



## About the Los Angeles Art Scene during the *Pacific Standard Time* Era

*Pacific Standard Time* brings together more than sixty cultural institutions throughout Southern California to tell the story of the rise of the Los Angeles art scene and how it became a new force in the art world. What began in 2002 as an effort by the Getty Research Institute and the Getty Foundation to document the artistic milestones in the region's history and preserve the archival record of the period expanded to become a great creative landmark in itself.

Modern art in Los Angeles has an exciting and vibrant history. Its unique artistic trajectory sets it apart from New York and other centers of modernism, but its distinctive contributions have never been fully appreciated. Exploring and celebrating the significance of the crucial years after World War II through the tumultuous period of the 1960s and 70s, *Pacific Standard Time* encompasses developments from L.A. Pop to post-minimalism; from modernist architecture and design to multi-media installations; from the films of the African-American L.A. Rebellion to the feminist activities of the Woman's Building; from ceramics to Chicano performance art; and from Japanese-American design to the pioneering work of artists' collectives.

**Before the Second World War**, Walter and Louise Arensberg installed their incomparable collection of Dada and Surrealist art in their home in Hollywood, where it had an enormous impact on the local art scene. At the same time, the German émigré dealer Galka Scheyer brought her definitive collection of German Expressionism to Los Angeles, where it was eventually donated to the Pasadena Art Museum (now the Norton Simon Museum). The presence of these collections already suggested a different path for modern art in Los Angeles, one not based on the Post-Impressionism and Cubism that were so dominant in the New York and Parisian art worlds. A third indication of the developments to come was the emergence of regional styles in architecture. The mild climate of Southern California, together with the modernist sensibilities imported by Austrian and German émigré architects and the indigenous hacienda tradition, combined to produce structures by architects including Richard Neutra and John Lautner that were destined to have a great impact on the rest of the nation.

**By the 1950s**, Los Angeles was developing its own art forms, such as assemblage sculpture and hard-edge painting. This avant-garde art coalesced in the early 1960s around two institutions: the Ferus Gallery (founded by Walter Hopps and Ed Kienholz as the first exhibition space devoted principally to new Southern California art) and the Pasadena Art Museum.

**By the mid-1960s**, Los Angeles had become a **center of Pop art** on par with New York and London through the work of artists such as Ed Ruscha and David Hockney (the great chroniclers of Los Angeles), and by the end of the decade a number of Los Angeles artists had developed international reputations, becoming well-known in Europe before they were recognized in the United States. Among them were John Baldessari (one of the founders of Conceptual art) and Bruce Nauman (the most radical Postminimalist on the West Coast). Many artists in Los Angeles also explored the intersection of art and science, culminating in LACMA's *Art and Technology* project of 1968-1971: a series of collaborations among artists, scientists and engineers. This art-and-science connection also led to the California Light and Space movement, which included artists such as Robert Irwin, James Turrell and Maria Nordman.

When combined with the vibrant performance art scene, this keen interest in technology also gave rise to one of America's earliest communities of video artists, particularly in Long Beach.

As important as formal innovation was to the birth of the Los Angeles art scene, the emergence of artists from **previously marginalized communities**, along with their previously unrepresented viewpoints and subject matter, was equally crucial.

The period of the **Mexican American Generation** in Los Angeles, 1945–1965, marked the emergence of the first widely recognized Mexican American artists, such as Manuel Rivera Regalado and Eduardo Carrillo. These artists laid the groundwork for a second artistic flowering, 1965–1980, associated with the Chicano civil rights movement. Artists such as Gronk, Judy Baca and Patssi Valdez created art and institutions that reflected their commitment to social protest, cultural identity and historical awareness.

At the beginning of the 1960s, **African American artists** began to fight for exhibition opportunities and for the hiring of African American curators. A seminal 1966 exhibition at UCLA entitled *The Negro in American Art* showcased Los Angeles artists, and as the decade progressed, artists of color began to have a greater presence in local art schools. The exclusion of their work from mainstream galleries led to the establishment of alternative venues such as the Brockman Gallery and Gallery 32. These spaces encouraged a burgeoning of modes of expression, from the assemblage pieces of Betye Saar and Noah Purifoy to the more abstract and conceptual practices and performance of Senga Nengudi, Maren Hassinger and David Hammons.

Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro started the **Feminist Art** Program at CalArts in 1971, producing the landmark exhibition *Womanhouse* in early 1972. The next year Chicago, Arlene Raven and Sheila Levrant de Bretteville founded the Woman's Building in downtown Los Angeles, which presented hundreds of exhibitions and became a center for performance art in the seventies and eighties.

The record of this prolonged outburst of creativity was for too long scattered in cartons and files all over Southern California, difficult to access and in some cases in danger of being lost or destroyed. Through the *Pacific Standard Time* initiative, the records have been preserved, the history has been re-examined, and the full story of the birth of the Los Angeles art scene has been readied for public presentation at exhibitions throughout Southern California.

**For information about Pacific Standard Time, visit [www.pacificstandardtime.org](http://www.pacificstandardtime.org)**