I wondered. #thatisthequestion —Piper Marshall at the close of Ryan Trecartin's show at MoMA PS1.



Björk performing *Biophilia*. (Photo: Carsten Windhorst)

"Choosing David Attenborough to announce each song from *Biophilia* was a brilliant move, relocating Björk's eccentricities away from Beuysian holistics and more toward BBC reassurance."

—Claire Bishop at the 2011 Manchester International Festival



Actor Rick Dacey (middle). (Photo: Brian Droittour)

"I was really excited by the chance to publicly trash William Powhida until his assistant told me to go for it. 'It will help create dialogue.' Buzzkill."

—Brian Droittour on William Powhida's opening at Marlborough Gallery

## SCENE & HERD [www.artforum.com/diary](http://www.artforum.com/diary)

learning, and apparently forgiveness." Great point, Harry. I am looking forward to an L.A. Biennial. There are so many more artists here now, and rent is a lot higher in Venice, Topanga, and West Hollywood than it was in the '60s and '70s. Silver Lake is even referred to as Brentwood East these days. Don't jump too quickly to assume that experimentation is vanishing. The fat of the land has dried up, and everyone is trying to learn how to garden again. □

BIRO/HEINECKEN continued from page 259

### NOTES

1. He'd done the same thing with the "Time" works in 1969; and in the 1970s, the artist also made gifts of pages superimposed with this image. Once, he also used it as "mail art," sending original pages to the entire membership list of the Society for Photographic Education.

2. See, for example, the series "Figure Horizon," 1971, and "Cliché Vary," 1974, in which images from porn magazines are broken up across discrete panels forming grids of bodies and body parts. For the paintings of the "Different Strokes" series, 1970–97, Heinecken made four-by-five-inch negatives of magazine photographs and printed combinations of these images on canvas, going over the resulting combination prints with lines of chalk and arranging the results in rows. These works suggest a cinema of fantastic metamorphosis, where interlocked bodies sprout new limbs in every frame.

3. Although they look like simple blown-up frames, the film strips are edited—they show frames from a varying series of actions. They thus look more like negatives despite the fact that they juxtapose positive images; and by blending these two distinct media, film strip and negative, these hanging works pose formally reflexive questions.

4. Significantly, the Polaroids also showed the artist's interest in staging or the directorial mode, a photographic strategy with which he is not usually associated.

5. Although the fragmentation of the language itself renders the female subject unstable (her name and occupation switch between dialogues), it is through the reproductions of the SX-70 prints, which depict different male portraits, that "he" becomes most strongly divorced from Heinecken's own persona and autobiography.

6. Evoking the financial crisis, *P.P./Surrealism—B*, 1991, for example, combines girl, cat, mail, and the *Economist* magazine under the title ADULT ENTERTAINMENT, making the pursuit of money seem slightly pornographic. The Cibachromes' references to AIDS were less direct but no less powerful. They

consisted in Heinecken's way of rendering human figures transparent (we see forms inside or through one another), as well as his often liquid iconography, a representational focus on water droplets, alcohol, makeup, and other fluid or semisolid substances, which connects his imagery to the photography of Andres Serrano, Nan Goldin, and others. Under the slogan *THE BREAKFAST THAT'S RIGHT ON TIME, P.P./Surrealism—G*, 1987, shows us a woman in the midst of making up her face. Through a chance combination of photographic perspectives, her eyes meld seamlessly with two Egg McMuffin sandwiches that seem to hover inside her head. By merging the organic instrument of vision with a processed food product, the photograph suggests that we are what we eat, reminding the viewer that today consumer culture looks toward our insides when defining us. Likewise, *P.P./Surrealism—T*, 1987, is no simple "good time." Although young and attractive, the blindfolded model is "invaded" by a variety of different sources, including two clasped hands reaching in from the right as well as tassels, lace underwear, and her own left hand. Here eroticism betrays a dark and unsettling undercurrent.

NORDEN/MCCRACKEN continued from page 277

### NOTES

1. From "John McCracken; Remote Viewing/Psychic Traveling; Mar–Apr., 1997," *Frieze*, no. 33 (June–July 1997): 60–63.

2. Unlike his East Coast contemporaries, McCracken addressed his writings to himself. And unlike some of his West Coast contemporaries, he didn't teach. Though pages from the sketchbooks were exhibited in his 1986 retrospective, and excerpts appeared in various essays and reviews over the years, none of these texts were published until 2008, when David Zwirner gallery produced a facsimile of the original 1965–67 sketchbooks.

3. McCracken, quoted in the press release for his September–October 2010 exhibition at David Zwirner gallery.

4. Unless otherwise noted, McCracken's observations are from a conversation with the artist recorded in New York, July 10, 2010.

5. The stepladder comes off as armature or prop—an association McCracken carefully conceals in his painted wood and resin sculptures. (In fact, the photograph was taken by McCracken's widow, Gail Barringer, who notes that McCracken wanted the stepladder cropped.)

6. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: Dutton, 1970), 45.

7. McCracken's use of colored resins—lacquer, then polyester—followed his initial use of colored paint and some less than satisfactory experiments with reflective automobile paints, Finish Fetish materials all. For an extensive discussion of McCracken's materials and methods, see Patrick Meagher and Yunhee Min's interview with McCracken in *The Silvershed Reader* (New York: Silvershed, 2008), 46–87.

8. McCracken, interviewed by Meagher and Min, *The Silvershed Reader*, 56.

9. Dike Blair, "Otherworldly: Interview with John McCracken," *Purple Prose*, no. 13 (Winter 1998).

10. Robert Smithson, "The Crystal Land," (1966), in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack D. Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 7–9.

11. Okwui Enwezor, "History Lessons," *Artforum*, September 2007, 384.

NED HOLTE/GAINES continued from page 285

### NOTES

1. Charles Gaines, conversation with the author, January 10, 2011.

2. Untitled statement in *No Title: The Collection of Sol LeWitt* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Art Gallery, 1981).

3. Franklin Simans, "Charles Gaines: Lurid Stories," in *Lurid Stories: Charles Gaines, Projects from 1995–2001*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Institute, 2001), 17.

4. Charles Gaines, *Theater of Refusal: Black Art and Mainstream Criticism*, exh. cat. (Irvine: University of California, Irvine, 1993), pp. 13–20.

5. Gaines, conversation with the author, January 10, 2011.

JAMES/ALTERNATIVE CINEAM AND VIDEO continued from page 293

### NOTES

1. I have been a Filmforum board member since 1980 and participated in several aspects of its "Alternative Projections" project, including the screening series here described.

2. As this essay went to press, the Filmforum programs were still in development and subject to change.

3. "Recollections: A Brief History of the Video Programs at the Long Beach Museum of Art," in Glenn Phillips, ed., *California Video: Artists and Histories* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008).

4. Kim Levin, "Video Art in the TV Landscape: Notes on Southern California," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *New Artists Video* (New York: Dutton, 1978), 65–75.

5. David Antin, "Video, the Distinctive Features of the Medium," in *Video Art*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania/Institute of Contemporary Art, 1975). Hollis Frampton, "The Withering Away of the State of the Art," *Artforum*, December 1974, 50. Reprinted in Hollis Frampton, *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters*, ed. Bruce Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 261–68.