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## 3 Jolting Pacific Standard Time Installations at LACMA



*Edward Kienholz's brutal "Five Car Stud" (Photo: Tom Vinetz)*

As the many-venued [Pacific Standard Time](#) retrospective continues to [focus global attention](#) on the independent trajectory of post-war Southern California art, we've been trying to catch as many of the exhibitions as our schedule and gas budget will allow. Our most recent drop-in was at [LACMA](#), where three

distinctive installations (all still on view for another few weeks) each stopped us in our tracks in a total of less than two hours.

Certainly the most shocking of the trio is [Edward Kienholz's](#) "Five Car Stud," constructed (though never previously exhibited) in Los Angeles and shown in Germany in 1972 before being stashed away in a Japan storage facility, where it had remained until now. Of course, it's not impossible to imagine why gallerists here or elsewhere declined the opportunity to transform their exhibition spaces into this walk-in civil rights horror scene. The installation offers unwitting viewers a veritable all-access pass to a nightmare, and arts patrons who take up the challenge might never be able to wander about the same room again without an involuntary flashback.

On a sandy-floored nighttime lunar landscape, presumably somewhere in the American South, five cars' headlights illuminate the central scene of several masked hillbillies castrating and preparing to lynch an African American victim. In one of the vehicles a woman reacts with revulsion to the event she is being forced to witness, while what appears to be a teenage boy stares transfixed at the unfolding violence from another.

Several of the sculptural elements we encounter in this installation would be powerful enough to merit an entirely independent viewing. But by allowing us to explore and to accumulate vantage points on our own, the work takes us right up to the edge of personal implication in the terrible unfolding event with which it surrounds us. It's as if the longer we stay and the more we watch, the more entrenched our presence on the scene becomes. We can even literally step back and observe the evil action from a safer, quiet distance rather than up close if we so choose. Before we know it, we're not merely looking at the crime being committed, we're proactively doing nothing about it.



*Maria Nordman's simultaneous double video with live chair*

A few steps around the corner and a world away from the Kienholz trauma, Maria Nordman's 1967 "Filmroom: Smoke" projects two simultaneously recorded short silent film clips of a pair of proto-hipsters mingling and smoking in a plastic-covered upholstered armchair on a Malibu beach. The two reels run side by side, separated by a wall jutting out between them, and the action in one precedes the other by a few seconds. The POV angles of the two shots is identical, though the flickering image on the left offers shifting

details and close-ups, while the film on the right maintains an unchanging wide-angle frame. The main difference is that the actual chair depicted in the film sits on the floor in front of the left-side film.

The real-life physical presence of the chair itself in this scenario, the fetishization of the actual object that serves as the film's primary prop, does feel very LA. And it's striking, too, to recognize how few--actually none--of the elements in these projected images looks or feels even slightly dated. This 44-year-old work could easily have been made last week.



*Still life with murals from LACMA's Sandra de la Loza installation*

In a different area of the LACMA compound, [Sandra de la Loza](#) "remixes" design fragments from forgotten decades-old LA wall murals in an astounding video project, wherein three Chicano subjects appear to use house painting brushes to cover their bodies in these rediscovered images. It's a radically inventive expansion of anyone's understanding of body art as well as a defiantly non-nostalgic reinvigoration of the almost-lost works of a vibrant but anonymous earlier generation of Los Angeles graphic artists.

"Edward Kienholz: Five Card Stud 1969-1972, Revisited" and "Maria Nordman Filmroom: Smoke, 1967-Present" on view at LACMA through January 15, 2012; "Mural Remix: Sandra de la Loza" through January 22.

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