

Pacific Standard Time: UCLA turns back clock to birth of L.A. art scene

The story of how Los Angeles artist Johnny D. González helped launch a mural revolution in Los Angeles is a forgotten chapter in the history of Los Angeles art, but one that will come to light, thanks to the Getty Foundation's massive arts extravaganza, Pacific Standard Time, and UCLA's Fowler Museum where González's contributions will be highlighted.

Inspired by the Italian frescoes and classical art he saw on a European trip, the young advertising professional funneled his fervor in 1970 into a mural he designed, "The Birth of Our Art," that was displayed for nearly 11 years over the entrance of another product of his inspiration, the East L.A. School of Mexican American Fine Arts. He set out to create a mural that he hoped would convey cultural pride among Chicanos in East Los Angeles and turn the Latino enclave into a cultural tourist destination.

"We had never even heard the words 'Chicano mural' until we started doing our mural," recalled González, 68. "After that, murals just started snowballing."

González's untold story will unfold along with many others as part of [Pacific Standard Time: Art in Los Angeles 1945-1980 \(PST\)](#), a sweeping, region-wide arts initiative funded by \$10 million in grants from the Getty Foundation that kicks off officially in October. Over the next six months, more than 60 cultural institutions across Southern California will contribute to this expansive multicultural, multidimensional story about how Los Angeles became a major force for artistic innovation and social change over the course of 35 years.

Pacific Standard Time will encompass everything from L.A. Pop and Chicano art to Japanese-American design and modernist architecture through 129 exhibitions, gallery showings, films, performances, multimedia installations, programs and other events that will extend from San Diego to Santa Barbara and Palm Springs. Museums, art galleries, movie theaters, performance spaces and other venues will be offering what the Getty is calling a "must-be-there experience."

Going back in time

The genesis of Pacific Standard Time actually dates back to 2002 when the late Henry Hopkins, then director of UCLA's Hammer Museum, and Lyn Kienholz, director of the California/International Arts Foundation, approached Getty officials about their grave concern that art from the Los Angeles postwar era and subsequent decades was going to vanish as artists grew older and died and records were lost.

According to Joan Weinstein, deputy director of the Getty Foundation, the Getty then decided to set out to capture this period of art history that was at risk of fading into oblivion.



"The Birth of Our Art," designed by Johnny González, helped launch a mural movement in the Chicano art community in 1971.

“We became aware that much of the history was being lost and, as we gathered archival material, we began to understand what a huge impact this period had on contemporary art,” Weinstein said. “Los Angeles was the birthplace to a lot of important art movements including the Chicano, feminist, light and space, and assemblage art movements.”

Through a multicultural prism

UCLA’s museums, arts scholars and film archive have approached Pacific Standard Time from a multicultural perspective. The [Fowler Museum](#), with two exhibitions; the [Hammer Museum](#); and the [Film & Television Archive](#) will host PST exhibitions, lectures, symposia and a film retrospective. Chon Noriega, director of the [UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center](#) and a professor in the Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media, has joined two others, Terezita Romo and Pilar Tompkins Rivas, in curating five exhibitions, collectively called [L.A. Xicano](#), to explore the diverse artistic contributions of Mexican American and Chicano artists to American art and L.A.’s artistic development since 1945. The shows by these curators will be presented at the Fowler, the Autry National Center, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the UCLA Chicano Research Center Library.



Photographer Oscar Castillo focused on scenes from everyday barrio life. His "Shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe" will be featured in an exhibition at the Fowler Museum

“There have never before been so many concurrent exhibitions featuring or focusing on Chicano art,” said Noriega, author of a book on the rise of Chicano cinema and editor of nine books dealing with Latino media, performance and visual art. Altogether, Pacific Standard Time will include eight Chicano exhibitions.

Among the first to open PST exhibitions, the Fowler Museum, with support from the Chicano Studies Research Center, will debut “[Icons of the Invisible: Oscar Castillo](#)” on Sept. 25, lifting the curtain on rarely seen photographs taken by Castillo from 1969 to 1980. The photographer captured the Chicano experience in Los Angeles by looking at everyday barrio life, social movements, cultural heritage and the urban environment; his works bring to life major political events of that era as well as cultural practices and family life.

Then on Oct. 16, the Fowler will showcase González’s restored mural, along with those by others, including “Uprising of the Mujeres (Women)” by UCLA’s Professor of Art and Chicano Studies Judy Baca. “[Mapping Another L.A.: The Chicano Art Movement](#)” will immerse visitors in the Chicano Art Movement of the 1970s, beginning with the



"Roosevelt High School Walkouts," 1970, by Castillo.

establishment of the first Chicano art gallery in 1969 in East Los Angeles. Approaching art as a collective in the context of the Chicano civil rights movement, these artists explored the uncharted spaces between Mexican tradition, the Chicano vernacular and American modernism. Among the artists and collectives represented will be Asco, Los Dos Streetscapers, Self Help Graphics, David Botello, Barbara Carrasco and Harry Gamboa Jr.

In addition to these two Fowler exhibitions, Noriega also has co-curated two other Latino shows at the Autry National Center (“[Art Along the Hyphen: The Mexican-American Generation](#)”) and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (“[Mural Remix: Sandra de la Loza](#)”). Beginning Sept. 22, visitors to the Chicano Research Center Library will be able to see “[Chican@s Collect: The Duron Family Collection](#).”

A pivotal moment in African American art

A wide-ranging exhibition and film series at the Hammer will delve into developments in African American art and film during two important decades.



David Hammons' "American the Beautiful" at the Hammer Museum.

“[Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960-1980](#)” examines the incredibly vital but often overlooked legacy of Los Angeles’ African American visual artists with works taken from public and private collections from across the country. The exhibition, which runs from Oct. 2 through Jan. 8, includes early pieces by now well-established artists as well as works once considered “lost.”

The 1960s was a pivotal moment for black art in Los Angeles, said its curator, Kellie Jones, a Columbia University associate professor of art history and archaeology. In 1966, a year after the Watts riots, UCLA’s Dickson Art Center hosted one of the first major shows featuring black artists in Los Angeles.

“The exhibition was very important in terms of mainstream museums doing their part to support African American artists,” Jones said. Museums soon began to notice the flurry of activity by African American artists; not waiting for an invitation to exhibit, black artists themselves started to open their own art galleries around the city.

“African Americans were basically shut out of exhibitions until the 1960s,” Jones said. “What was so exciting ... was that there was so much art being created and so many artists being drawn to Los Angeles during that period.” But Jones noted that black artists weren’t working in a vacuum. In fact, there were many collaborations between African Americans and artists from other ethnic groups, a multicultural theme that the Hammer exhibition deftly explores.

Featured in the exhibition will be such prominent artists as Melvin Edwards, Charles White, Daniel LaRue Johnson – all of whom also exhibited at the 1966 UCLA exhibition – as well as Betye Saar, Fred Eversley, John Outterbridge and Maren Hassinger.

On Sunday, Nov. 13, the Hammer, along with the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA, will present “High Voltage: The Watts Legacy,” a discussion on the past and future of Watts as a creative hub. Participating will be moderator and director of the Bunche Center Darnell Hunt, and artists John Outterbridge, Edgar Arceneaux, Andrew Zermeno and collector Stan Sanders. It’s one of many conversations, poetry readings and other programs taking place at the Hammer.

A rebellion against Hollywood's black stereotypes



John-T. Riddle Jr.'s "Ghetto Merchant," part of "Now Dig This!"

From Oct. 7 to Dec. 17 at the Billy Wilder Theater, the UCLA Film & Television Archive will host a major film retrospective, “L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema,” which explores a key artistic movement led by a group of Los Angeles-based African American and African filmmakers. Collectively, they became known as the “L.A. Rebellion” or the “Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers.” And their careers began at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, where they met as students from the 1960s to the 1980s, recruited under a concerted effort to be more responsive to communities of color.

“Many of them felt the images produced by Hollywood then — and now — were very stereotypical and racist,” said Jan-Christopher Horak, the archive’s director who is co-editing a book on the



A scene from "Ashes and Embers" (1982), a film by UCLA alumnus Haile Gerima, who was part of a group of black film students known as the L.A. Rebellion.

movement. “They were attempting to produce a kind of film that was different and realistic.”

In the first sustained effort to forge an alternative black cinema movement in the U.S., the L.A.

Rebellion produced such moving films as “Bush Mama,” by Haile Gerima, that portrays the struggle of a single mother in South L.A. with authorities. A film included in the National Film Registry — “Daughters of the Dust” by Julie Dash — tells the unique story of an African-American community in the Gullah islands off the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia.

The film exhibition will include more than 50 film and video works, most that have never before screened theatrically and many that will be accompanied by discussions with the respective filmmakers. The most widely known filmmaker to come out of the L.A. Rebellion was Charles Burnett, who made “Killer of Sheep,” a stirring portrait of a factory worker living amidst the dusty lots, cramped houses and concrete jungle of Watts in South Los Angeles. Watch for it Saturday, Nov. 5, at 7:30 p.m.

The exhibition also will showcase the archive’s extensive efforts to conserve films from the L.A. Rebellion movement. With a planning grant from the Getty Foundation, the archive has filmed more than 20 oral histories from filmmakers and has restored some of their films to their full glory.

“Most of these films are not in distribution — they’re just not around,” Horak said. “It’s been an almost three-year process to find these films.”

Horak said he hopes that the exhibition, oral histories and film restorations will finally put the L.A. Rebellion movement “back on the map of film history.”

To find out about these exhibitions, go to the [Pacific Standard Time website](#).

To see a video about Pacific Standard Time, [go here](#).

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