

Los Angeles Times

Monday, Sep. 19, 2011
6:49 a.m. PDT

LADEALS.COM
Los Angeles Times

SIGN UP NOW

LOCAL U.S. WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT HEALTH LIVING TRAVEL OPINION DEALS

WEEKLY AD

BREAKING HOY CRIME OBITUARIES COMMUNITY WEATHER TRAFFIC CROSSWORDS COMICS DATA DESK APPS

IN THE NEWS: MICHAEL VICK | DRUG DEATHS | MILLIONAIRE TAX | RENO PLANE CRASH | MAYWEATHER-ORTIZ | EMMYS

LINCOLN VOLVO JAGUAR GALPIN PREMIER COLLECTION LOTUS ASTON MARTIN

800.GO.GALPIN THE WORLD'S BEST TEST DRIVE GALPIN.COM

Lesser-known artists are poised for a breakthrough

The Pacific Standard Time museum extravaganza will give some of the unsung heroes their due as well as their more celebrated colleagues.



Oscar Castillo, '47 Chevy in Wilmington, California, 1972. (Oscar Castillo, Fowler Museum / September 18, 2011)

L.A. Times on Facebook Like 121K

Sign Up Create an account or log in to see what your friends are recommending.

- Millionaire tax sought by Obama is panned by GOP as 'class warfare'**
244 people recommend this.
- Michael Vick injured in Eagles' 35-21 loss to the Falcons**

advertisement

Recommend 3 Share 111 Comments 3 Recommend 39

ALSO



About PST

By Jori Finkel, Los Angeles Times
September 18, 2011

Nobody thought a 12-sided geometric painting by a little-known artist could top a Hockney. The painting, "Vector," has languished in storage for at least 30 years. The painter, Ron Davis, has been living off the grid near Taos, N.M., for almost as long.

But when the curators of the Getty Museum's "Crosscurrents" exhibition first saw the work in a warehouse used for Tate museum storage outside of London, right after viewing one of David Hockney's greatest "splash" paintings, it was



Emmys 2011: Full coverage



L.A. pondering longer yellow lights



Michael Vick injured in Eagles' loss to the Falcons



Pacific Standard Time makes a bid for L.A. in art history



Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A., 1945-1980



'Pacific Standard Time': Exhibitions to keep an eye on



Pacific Standard Time: How L.A. artists took '60s scene by storm



Shining a light on Light and Space art

[See more stories »](#)

nonetheless arresting.

"It was a knockout moment," says Rani Singh, describing how Davis' dodecagonal painting (made of resin on fiberglass, not paint on canvas, in 1968) is shaped and colored in such a way that it seems to jut from the wall in three dimensions.

"It makes an enormous impact in your field of vision," adds her co-curator, Andrew Perchuk. "We knew instantly we wanted to borrow the piece."

Now part of "Crosscurrents," which opens Oct. 1, Ron Davis is one of the discoveries awaiting visitors to the museum extravaganza known as Pacific Standard Time. At its core, it consists of 60 exhibitions throughout Southern California exploring facets of the region's art history from 1945 to 1980.

As expected, the shows celebrate the lions of contemporary art here such as Hockney, John Baldessari and Ed Ruscha. But many say the initiative's real purpose was to supply much-needed historical context and to identify other regional artists worth greater consideration.

Some, like Davis, were lauded by art critics at one time but have since dropped out of sight. (In his case, psychiatric problems and his move to New Mexico played a role.) Others never got their due in the first place, perhaps because they were Chicano or African American and showed in community spaces instead of bigger galleries or museums.

"Ed Ruscha's stock will not lower because of this, and rightly so," says Chon Noriega, a Chicano art expert who has co-curated five shows under the Pacific Standard Time umbrella. "But the great thing is that there will also be a number of artists who receive some overdue critical attention."

So who are the breakthrough artists of Pacific Standard Time? Of course in time one could survey the next generation of curators, critics, academics and also collectors, who increasingly shape art history. But at this stage another tack is to ask some of the shows' curators themselves: Whose work felt like a discovery to you, and which artists do you think are ripe for reappraisal?

Noriega, who suspects most names in his shows are unknown to a broad audience, named Oscar Castillo, subject of a solo show at the Fowler Museum. As a photographer, Castillo did much to document the Chicano community in L.A. starting in the late 1960s. Noriega praises his ability to sidestep ethnic stereotypes and expose "contradictions apparent between aspirations and reality."

He also discussed Roberto Chavez and Dora De Larios from "Art Along the Hyphen" at the Autry National Center. Chavez, he says, "is someone who experimented in all styles — he's

extraordinarily prolific — but it's really his portraiture of Mexican Americans, family members and others, that stands out."

De Larios, the only sculptor in the Autry show, interests Noriega for her "lifelong attempt to integrate the deep history of two national art forms, Japanese and Mexican." He attributes it in part to her growing up in downtown Los Angeles among immigrants from both countries, until World War II internment policies ripped the community apart. "I think that through art she is trying to bring the



L.A. woman has state's longest tongue

LA DEALS



\$95 for 3 medi-spa treatments + \$50 gift certificate (\$545 value)

[Latest News](#) [Most Viewed](#) [Most Emailed](#)

Your commute: Live L.A. traffic conditions - L.A. Now *09/19/2011, 6:30 a.m.*

Canary Islands: Bicycle amid dunes, beaches and forests - latimes.com - Travel *09/19/2011, 5:30 a.m.*

Obama's urgent jobs plan: Right now, 'right now' means sometime next month maybe - Top of the Ticket *09/19/2011, 5:18 a.m.*

Los Angeles regional weather forecast - L.A. Now *09/19/2011, 5:00 a.m.*

Quake kills at least 40, injures hundreds in India, Nepal and Tibet - L.A. Times - World News *09/19/2011, 2:25 a.m.*

ADS BY GOOGLE

Ask Art Appraisers Online
An Art Appraiser Will Answer Now! Art Appraisals Today: 35
Appraisals.JustAnswer.com/Art

Oil Painting
Los Angeles oil painting studio. Beginner & advanced classes.
www.RaminfardArt.com

Art on NOWNESS
Read about the Current World of Art By Visiting NOWNESS.com Today!
www.Nowness.com/Art

community back together, and it's fascinating to see," Noriega said.

Davis, from the "Crosscurrents" show at the Getty, is poised to be one of the biggest comebacks for his "astonishing perceptual play," which points the way to Light and Space art, according to co-curator Perchuk. Davis' paintings will appear in a gallery along with Hockney, Ruscha, Sam Francis and Richard Diebenkorn. "We really feel like the work holds its own, and that's a pretty major statement," says Perchuk.

Perchuk also praised the early work of feminist legend Judy Chicago, who went to school to learn auto-body paint techniques to make her own contribution to the hot rod-inspired branch of California minimalism known as "finish fetish."

"I think the work she was doing in the 1960s, when she painted the [Corvair] car hood in our show, will be a real revelation to people who think of her explicitly sociopolitical work," he said.

Another name on Perchuk's list is the late Noah Purifoy, who led a group of artists in making assemblage out of charred railroad ties and other detritus of the Watts riots — "one of the great unsung projects of postwar Los Angeles."

Purifoy also figures in the Hammer show, "Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960-1980," which is rife with reappraisals. "I would say all of our artists are underappreciated in a way," offers the show's curator, art historian Kellie Jones.

There is one exception: David Hammons has become an art star for his socially loaded but intimate work using humble materials like margarine, cigarettes and his own hair. Jones says interviewing Hammons in the '80s led her to many other artists now in her show.

"He talked about an entire community of L.A. artists that basically supported him and gave him voice," she says. "David's phenomenal, don't get me wrong, but the isolated genius is not the story I want to tell. I want to tell the story of the whole community."

One section of her show focuses on local gallerists whom she considers strong artists in their own right. She calls Suzanne Jackson a "phenomenal painter ... whose paintings have the lyricism of Francesco Clemente and precede Clemente by a decade."

Jones also names Maren Hassinger and Senga Nengudi, who have large installations in the show. Hassinger used wire rope with some of the gnarly effects of Eva Hesse; Nengudi filled pantyhose with sand, making bulbous hangings that anticipated Ernesto Neto. Both artists, trained in dance, also found unconventional ways to bring performance into their work, and they often collaborated. According to Jones, "They are the bridge between the finish-fetish group and the post-minimalist artists we know about in L.A.," she says.

Finish-fetish work and its more expansive, ephemeral cousin Light and Space are the subjects of "Phenomenal," the new show at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. Museum Director Hugh Davies sees Doug Wheeler as one artist from the show poised for reappraisal.

He also names Mary Corse and Helen Pashgian as artists who have never gotten their due. "You don't have to be a psychiatrist to understand why," Davies says. "Much like New York minimalism, Light and Space here was a very macho movement too."

The San Diego show includes Corse's all-white canvases, which have glass micro-beads embedded in the acrylic paint to create a surface that shifts dramatically with the light. It also features examples of Pashgian's acrylic spheres — globes with an unreal glow, seemingly lighted from within. (Davies is not the only one betting on these artists: Pashgian just had a solo show in L.A. with Ace Gallery; Wheeler and Corse have shows coming up with David Zwirner in New York and White Cube in London, respectively.)

Karen Moss, a curator of the Orange County Museum of Art show on conceptual art, "State of Mind: New California Art circa 1970," says one of their biggest discoveries was Robert Kinmont. She says he has been off the art-world radar for years, partly because of his location in Sonoma ("State of Mind" is one of few Pacific Standard Time shows to include Northern California artists). But he has recently gained more attention, at least on the East Coast, through a 2009 show at the New York gallery

MARTIN

CADILLAC SAAB

PONTIAC

GMC

CADILLAC • SAAB
PONTIAC • GMC

2009
SAAB

9-5

12101 OLYMPIC BLVD.
LOS ANGELES
90064

CLICK HERE

Southern California Moments »



We'll highlight your best photos of the Southland. Above, SpongeBob legal woes. [Today's photo](#)

That's where Moss first saw his work, including a series of photographs from 1969 that show him holding a handstand in eight dramatic sites in the Sierra Nevada mountains, starting with the edge of a precipice. Moss and co-curator Connie Lewallen liked that image enough to make it the cover of their exhibition catalog.

"It felt right because the work is very much about the edginess, experimentation and also humor we associate with the period," says Moss. "He works the border between adventure and danger."

Moss also hopes the show will be an eye opener for people who think they know the work of Suzanne Lacy, an activist, community-oriented artist.

"People don't know about Suzanne's early performance work, her roots as a solo performance artist," says Moss. "They also don't know that she studied premed to become a doctor," she says, describing the theme of decomposition implicit in a 1973 work made of animal organs called "Lamb Construction" that is now being re-created.

MOCA's chief curator, Paul Schimmel, also chose Lacy, "an extraordinary artist who is right on the verge." In "Under the Big Black Sun," his sweeping survey about culture, politics and pluralism in the 1970s, he has included one of her public interventions: a map of Los Angeles, originally displayed near City Hall, on which she stenciled "RAPE" in red letters every time the crime was reported over three weeks in May 1977.

"It documents a sort of social atrocity in this very physical way," the curator says, suggesting that its blend of art and activism was ahead of its time. "I would be shocked if this piece [on loan from Lacy] doesn't end up in a major museum collection."

Schimmel also expects growing interest in Chauncey Hare — "not an artist I'd ever heard of before working on this show." Hare came to photography late in life after working as a research engineer for Standard Oil, and his tour de force shows workers in impersonal offices or cubicles variously enslaved by the greed and uniformity of corporate America. Schimmel calls it "a very powerful point of view, political but at the same time emotional." (Not much for art sales or even museum shows, Hare now offers his services in San Francisco as a therapist in the field of "work abuse.")

The curator's final pick was Bas Jan Ader, the Dutch-born L.A.-based conceptual artist presumed to have died in 1975 while trying, in the name of art, to complete a solo sail across the Atlantic in a 13-foot boat. The boat was recovered; his body was not.

Ader is now the subject of much art-world buzz, and Schimmel has a take on why. "I think we all want to believe that art is about miracles — feeling and seeing something beyond language and normal visual recognition, and we see that both in Bas Jan Ader's work and his biography."

Then, with the kind of comparison that can help to carve out space for lesser-known artists in the canon, Schimmel added, "Bas Jan Ader is to Conceptualism what Basquiat was to graffiti or Van Gogh was to neo-Impressionism."

jori.finkel@latimes.com

Copyright © 2011, Los Angeles Times

   10 [Share](#) 111 [Comments](#) 3 [Recommend](#) 39

« Previous Story

More Entertainment - entertainment, movies, tv, music, celebrity, Hollywood - latimes.com

Next Story »



Television review: "The Playboy Club"



Emmys 2011: PBS' 'Downton Abbey' steals awards thunder from HBO

MORE FROM THE TIMES

Eel enters man's penis in spa treatment, is surgically removed

FROM AROUND THE WEB

Living with Chronic Pain? Here's How to Get Relief | Lifescrypt.com