

frieze

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The Year

in

Review

Dispatches from:
Beirut, Berlin, Cairo, London
Los Angeles, New York,

FRIEZE



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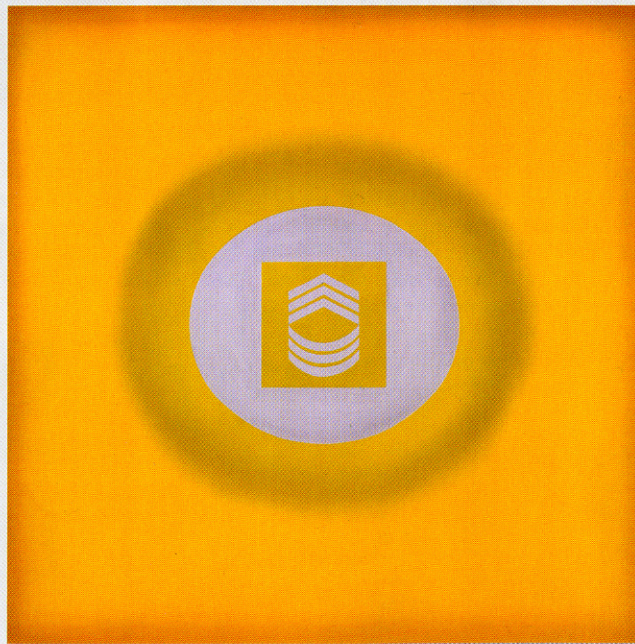
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Left:
David Hammons
America the Beautiful
 1968
 Lithograph and
 body print
 99×75 cm
 Included in
 'Now Dig This! Art
 and Black Los Angeles
 1960–1980' at the
 Hammer Museum

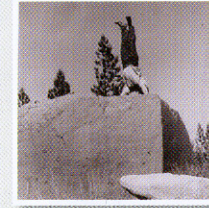
Below:
Billy Al Bengston
Sonny
 1961
 Oil on Masonite
 91×91 cm
 Included in 'Pacific
 Standard Time:
 Crosscurrents in
 L.A. Painting and
 Sculpture, 1950–1970'
 at the J. Paul Getty
 Museum



Stretching across 70 museums and galleries,
'Pacific Standard Time' is an unprecedented
 collaboration that traces different histories
 of Southern Californian art between 1945 and
 1980 by *Sam Thorne* and *Stacey Allan*



Below and opposite:
Robert Kinmont
8 Natural Handstands
 1969/2009
 Nine silver gelatin prints
 (opposite page: detail)
 Each: 21×21 cm
 Included in 'State of
 Mind: New California
 Art Circa 1970' at
 the Orange County
 Museum of Art



Sam Thorne

Associate editor of frieze, based in London, UK.

Sniping at the Getty's activities is nothing new. As early as 1977, Joan Didion noted that, 'From the beginning, the Getty was said to be vulgar [...] ritually dismissed as "inauthentic", although what "authentic" could mean in this context is hard to say.' So, when 'Pacific Standard Time' (PST) – which was initiated and funded by the Getty Foundation – opened at the end of September, the reactions were fun to watch. Taking in around 70 cultural institutions in Southern California, PST is, as the Getty's catalogue claims, 'quite possibly the largest visual arts initiative ever'. Discounting New Deal-style programmes, this is surely the case; the collaboration, which runs for almost eight months and focuses on Southern Californian art produced between 1945 and 1980, has few precedents. But there was a derisive note to several of the early responses. Roberta Smith's review in *The New York Times* was titled 'A New Pin on the Art Map', as though land had just been sighted by pith-helmeted art historians.



Pacific Standard Time

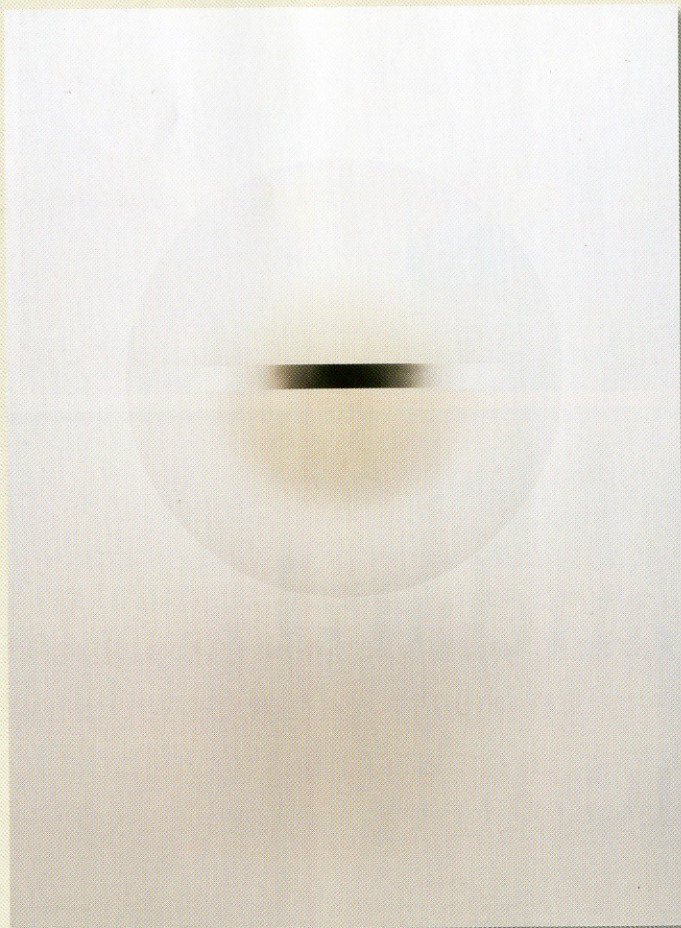
PST is best understood as recuperative rather than self-promoting, a long-due counterweight to New York's centrifugal pull.



Top left:
Ken Price
BG Red

1963
Fired clay with acrylic and lacquer on wooden base
25×20×20 cm
Included in **'Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture, 1950-1970'** at the J. Paul Getty Museum

Left:
Robert Irwin
Untitled
1969
Acrylic lacquer on formed acrylic plastic
Diameter: 135 cm
Included in **'Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface'** at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego



Condescension was alloyed with the feeling that self-celebration on this scale is gauche or even paranoid – the kind of thing, as Dave Hickey opined, that Denver would do.

Other reactions saw PST as a brazen act of regional boosterism: city-myth production not so different from the antics of Los Angeles's original boosters – those Downtown bureaucrats and PR men who ruthlessly promoted urban development early last century. But PST is better understood, I think, as recuperative rather than self-promoting, a long-due counterweight to the centrifugal pull of New York in accounts of postwar art in the US. Certainly this is how it was first imagined by the Getty Foundation and the Getty Research Institute in 2001, when the then-unnamed initiative had the relatively modest ambition of locating and preserving the historical record of LA's art production. This was prompted by a dearth of scholarly books on the subject, made urgent by the fact that many of the artists who had come of age during World War II were growing old. By 2008, what began as an LA-focused archival endeavour had grown to encompass the whole of Southern California and, more dramatically, had developed an extensive exhibition component with a total budget of around US\$10 million provided by the Getty. The initiative was to be led by the Getty, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) and the Hammer Museum, but would take in dozens of smaller institutions and alternative, artist-led and commercial spaces.

At this point, any evaluation of PST will be partial in the extreme. This is not only because the programme is less than halfway through, but, with the enormous quantity of background scholarship and parallel publications, a clear sense of its impact is unlikely to be possible for some years. Such is the range and depth of material generated by the Getty's investment, it's even likely that our understanding of Southern Californian art will at some point be measured in pre- and post-PST terms. Less optimistically, this one-off cash injection provides a unique opportunity for those institutions which otherwise pay scant attention to marginalized artists to organize something they'd never usually get past the board.

The umbrella title – 'Pacific Standard Time' – insinuates a geographical zone that stretches from Vancouver and Seattle to Tijuana, but the focus is almost exclusively on Southern California, with no more than a smattering of Bay Area art. Few people, if any, will be able to see all of these exhibitions, which are clustered in and around LA, but framed by a triangle of outliers a couple of hours' drive in each direction: down the coast to San Diego, north to Santa Barbara and as far inland as Palm Springs. Over the course of a week, I saw around 25 affiliated exhibitions. Aside from the flagship shows presented by the four lead institutions, these encompassed spaces as diverse as the Robert Venturi-designed Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MOCASD) and a middle school in Santa Monica, the tiny Craft and Folk Art Museum on Wilshire Boulevard and a lone mezzanine of the Natural History Museum. Exhibitions are

intensely varied in approach, including surveys of movements and tendencies – Light & Space and ceramics, as well as Chicano, African-American and feminist artists – and focuses on individuals as diverse as Sam Maloof and Wallace Berman, Fred Eversley and Barbara T. Smith. Others trace the history of specific sites, such as the Watts Towers Art Center, Pomona College, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions and ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives. Whether a greatest-hits show, like the Getty Center's flagship 'Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture, 1950–1970', or a tiny, gem-like archival offering such as 'She Accepts the Proposition: Six Women Gallerists, 1967–1977' at the Crossroads School, the shared 35-year period and SoCal vicinity links these island exhibitions into an archipelago.

Below: James Turrell
Stuck Red and Stuck Blue
 1970
 Construction materials
 and fluorescent lights
 Installation view
 Included in 'Phenomenal:
 California Light, Space,
 Surface' at the Museum
 of Contemporary Art
 San Diego

Right:
Ward Youry
Ceramic Group
 1950
 Glazed ceramics
 Dimensions variable
 Included in 'The
 House That Sam
 Built: Sam Maloof
 and Art in the
 Pomona Valley,
 1945–1985' at The
 Huntington Library

