

# LOS ANGELES 1955-1985

## The birth of an art capital

March 8 - July 17 2006  
Gallery 1A, 6<sup>th</sup> floor

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Working in factories

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## INTRODUCTION

In the exhibition **Los Angeles 1955-1985** the visitors will discover a surprisingly diverse art scene, although still not well-known, which evolved continually during the thirty years of this survey. The provincial art scene of the 1950's and 1960's gave birth to an international art capital, recognized since the eighties as an alternative to the New York art scene. The transformation of art forms and concepts and the emergence of innovative art movements were concurrent with the establishment of new art venues, museums and galleries, and the growing reputation of Southern California art schools.

The most significant expressions of this progression are presented in the 17 rooms of the exhibition with a selection of about 350 paintings, sculptures, installations, photos, films and videos. Following a chronological layout, the works are grouped by trends and movements. The exhibition starts with works from the 50's, when the art of **assemblage** reacted against the period's conformism in America. After that, several rooms are devoted to **L.A. Pop** from the 1960's, which examined the ordinary urban landscape. Then, the exhibition includes works representative of the **Finish Fetish** (California Minimalism) and **Light and Space** movements, which both included innovative materials and techniques in the late 1960's. This is followed by **Conceptual Art** and **Performance Art**, which explored new directions in the 1970's. The final rooms of the exhibition are devoted to the younger generation who came on the scene in the 1980's.

The exhibition follows the development of the art scene from its birth to its international recognition, introducing us to its major figures while also throwing light on a fertile and rich experimental milieu. Among the 85 Angeleno artists in **Los Angeles 1955-1985**, many enjoy an international reputation, like **John Baldessari, Allan Kaprow, Mike Kelley, Ed Kienholz, Paul McCarthy, Ed Ruscha, or James Turrell**. Several others, not yet as well-known in Europe, are presented for the first time in France.

The exhibition is complemented by a series of Los Angeles movies and videos, to be screened in the Centre's movie theaters, by panel discussions and by a display of James Turrell's *Alta White* at the Atelier Brancusi. The catalog accompanying the exhibition puts the art movements in their historical context.

#### LIST OF ARTISTS IN THE SHOW:

Bas Jan Ader	Jack Goldstein	John Outterbridge
Peter Alexander	Joe Goode	Raymond Pettibon
John Altoon	David Hammons	Lari Pittman
Kenneth Anger	Robert Heinecken	Kenneth Price
Eleanor Antin	George Herms	Stephen Prina
Steven Arnold	David Hockney	Charles Ray
ASCO (Harry	Dennis Hopper	Rachel Rosenthal
Gamboa, Jr.,	Douglas Huebler	Martha Rosler
Gronk, Willie	Robert Irwin	Nancy Rubins
Herrón, Patssi	Richard Jackson	Allen Ruppersberg
Valdez)	Larry Johnson	Ed Ruscha
Michael Asher	Allan Kaprow	Betye Saar
John Baldessari	Craig Kauffman	Miriam Schapiro
Larry Bell	Mike Kelley	Alan Sekula
Billy Al Bengston	Edward Kienholz	Jim Shaw
Ed Bereal	John Knight	Peter Shelton
Tony Berlant	Suzanne Lacy	Alexis Smith
Wallace Berman	David Lamelas	Barbara T. Smith
Jonathan Borofsky	Bill Leavitt	Edmund Teske
Nancy Buchanan	Paul McCarthy	Robert Therrien
Chris Burden	Allan McCollum	James Turrell
Vija Celmins	John McCracken	Jeffrey Vallance
Judy Chicago	John McLaughlin	Bill Viola
Guy de Cointet	Michael McMillen	James Welling
Richard	Susan Mogul	Christopher
Diebenkorn	Linda Montano	Williams
John Divola	Edward Moses	Bruce Yonemoto
Morgan Fisher	Matt Mullican	Norman Yonemoto
Judy Fiskin	Bruce Nauman	
Llyn Foulkes	Maria Nordman	
Sam Francis	Patrick O'Neill	

This document, written for high school students, aims to put the aesthetic influences and the works presented into their historical, geographic, socio-political and cultural context. Indeed the artistic movements and the works appear at precise moments in history and in particular circumstances that surround their elaboration. This is particularly true for a number of the works that reflected and responded to the situation in Los Angeles in the years 1955-1985. The visitor will thus be able to view the works with the relevant external factors that contributed to their creation. The themes in this document might interest students of the plastic arts and the history of art, of geography, English or American civilization.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1781** The Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles is founded in the Mexican territory by a group of colonists of Spanish, African and Mexican origin.
- 1846-48** Mexican American War. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo cedes California to the United States
- 1850** California admitted as 31st state of the Union.  
3530 people live in Los Angeles.
- 1955** Disneyland opens in Anaheim.  
*West Coast Jazz* is thriving.  
The exhibition "Action 1" shows the emergence of a Californian artistic avant-garde.
- 1957** Walter Hopps and Edward Kienholz found the Ferus Gallery, which promotes young local artists.  
Beat artists and poets move into the Venice Beach area.
- 1958** Beginning of Free Jazz with Ornette Coleman.
- 1959** The first Barbie doll is created in Los Angeles.  
The *Watts Towers* escape a demolition order.
- 1960** End of the "Hollywood Black List" established during the McCarthy anticommunist era.  
6 million people live in Los Angeles County.
- 1961** Surfing grows hugely popular. Debuts of the surf-rock group The Beach Boys.  
The exhibition "Objectmakers" introduces the California Assemblage movement.
- 1962** The exhibition "New Paintings of Common Objects" at the Pasadena Art Museum marks the rise of Pop Art.  
The Ferus Gallery organizes Andy Warhol's first solo show.  
Beginning of the minimalist style known as *L.A Look* or *Finish Fetish*.
- 1963** Los Angeles becomes "America's second art city", behind New York, for the number of galleries, artists and collectors.  
Walter Hopps presents Marcel Duchamp's first retrospective at the Pasadena Art Museum.
- 1965** The first museum entirely devoted to art opens in Los Angeles: the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).  
The magazine *Artforum* moves from San Francisco to Los Angeles for two years, before going to New York.  
The Watts uprising leaves 34 people dead and considerable damage in its wake.  
Charles Bukowski begins his famous column: « Notes of a Dirty Old Man » in an independent local daily newspaper.
- 1966** Debut of The Doors (Jim Morrison) and of The Mothers of Invention (Frank Zappa).  
Ronald Reagan elected governor of California.

- Los Angeles artists build the *Artists' Peace Tower* in Hollywood to protest against the war in Vietnam.
- Gemini G.E.L lithography workshop opens in Los Angeles, inviting East Coast as well as local artists.
- The emerging art schools attract thinkers and artists to the Los Angeles area.
- 1967** The LACMA launches the "Art & Technology" program (1967-1971).
- 1968** Large hippie gathering in Malibu.  
Emergence of the *Light & Space* movement.  
Writer Joan Didion is voted "Woman of the Year" by the California press.
- 1969** Release of the film *Easy Rider* which becomes a cult movie for its generation.  
A large oil spill in the Santa Barbara Channel ignites environmental activism.
- 1970** Opening of the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), which will have a growing influence on the art scene.  
Early development of Conceptual Art in Los Angeles.  
First official mural programs launched in the Los Angeles *barrios*.
- 1971** The Sylmar earthquake causes considerable damage.  
A new generation of artists creates a series of spectacular performances.
- 1972** Several Chicano artists' groups are formed.
- 1973** Los Angeles feminist artists open the Woman's Building.
- 1974** Artists open the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA), an alternate venue for performance and videos.
- 1977** A Punk scene takes root in Los Angeles, with resonance among artists.  
The artists-managed alternative venue, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), introduces a new generation of multidisciplinary artists.
- 1980** 8.8 million people live in Los Angeles County.
- 1981** Los Angeles bicentennial: new sky-scrapers built in Bunker Hill.
- 1982** Ridley Scott makes the futuristic film *Blade Runner*, set in Los Angeles.
- 1983** beginning of the construction of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), the first museum devoted to contemporary art in Los Angeles.  
Emergence of a new generation of artists influenced by performance and conceptual art.
- 1984** Los Angeles replaces Chicago as second largest American city.  
The Olympics take place in Los Angeles. *Olympic murals* are created along the city highways.
- 1985** Los Angeles County has 400 gangs comprising 4500 members.
- 2005** 17 million people live in the Los Angeles area.  
The main art museums in the Los Angeles area are: the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the J. Paul Getty Center, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), the UCLA Hammer Museum and the Norton Simon Museum (old Pasadena Art Museum).

## CRUISING LOS ANGELES

The *Los Angeles 1955-1985* exhibition takes into account the whole region around Los Angeles, which extends beyond the city itself. The exhibition covers the area basically known as Southern California (aka So Cal), i.e. from Los Angeles to San Diego (about 100 kilometers to the south).

→ **Look at a map** of Los Angeles County on the website of the San Gabriel Valley / Monrovia Transit Authority (public benefit agency): <http://sgvta.gov/maps/mapLACountyLarge.gif>

→ **Look at a map** of Southern California on the web site of the University of Texas: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united\\_states/california\\_south\\_90.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states/california_south_90.jpg)

"Los Angeles" is an evocative name, which will usually bring to people's mind dualistic notions about the city and Southern California. On the one hand, the region is believed to offer a pleasant and laid-back life style. This is the city of surfing and skate-boarding, of Disneyland, Hollywood and famous TV series, of high-living and new *California Cuisine*. Those are some of the clichés on the sunshine side of the coin – to quote the contrasting "light/dark" vocabulary often applied to the city, as in titles of art exhibitions like "Sunshine and Shadow : Recent Painting in Southern California" in 1985, and "Sunshine and Noir : Art in L.A. 1960-1997" in 1997. What might come to mind on the darker side are things like the long feared earthquake which will cause California to disappear forever in the Ocean; apocalyptical forest fires; deadly gang wars; bloody racial riots; police violence; and automobile congestion with its consequent pollution...

How could such a city – or its myth – not have become a major source of inspiration for artists, and not have a major influence on their art and work process?

## David Hockney

**David Hockney** (born 1937)

*Sunbather*, 1966\*

Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 183 cm

Museum Ludwig, Cologne. Donation Ludwig © Museum Ludwig/David Hockney

Many artists have represented the Los Angeles that they knew, saw or imagined, each with his/her own eyes and viewpoint. Some were born in the area, some came to study in the famous Los Angeles art schools and stayed for good, some were attracted by the myth, the surf and the sun. This is the case for the British painter **David Hockney**, who settled in Los Angeles in 1964, because, he said, "the climate is sunny, the people are less tense than in New York ... When I arrived I had no idea if there was any kind of artistic life there and that was the least of my worries."

Hockney was immediately taken by the light, the modernity, the artificiality of the metropolis which seemed to him like some tropical utopia. The city and its inhabitants became the subjects of his paintings, as if he were looking at an anonymous, distant, stage set. *California Art Collector* belongs to the first series he painted in California, as well as one of his first attempts with acrylic paint. It is also the first time he represented a swimming pool. In Los Angeles, Hockney had realized that everybody had a swimming pool, and that you could use it all year long – unlike in England! Thus, in 1964 he began the famous "Swimming Pools" series, searching different ways to depict the shifting aspect of the water in each painting. For example, the "op art" lines in *Sunbather* illustrate the hypnotic effect of the changing and shiny surface of the water in the sun.

David Hockney is usually classified as a Pop artist, along with **John Baldessari**, **Llyn Foulkes**, **Ed Ruscha**, **Vija Celmins** and **Joe Goode**, because he's interested in the prosaic and the aesthetics of popular culture. At some point in their career, these artist have all depicted the ordinary objects, signs or words, used the grid system or mechanical reproduction which typify Pop Art. Nevertheless, Los Angeles Pop Art is not quite the same as New York Pop Art, and none of these artists easily fits in the Pop mold.

## Ed Ruscha

**Edward Ruscha** (born 1937)  
*Back of Hollywood*, 1977  
Oil on canvas, 56 x 203 cm  
Musée d'art contemporain, Lyon  
© Edward Ruscha - © Photo Blaise Adilon

**Ed Ruscha** (pronounced "rewchay"), the archetypical Los Angeles Pop Artist, became famous in the 60's with his artist's books and his paintings of Los Angeles icons such as the Standard Oil gas stations, the Twentieth Century-Fox logo, or the famous "Hollywood" sign. In 1965, when the Museum had just opened and was the object of many criticisms, Ruscha added the LACMA to his inventory of commonplaces with a large oil painting entitled *The Los Angeles County Museum on Fire*. With the same irony that typifies many of his works, the artist painted the LACMA building with huge flames coming out of it. Was he hinting at the end of the museum authority, and of a certain idea of art? Or was he confronting high-art elitism to the social realities that caused riots, deaths, and fires in the Watts neighborhood in 1965?

Although the LACMA is very identifiable in the painting because of the architectural details, the painter doesn't allude to the city or the neighborhood of the museum, which he isolated on a background of unexpected color. This representation tends to give emphasis to the intrinsic characteristics of the painted subject, and thus stands apart from Pop Art which on the contrary would usually stress the prosaic and the humdrum.

When he painted a word, Ruscha proceeded in the same way, isolating it from any context in order to deactivate the meaning intrinsic to the written text itself. The word, depicted more as a portrait or a still-life of letters, takes on a physicality and a personality of its own, which the artist stages with humor. Letters will melt into liquids, burn in flames, be attacked by threatening clamps, or romantically unravel like ribbons... In this way, Ruscha painted hundreds of "portraits" of word or phrases spotted on Los Angeles highways, on the city's walls or in the movies.

**Edward Ruscha** (born 1937)  
*The Los Angeles County Museum on Fire*, 1965-1968\*  
Oil on canvas, 135,9 x 339,1 cm  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1972  
→ **See the image** on the website of the Hirshhorn Museum  
<http://hirshhorn.si.edu/collection/gallery/ruscha.html>  
→ **Look** at examples of Ruscha's word paintings on the website of the Traditional Fine Arts Organization (non-profit): <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/2aa/2aa51.htm>

Between 1963 and 1978, Ruscha also created several artist's books published in small numbers, with a collection of photographs of avenues, buildings, swimming pools, parking lots, and palm trees of Los Angeles. The photographs, assembled in the books without any narrative input or any apparent order of content or aesthetic value, systematically depict, for instance, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963), *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965), or *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1965) which is a very long and popular street running through the heart of Hollywood. For this particular book, each façade on the Sunset Strip was photographed using the automatic system of a camera set in the back of the car that Ruscha was driving up and down the street. Then, following the order of the street numbers, the artist methodically glued the photographs of the buildings on a long narrow sheet of paper folded in accordion fashion. When entirely unfolded the book measures 7.60 meters.

**Edward Ruscha**

*Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, Los Angeles, 1963\*

18 x 14,2 cm

→ **See the image** on the website of Media Art Net:

<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/assets/img/data/3428/full.jpg>

*Every Buildings on the Sunset Strip*, Los Angeles, 1966\*

Tiré à 1000 ex.

18 x 14,2 x 1 cm (folded), 760,7 cm (unfolded)

→ **See the image** on the website of Media Art

Net: <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/assets/img/data/3434/full.jpg>

→ **Visit the exhibition** "Ed Ruscha photographe" at the Musée du Jeu de Paume from January 31 to April 30 2006.

Ed Ruscha's books challenged the classic genre of the photo book in which, traditionally, aesthetic, composition, and originality were essential factors (*cf.* Walker Evans, Robert Frank). On the contrary, the most important characteristic of Ruscha's art, lies in the idea (or concept), bringing it closer to Conceptual Art which focuses on conveying an idea rather than on the creation of a beautiful art object. Ruscha's conceptual process and choice of ordinary subjects heralded Los Angeles Conceptual Art which would investigate this direction even further.

## John Baldessari

A key figure of 1970's Conceptual Art, **John Baldessari**, like Ruscha, was initially linked to the 1960's Pop Art movement, especially with his photo-texts series which made use of photography, text and imagery of nondescript urban landscapes, such as in *Econ-o-Wash, 14th and Highland, National City Calif.*

**John Baldessari** (born 1931)

*Econ-o-Wash, 14th and Highland, National City Calif.*, 1966-1968\*

Acrylic and photoemulsion on canvas

149.8 x 114.3 cm

Courtesy John Baldessari Studio

For this series of works from the 60's, the artists would take photos while driving, without trying to perfect the composition or the picture. He sought to fix images of ordinary places of which people took no notice. Baldessari flatly rendered the urban landscape. Here, the sky is grey; the building is not particularly attractive with its telephone pole and billboard. The photo itself is not pretending to be a model in any way. However, the artist transferred the image on canvas using a photo-emulsion technique, and added a title (in this case the building's address) in acrylic paint, thus blurring the line between photo and painting. In an interview, he explained: "The way I've been taught art was: art was painting, and painting was art. But after a while I began to think beyond that. I thought that I could be more into art than just painting and sculpture." And he added, not without irony: "I put those photographic pieces on canvas because it made them into art. If it's canvas, you don't even have to have anything on it and people still think it's art." This demonstrates how Baldessari shifted from Pop Art to Conceptual Art. The shift was patent when, in 1970 he decided to burn the paintings he made in the 60's.

Through his CalArts teaching, as well as his artwork, Baldessari would have a major influence on the Los Angeles Conceptual Art movement represented by artists such as **Bas**

**Jan Ader, Eleanor Antin, Michael Asher, Douglas Huebler, Mike Kelley, Allan Kaprow, Allan McCollum and Allen Ruppersberg.**

However, Baldessari is an exception in Los Angeles when it comes to his overt critique of the art world, art teaching and art making. Sometimes in his paintings he makes use of quotes borrowed from famous art critics such as Barbara Rose or Clement Greenberg. Unlike Baldessari, South California artists have generally shown little concern for aesthetic debates and theoretical issues.

## FREEDOM IN ART

**Because they didn't feel oppressed by the weight of history and tradition, Los Angeles artists were able to experiment without restraints with innovative materials and new means to create artworks whose intent was not to challenge or confront older models or art trends. Many California artists thus naturally turned their back on art rules and canons, on conventional art techniques and materials. Spontaneously, they found sources of inspiration in the popular culture, the hip sports, as well as in the handicrafts and technological innovations that comprised their ordinary surroundings.**

The distance from main art centers, inadequate fine art training until CalArts opened, a deficient local contemporary art market and art scene, and East Coast indifference for California art, were some of the factors allowing for emancipation, especially in the 50's and 60's. Since the critics' eyes were not turned towards California, artists could unselfconsciously conceive new art forms that flourished. The painter Lari Pittman summed it up thus: "I think here you can grow like a weed – with sweet neglect. That's really been part of the history of Los Angeles, thriving like a weed."

Several art movements, such as California Assemblage, L.A. Look or Finish Fetish, and Light and Space, grew out of that independence from academic art traditions.

## RUMMAGING THE DUMPS

⇒ **California Assemblage: Wallace Berman, Edward Kienholz, George Herms, Tony Berlant, Ed Boreal, Dennis Hopper, Nancy Rubins.**

California Assemblage spontaneously emerged in Los Angeles in the 50's with **Wallace Berman, Edward Kienholz** and **George Herms**, who created three-dimensional artworks by assembling ordinary objects, often discarded, which were not originally intended as art material.

### George Herms

For instance, **George Herms' *Librarian*** is composed of old books, a bell, a wooden stool and others unconventional materials retrieved from the trash – hence the term "junk sculpture" often applied to these California works. The *Librarian* is part of a series of anthropomorphic assemblages the artist made in homage to real people who left a mark in his life. This one is the portrait of the librarian who introduced him to books when he was a boy.



**George Herms** (born 1935)

*The Librarian*, 1960\*

Mixed-media assemblage: wood box, papers, brass bell, books, and painted stool

57 x 63 x 21 in. (144.8 x 160 x 53.3 cm)

Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena. Gift of Molly Barnes, 1969, P.1969.091

→ **See the image** on the Norton Simon Museum website:

<http://www.nortonsimon.org/collections/viewresult.asp?type=collection&x=16&q=Herms&y=5&resultnum=4&id=P%2E1969%2E091>

Free and plentiful in California (where good weather and ample space contribute to their conservation and storage), discarded objects enabled artists to produce all sorts of free associations, often poetic, playful, and esoteric. Until the early 60's California Assemblages displayed Surrealist overtones which, it could be said, materialized Lautréamont's famous quote: "*Beau comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie !*" ["Beautiful as the chance encounter on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella."] A literary reference is highly pertinent when talking about assemblage since the artists were very close to the Beat writers and poets such as **Allan Ginsberg** and **Jack Kerouac**, and they often made use of poetry verses, literary connotation, and play on words in the titles of their works. If the Beat movement took off in San Francisco, it rapidly reached Los Angeles, and, in the late 50's Venice Beach was home to a large Beat community where artists intermingled with jazz musicians and poets like **Stuart Perkoff** or **Philomene Long**.

→ **Visit** the American Museum of Beat Art (Non-Profit) website: <http://www.beatmuseum.org>

## Wallace Berman

**Wallace Berman** was certainly one of the key figures of this group, which he helped form, define and represent in his underground "magazine" called *Semina*. The home-made publication was conceived, assembled and distributed entirely by Berman himself between 1955 and 1964. With only nine issues each printed in small batches of 85 to 350 copies, the legendary magazine is now highly sought after.

*Semina* is difficult to categorize, as it is at the same time a home made publication, a collective artist's book, a literary anthology, a collage, a diary and mail art. *Semina* was usually not bound, and each issue comprised a collection of photos, collages, drawings, texts and poems printed on loose sheets of papers of different size and colors. **Antonin Artaud**, **Herman Hesse**, and **Jean Cocteau** were featured next to younger writers, friends of Berman, who would later become famous: **William Burroughs**, **Charles Bukowski**, **Allan Ginsberg**, **Michael McClure**, etc. *Semina* wasn't for sale; it was given away by the artist to selected recipients. Shunning the limelight, Berman remained little known by the public and the art world, but he had a tremendous influence on his entourage. That's certainly why he can be spotted on the sleeve of the Beatles' album *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, among other cult personalities of the 60's.

**Wallace Berman** (1926-1976)

*Semina*, 1955-1964\*

Home made magazine, 9 issues

→ **See an image** of *Semina 3* on the American Museum of Beat Art website:

<http://www.beatmuseum.org/berman/wallaceberman.html>

→ **See an image** of *Semina 4* on the San Francisco Center for the Book website:

<http://sfcb.org/revealing/semina.html>

## Sam Rodia

**Sam Rodia's** (1879-1965) monumental *Watts Towers* also had a major influence on the first generation of West Coast "assemblagists" who understood this masterpiece of **Outsider Art** (or Folk Art) as an archetypal assemblage. From 1921 to 1954, Sam Rodia had devoted himself completely to building the 30-meter-high towers, decorated with all sorts of colorful material and found objects. In 1959, the local and international art world reacted against an official demolition order and saved the towers by proving their incredible sturdiness with a stress test. The *Towers* were then preserved and restored, and finally re-opened for public visits in 2001. The *Watts Towers* are one of only nine works of folk art listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and one of only four US National Historic Landmarks in the city of Los Angeles.

→ Type "Watts Towers" in any search engine to see **online images** of the *Watts Towers*.

## Edward Kienholz

**Edward Kienholz** (1927-1994)

*While Visions of Sugar Plums Danced in their Heads*, 1964.

Installation with sound

180 x 360 x 270 cm

Coll. Centre Pompidou, Mnam

Achat de l'Etat 1971, attribution 1976. AM 1976-984

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In the early 60's, **Edward Kienholz's** famous "tableaux" changed the scale and the nature of found-object assemblages. Tableaux are human scale room-like installations in which the visitor could enter.

Often, the artist would recreate real places he knew, inhabited by characters made out of assemblages, furnished with second-hand furniture and found ordinary objects borrowed from real life. For example, in *While Visions of Sugar Plums Danced in their Heads*, the visitors can share the dreams of a couple lying in bed, and *Barney's Beanery* (1965) recreates with accurate details the eponymous Los Angeles bar where Kienholz and other artists used to hang-out in the 60's.

**Edward Kienholz**

*Barney's Beanery* 1965,

Mixed-media assemblage, 213,4 x 182,9 x 670,6 cm

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

→ **See the image** on the website of the Stedelijk Museum:

<http://www.stedelijk.nl/oc2/page.asp?pageid=518&url=/detectflash.asp>

## Nancy Rubins

With **Nancy Rubins**, assemblage reached colossal dimensions in the 1980's, when she started making sculptures based on the accumulation of dozens of large objects of similar types: discarded household items, junked mattresses, rusty hot water heaters, old dented trailers, or even smashed airplane parts collected in the desert! Held together by invisible welds and cables, her giant tangles, despite their terrific actual weight, seem to gracefully and miraculously cantilever in the air instead of looking grounded and heavy.

**Nancy Rubins** (born 1952)

*Chas' Stainless Steel, Mark Thompson's Airplane Parts, About 1,000 Pounds of Stainless Steel Wire, and Gagosian's Beverly Hills Space at MOCA*, 2001

Stainless steel and airplane parts 25 x 54 x 33 feet (7,6 x 16,45 x 10 m)

→ **See the image** on the website of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)

[http://www.moca.org/museum/pc\\_artwork\\_detail.php?acsnum=2002.2&sa=1280&](http://www.moca.org/museum/pc_artwork_detail.php?acsnum=2002.2&sa=1280&)

## TAKING ON SURFING

⇒ **L.A. Look or Finish Fetish: Billy Al Bengston, Craig Kauffman, John McCracken, Judy Chicago, Ken Price, Larry Bell, Peter Alexander.**

Whereas assemblagists found inspiration in the mainstream's margins, such as African-American jazz, Beat poetry, Outsider and Folk Art, and even in the detritus of consumer society, on the contrary one could argue, West Coast minimalists found theirs in modish hi-tech sports and leisure.

In the 60's, two activities were particularly in vogue among Southern California youth: hot rods or customized cars, and surfing. Both sports generated a popular fad and life style that, in their own creative way, artists also embraced.

In 1961, the newly-formed band **The Beach Boys** invented a music style called "surf-pop" with hit songs like *Surfin'* and many others in the same vein. The popular TV series *Gidget* and many other good and no-so-good movies also helped popularize surfing and the matching life style. Well in tune with the surf craze, the sculptor **Ken Price** had himself photographed balanced on a surf-board, and featured the photo in his *Ferus* exhibition poster announcement – a choice of image that might have shocked the New York art world! In the same way, Southern California had a passion for customized cars, quite understandably since cars and traffic dominate their life. Famous car customizers, like **George Barris**, **Ed « Big Daddy » Roth** and **Von Dutch** were respected like fine artists even though their works never entered museums – back then. Fascinated by the shapes and colors, the innovative techniques and the "free art" approach of the custom car designers, **Tom Wolfe** devoted an essay, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, to the so-called "Kustom Kulture" after his Los Angeles visit in 1963. In it, he compared customized cars to art objects and car workshops to art galleries.

→ **Listen** to *Surfin', Surfin' Safari, Surfer Girl* etc., by The Beach Boys and *Surf City* by Jan & Dean (Jan Berry and Dean Torrence)  
→ **Read** Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored-Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, 1963-1965  
→ **See images** of custom cars on the (commercial) websites of George Barris, Ed « Big Daddy » Roth and Von Dutch

## Billy Al Bengston

**Billy Al Bengston** (born 1934)

*Busby*, 1963\*

Oil, polymer and lacquer on masonite.

203,2 x 152,4 cm

Courtesy Chevron Gallery, Irvin, California

© Billy Al. Bengston

Wolfe and the sport devotees weren't the only ones appreciative of the unusual colors, of the new forms, of the new materials, of the iconoclastic approach of these creators. Reacting against the domineering Abstract Expressionism art trend, many Los Angeles artists sought a cooler, less personal and less passionate mode of expression. In the 60's, they begun using bright colors, highly reflective surfaces, simpler geometric shapes, and experimental methods borrowed from the vernacular surf and custom car cultures that they admired and were part of. **Judy Chicago**, for instance, wrestled with the sexism of this all-male milieu to learn spray gun-painting with a car customizer in order to make her own artwork in that fashion. **Billy Al Bengston**, a professional motorbike racer and mechanic, also experimented with car paints and synthetic lacquers on unconventional backings instead of oil on canvas.

Simultaneously, cutting-edge technology – especially in the aeronautic industry which had a strong hold in Los Angeles after WW2 – gave birth to new materials. Artists like **Craig Kauffman**, **Robert Irwin**, **John McCracken**, **Ken Price**, **Larry Bell** or **Peter Alexander** didn't hesitate to adopt these original supplies, and gave birth to a new art movement described as "L.A. Look" or "Finish Fetish".

"Finish Fetish" refers to the quasi-obsessive way in which artists polished their works' surface, which had to be flawlessly smooth and shiny to allow for light reflection. Although the simple abstract shapes of these works were comparable to the Minimalist works made in New York in the same period, the incongruous combination of bright colors in the Los Angeles pieces, such as in *Untitled Wall Relief* by **Kauffman**, as well as their glossiness, differentiate the two trends.

**Craig Kauffman** (born 1932)

*Untitled Wall Relief*, 1967\*

Acrylic lacquer on vacuum-formed Plexiglas, 52 1/2 x 78 1/4 x 12 in. (133.35 x 198.76 x 30.48 cm)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. Gift of the Kleiner Foundation, M.73.38.10

→ **See the image** on the website of the Los Angeles County Museum (LACMA)

<http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record&id=36070&type=101>

Because of these characteristics, the L.A. Look is often accused of being shallow, fake and garish, and thus of corrupting Minimalist purity. However, **McCracken's** boards made of polyester resin on fiberglass, while suggesting surfboards, also have such a solemn and immaculate look to them that it would be unjust to judge them lightly. By the same token, **Larry Bell's** vacuum coated glass cubes – which appear to levitate in the gallery space – or **Peter Alexander's** transparent resin columns – whose tip seem to reach into the sky – all

strongly suggest the quasi-metaphysical quests of the Los Angeles artists, even though they experimented with "improper" industrial materials traditionally thought of as unworthy for art making.

**John McCracken** (born 1934)

*Don't Tell Me When To Stop*, 1966-1967\*

Polyester resin, fiberglass and plywood, 104 x 18 x 3 in. (264.16 x 45.72 x 7.62 cm)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. Gift of the Kleiner Foundation, M.73.38.13

→ **See the image** on the LACMA website:

<http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record&id=36073&type=101>

**Larry Bell** (born 1939)

*Cube*, 1966\*

Vacuum coated glass, 12 1/8 x 12 1/8 x 12 1/8 in. (30.8 x 30.8 x 30.8 cm)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. Gift of the Frederick R. Weisman Company, M.82.112.2

→ **See the image** on the LACMA website:

<http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record&id=44055&type=101>

Los Angeles artists' interest in technological innovation would be confirmed with the *Art & Technology* program, launched by the LACMA, that gave them new means to develop their research.

## WORKING IN FACTORIES

⇒ **The Art & Technology program.**

(Although impossible to represent in the exhibition as such, this program was an important historical event for the Los Angeles art scene.)

**Maurice Tuchman**, curator of modern art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) introduced the Art and Technology (A&T) program in 1966, that is, one year after the museum's opening. The aim of the program was to promote fruitful creative interactions between artists and local cutting-edge companies. The program was officially launched in 1967 with forty businesses in partnership with seventy-six American, European and Californian artists including: **James Turrell, Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, Sam Francis, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol...** Some works produced in the program were presented at the American Pavilion during the 1970 Osaka World Exposition in Japan, and at the LACMA the following year.

**Claes Oldenburg** (born 1929)

*Giant Ice Bag*, 1969-1970

Fiber-reinforced polyester resin, lacquer, nylon impregnated with neoprene, and motor

Hight: 600 cm, diameter: 600 cm.

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne. Achat avec le soutien de la Clarence Westbury Foundation, 1999. Inv.: AM 1999-7

Each artist proposed to his partner an experimental project that was inspired by the materials, methods, technological advancements found in the company, who, in turn, assisted in materializing the project. The teams were supervised by LACMA staff and by outside scientific consultants, one of whom was the physics Nobel Prize winner **Richard Feynman**. He accompanied artists during the meetings with the engineers, and remembered with amusement some of the artists' candid questions and the extraordinary ideas they came

up with when struck by what they saw. Whereas some of the projects were impossible to realize, several were actually produced with materials, which, while available in industry, were still unheard of in the art world at the time, such as: lasers, luminescent fluids, holography, and computers. Among the most spectacular objects produced, one could list: **Robert Rauschenberg** and **Teledyne Industries'** *Mud-Muse* (a pool filled with gooey mud that bubbles to the sound of external noise) as well as **Claes Oldenburg's** *Giant Ice Bag*, manufactured by **Disney/WED**, which inflates and deflates like huge lungs thanks to a sophisticated hydraulic system.

## James Turrell and Robert Irwin

Other more abstract projects of Art & Technology didn't materialize into any actual objects. That is the case with the experiments conducted by two Los Angeles artists, **James Turrell** and **Robert Irwin**, the only artists who teamed up to pursue their research on perception conditioning. They collaborated with the psycho-physiologist **Ed Wortz**, who was then investigating the perceptual problems of space travel for NASA's Apollo program with the Garrett Corporation. The team conducted experiments in an anechoic chamber (a space void of sounds and other external interferences) in order to test states of consciousness derived by sensory stimulation. For example, to investigate optical illusions prompted by light, a blindfolded person would be exposed to stroboscopic flashes of colored light in the otherwise dark and silent room. Turrell was also interested in oriental meditation and Wortz was a West Coast pioneer in **biofeedback** (the study of the interaction between conscious mental control and unconscious bodily functions).

As a conscientious objector, Turrell enlisted for alternative service during the Vietnam War and, being trained as a pilot, flew monks out of Tibet. His interest in perception might have been triggered by the isolation and darkness he was forced to experience when he was in prison for having spoken against the war.

It must be said that California artists generally expressed more political concerns in their work than East Coast artists. In Los Angeles in particular, many artists reacted to contemporary events and uttered their points of view in their work, be it to protest U.S. military intervention in Vietnam, to point the finger at injustice, to defend the rights of workers or minority groups.

## ARTISTS IN RAGE

The thirty-years covered by the exhibition *Los Angeles 1955-1985* was a period of social and political upheaval in the United States: The Beats' anti-conformism of the late 50's was followed by that of the hippies in the 1960's; anti-Vietnam war protest in the late 60's gave way to minority groups activism in the 70s... California was a hotbed of many countercultural and radical groups, it is therefore not surprising that artists would echo or even promote these values in their art.

## ON WAR AGAINST THE WAR (VIETNAM)

### Important dates:

- 1956** First U.S. military advisors sent to Vietnam.
- 1960** John F. Kennedy elected president of the United States.
- 1963** Assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas.

- 1964** Gulf of Tonkin Incident (alleged attacks by North Vietnamese gunboats on two American destroyers). US government sends additional troops to Vietnam. Beginning of combat.
- 1965** A group of artist founds the *Artists' Protest Committee* in Los Angeles.
- 1966** Erection of the *Artists' Peace Tower* in Hollywood. Anti-war demonstrations.
- 1967** Massive anti-war demonstration for President L.B. Johnson's visit to Los Angeles.
- 1968** 500 000 American soldiers are fighting in Vietnam.  
Assassination of Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles.
- 1970** Anti-war demonstration in East L.A., confrontation with the police.
- 1972** Massive student demonstrations on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles following Richard Nixon's decision to bomb North Vietnam.
- 1973** Ceasefire agreement in Paris puts an end to the war, which killed 55 000 American soldiers and 2 million Vietnamese civilians. Last US troop pull-out of Vietnam in 1975.

→ **See photos** of the Vietnam anti-war demonstrations in Los Angeles on the website of the Los Angeles Public Library: <http://catalog1.lapl.org>  
SEARCH FOR: "Vietnam anti-war Protest Los Angeles" in "PHOTO COLLECTION" (in menu)

Unlike previous conflicts in which America was involved, the U.S. government didn't use much official propaganda to support the war in Vietnam. On the other hand, artists and students expressed their disagreement with their government's policy like never before in the history of the country. In Los Angeles, as early as 1965, **Irving Petlin** and other artists organized the Artists' Protest Committee, and the *Artists' Peace Tower* was raised in the heart of Hollywood in 1966, not far from major art galleries. The 18 meter-high metallic structure was designed by sculptor **Mark di Suvero**. Painted yellow and purple to attract attention, the Tower was surrounded by 418 works of art created and donated by artists from all over the world in support of this anti-war action. Among the contributors were: **Wallace Berman, Vija Celmins, César, Richard Diebenkorn, Sam Francis, Judy Chicago, Eva Hesse, Donald Judd, Roy Lichtenstein, Mattà, Robert Motherwell, Louise Nevelson, Claes Oldenburg, Bernard Rancillac, Ad Reinhardt, Larry Rivers, Jim Rosenquist, Mark Rothko, Betye Saar, George Segal, Frank Stella, Hervé Télémaque, Tom Wesselmann...**

→ **See photos** of the *Artists' Peace Tower* in Los Angeles on the website of the Los Angeles Public Library: <http://catalog1.lapl.org>  
SEARCH FOR: "Artists Peace Tower Los Angeles" in "PHOTO COLLECTION" (in menu)

While the United States is currently involved in another conflict, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York chose to recreate the 1966 Los Angeles *Artists' Peace Tower* on the occasion of its 2006 Biennale. As with the 1966 original, artists were contacted to contribute artwork in favor of peace which will be exhibited around the new Tower in the heart of New York. (See: [www.whitney.org](http://www.whitney.org))

## Robert Heinecken

Other Los Angeles artists also expressed their pacifist convictions and their discontent with the American policy in Vietnam, in works where violence and death, soldiers and weapons were clearly depicted to provoke the viewer's thoughts. Several installations by **Edward Kienholz**, paintings and drawings by **Vija Celmins**, or photomontages by **Martha Rosler** could be chosen as examples condemning the war in Vietnam, and by extension any armed

conflict. **Robert Heinecken's** modified magazine pages were certainly among the most effective. Called a "photographer" by a reviewer, since he uses photographs without using a camera to take photos, Heinecken alters the images he finds in popular magazines in order to convey a sharp critique about consumer society, sexuality or war.

**Robert Heinecken** (born 1931)

*Periodical #5*, 1971

Magazine page with offset lithographic overprinting, 11 3/16 in. x 8 1/8 in.

Princeton University Art Museum, Gift of Jerry N. Uelsmann

→ **See the image** on the website of the Museum of New Mexico:

<http://www.museumofnewmexico.org/mfa/ideaphotographic/cgi-bin/display.pl?heinecken.jpg>

In this 1971 series, the artist overprinted on a banal fashion-magazine illustration the horrifying photo of a soldier holding two freshly decapitated bloody heads. The two superimposed images clash violently and compel the onlookers to pay attention to what is going on, even though they might have preferred to look away and continue their life undisturbed, taking advantage of all the bounties offered by consumer society.

Antiwar protest was not the only topic championed in engaged art. Causes like the civil rights struggle, the Chicano labor movement, feminism, gay liberation, or environmental activism have produced significant works of art, especially in California. Furthermore, artists who belong to minority groups often explained that they felt a duty towards their community to create works with a political content. In that regard, Los Angeles African-American, Chicano and feminist artists were among the most dynamic in the country in the 1970's. They frequently used overt and provocative images to support their cause. As artists, they also had to fight the (largely white and male) traditional art world, which gave them little opportunity to exhibit and to sell their work.

## MINORITY GROUPS' STRUGGLE

⇒ **African-American artists: Betye Saar, John Outterbridge, David Hammons.**

### Important dates

**1955-56** Bus boycott by the African-American community in Montgomery, Alabama.

**1957** Jr. Martin Luther King founds the pacifist Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

School desegregation sets off the Little Rock Incident, Alabama.

**1960** First student sit-ins against segregation, Greensboro, North Carolina.

**1963** 250 000 join the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. King delivers his famous address: "I have a dream..."

**1964** President Johnson signs the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* prohibiting race and gender discrimination.

Martin Luther King is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

**1965** Assassination of Malcolm X in New York.

"Bloody Sunday" during the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

President Johnson issues Executive Order 11246 enforcing "affirmative action".

Riots break out in Watts, the Black section of Los Angeles. 34 people are killed.

**1966** The revolutionary Black Panther Party for Self-Defense is founded in San Francisco.

**1968** Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee.

**1969** African-American artists open several art galleries in Los Angeles to be able to exhibit their work.

**1973** First African-American mayor elected in Los Angeles.



→ **See** an illustrated timeline of the UFW and the Civil Rights struggles on the PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) website:  
<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/fightfields/timeline.html>  
→ **See photos** of the Watts riots in Los Angeles on the website of the Los Angeles Public Library:  
<http://catalog1.lapl.org>, SEARCH FOR: "Buildings on fire, Watts Riots" in "PHOTO COLLECTION" (in menu)  
→ **Read:** *A Journey into the Mind of Watts* by Thomas Pynchon, on the website of San Narciso Community College: <http://www.pynchon.pomona.edu/uncollected/watts.html>

**Betye Saar, John Outterbridge** and **David Hammons** can be included in the California Assemblage movement mentioned above, since, like George Herms or Edward Kienholz, they make works with found objects. However, the political content and identity statement constitute an essential component of their art. This is obvious in two emblematic pieces: *Injustice Case* by David Hammons and *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* by Betye Saar, who, as an African-American and woman artist, had to fight more than one battle.

## Betye Saar

**Betye Saar** (born 1926)  
*The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, 1972\*  
Mixed-media assemblage, 11.6 x 7.9 x 2.5 in., 29,8 x 20,3 x 6,9 cm  
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum. Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, 1972.84  
→ **See the image** on the website of the California/International Arts Foundation (non-profit)  
<http://www.netropolitan.org/saar/auntjemima.html>  
→ **See more works** by Betye Saar here: <http://www.netropolitan.org/saar/saarwork.html>

In this well-known piece in the United States, **Betye Saar** appropriated and revisited the stereotypical and demeaning image of a Black benign, jolly African-American nanny from the South. An emblem of American consumerism, Aunt Jemima is the commercial effigy used by a brand on their pancake syrup bottles and other products (equivalent to the imagery used by Banania in France). Provocatively adding a gun and a rifle in the Black woman's hand, the artist turned the easy-going smiling household servant into an utterly dangerous revolutionary, ready to defend her rights or even to attack to get the respect she deserves. *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* speaks for the emancipation of African-Americans, the right to self-defense wanted by the Black Panthers, and the liberation of women.

## David Hammons

**David Hammons** (born 1943)  
*Injustice Case*, 1970\*  
Body print (margarine and powdered pigments) and American flag  
63 x 40 1/2 in. (160.02 x 102.87 cm)  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. Museum Acquisition Fund, M.71.7  
→ **See the image** on the LACMA website:  
<http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record&id=30972&type=101>

*Injustice Case* is another work prompted by anger and protest. **David Hammons** was deeply affected by the humiliating treatment to which the defendant Bobby Seale (co-founder of the Black Panther Party) was submitted during the "Chicago Eight" trial (Oct-Nov 1969). The judge ordered that he be tied to his seat and gagged in the law court to prevent him from talking in his defense. David Hammons' *Injustice Case* is a "body print", created by first pressing the margarine-covered artist's body on a sheet of paper, which is sprinkled afterwards with black powder to reveal the impression. The viewer naturally feels empathy with the victim represented by the recognizable, full-scale human trace and is forced to identify with the figure in front of him. The sense of immediacy is amplified with the use of a real object in the piece: the frame is made of a real American flag, turned so that the vertical red and white lines seem like prison bars, confining the human silhouette. The artist points to the fact that all of the ideals of freedom, equality and "justice for all" that the Star-Spangled-Banner calls to mind, appear to be violated here.

⇒ **Chicano artists: ASCO**  
**(Harry Gamboa Jr., Gronk, Willie Herrón, Patssi Valdez)**

**Important dates:**

- 1962** César Chávez organizes the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) in California, future United Farm Workers (UFW).
- 1965** Beginning of the Delano grape strike and national boycott, to protest against the essentially Latino workers' conditions.  
 Beginning of "El Movimiento" (Chicano movement) and of Chicano political art and symbols (stylized black eagle) linked to "La Causa".  
 Luis Valdez creates El Teatro Campesino, a political theater.
- 1967** David Sánchez forms the Brown Berets, a self-defense group that supports Chicano community action, modeled on the Black Panthers.
- 1968** "Chicano Blow Out": massive student strike in Los Angeles Chicano high-schools to obtain better education for Chicanos.  
 The arrest of 4 Brown Berets members causes massive demonstrations in Los Angeles.  
 First *murals* by Chicano artists.
- 1969** The Mechicano Art Center opens, a venue for Los Angeles Chicano artists.  
 Proclamation of the Chicano revolutionary manifesto "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán."
- 1970** The journalist Rubén Salazar is killed by the police during the Chicano Moratorium, a demonstration against the war in Vietnam.  
 Chicano graffiti exhibition at Pomona College.  
 A group of feminist Chicanas forms the Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc.
- 1972** The Chicano artists' groups Los Four and ASCO are formed.
- 1974** First exhibitions of Chicano art in Los Angeles art institutions.  
 Beginning of the mural *Great Wall of Los Angeles*.
- 2000** 44,6% of the Los Angeles County population is of Latino descent.
- 2005** First Chicano mayor elected in Los Angeles.

→ **See photos** on the website of the Los Angeles Public Library: <http://catalog1.lapl.org>,  
 SEARCH FOR: "Civil rights movements California Los Angeles" in "PHOTO COLLECTION" (in menu)

*The Great Wall of Los Angeles*

The Chicano manifesto "**El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán**" included a section on the social role of Chicano activist artists, who should convey the Chicana culture and values in their artwork, collective art activities, and public show: "We must insure that our writers, poets, musicians, and artists produce literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture." The notion of an art at the service of a community and a revolutionary cause had been practiced by the Communist Mexican government in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with, among others, the mural projects of **Diego Rivera** or **David Alfaro Siqueiros**. In fact, both muralists came to work in California in the 30's. Siqueiros dedicated a mural, *Tropical America*, to the Mexican laborers of Los Angeles in 1932. The famous mural is now being restored after having been concealed for almost seventy years. In the same perspective of revolutionary art, several art exhibition and workshop venues opened for the Chicanos in Los Angeles in the 1970's. Silkscreen workshops created posters for the community's activities; large mural programs, like Judith Baca's *Great Wall of Los Angeles*, were implemented allowing the involvement of young people in a gratifying collective project – at the same time encouraging them to avoid gangs and promoting a sense of pride and belonging.

→See a virtual exhibition of UFW posters on the website of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics:

[http://www.politicalgraphics.org/cgi-bin/album.pl?photo=08viva\\_huelga/PG\\_02022.jpg](http://www.politicalgraphics.org/cgi-bin/album.pl?photo=08viva_huelga/PG_02022.jpg)

→See images of the *Great Wall of Los Angeles* and other murals on the SPARC website:

[http://www.sparcmurals.org/sparcone/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=52](http://www.sparcmurals.org/sparcone/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=52)

## Le groupe ASCO

### ASCO (Harry Gamboa Jr., Gronk, Willie Herrón, Patssi Valdez)

*Instant Mural*, 1974\*

Performance documented by a color photograph by Harry Gamboa, Jr.

Courtesy © Harry Gamboa Jr.

On the contrary, **Harry Gamboa Jr.**, **Gronk**, **Willie Herrón**, and **Patssi Valdez** wanted to break away from the traditional Chicano art forms, media (painting, sculpture, silkscreen, murals) and nationalist symbolism used by other artists. To signify this, without ever rejecting their Chicano original culture, the group chose to be called "**asco**," a Spanish word meaning "**nausea**". The group ASCO didn't produce art objects *per se*, preferring performances, full of black humor, often carried out in the streets in the Los Angeles *barrios*.

For instance, with the performance entitled *Instant Mural*, the four artists poked fun at a classic mural by taping themselves to a wall in an imitation of a live wall painting. Or, with *Spray Paint LACMA* they emulated long-established gang-like graffiti, "signing" their names on the LACMA walls in order to point their fingers to the absence of Chicano artists in art institutions – and thus becoming the first ones to exhibit their "work" in the museum!

In the performances of the *No-Movies* series, they create fake film stills of non-existing movies to fight demeaning Hollywood Chicano stereotypes. Fashion, religion, the war in Vietnam, institutions, the army are some of the subject matters explored by ASCO in collective works until 1975, and more occasionally in the ensuing ten years.

## FEMINIST ART

⇒ **Feminist Artists: Eleanor Antin, Judy Chicago, Susanne Lacy, Linda Montano, Rachel Rosenthal, Martha Rosler, Moira Roth, Miriam Schapiro, Faith Wilding.**

**Important dates:**

- 1911** California women win full voting rights.  
**1920** All American women win full voting rights.
- 1960** First birth control pill commercialized in the United States.  
**1963** Publication of *The Feminist Mystique* by Betty Friedan.  
**1964** President Johnson signs the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* which outlaws discrimination on the basis of gender.  
**1966** NOW (National Organization for Women) is founded in Washington D.C.  
**1969** Publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book by and for Women*, incorporating medical information with personal experiences.  
**1970** Several feminist organizations are formed in California, such as: Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional (Chicana group) and Black Women Organized for Action. Publication of *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet. San Diego State College in California establishes the first official, integrated women's studies program. Judy Chicago establishes the first university feminist art studies program at Fresno State College, California.  
**1971** Publication of Linda Nochlin's essay "Why have there been no great women artists"? Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago establish a feminist art studies program at CalArts in Los Angeles.  
**1972** The United States Senate passes the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment), affirming the equal application of the U.S. Constitution to both females and males. *Womanhouse* opens in Los Angeles. The exhibition "Four Los Angeles Artists" presents 4 woman artists.  
**1973** Abortion is legalized in the United States. The Woman's Building, an exhibition and feminist art teaching venue, including the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW), opens in Los Angeles. The First West Coast Conference for Woman Artists takes place at CalArts.  
**1974** Judy Chicago and a group of women begin *The Dinner Party*.  
**1977** The historical exhibition "Women Artists: 1550-1950" opens at the LACMA.  
**1979** *The Dinner Party* is exhibited in San Francisco.

As this brief chronology demonstrates, Los Angeles was at the forefront of feminist art theories and teaching. First, the university studies program initiated by Judy Chicago was established at CalArts in 1971. Then, in 1971-72, about twenty CalArts woman artists took over an abandoned building and created a series of installations entitled *Womanhouse*. Each of the rooms was devoted to a topic relating to a woman's life and circumstances. There were, among others: *The Dollhouse*, *Menstruation Bathroom*, *Lipstick Bathroom* and *Nurturant Kitchen*, which celebrated the woman's experience but denounced the restricted, exclusively domestic place of women in society. The Woman's Building, including the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW), opened in 1973 in Los Angeles giving woman artists a venue where to learn, exhibit, and practice several art disciplines. For about twenty years, the Woman's Building hosted exhibitions, events and activities which emphasized collective art work and performances based on women's personal history and presented with a sociopolitical perspective. Performances carried out at the Woman's Building by artists such as **Eleanor Antin, Judy Chicago, Suzanne Lacy, Linda Montano, Martha Rosler, Moira Roth, Miriam Schapiro, Faith Wilding** had a considerable impact on Performance Art in Los Angeles.

→ See images on the Woman's Building website: <http://www.womansbuilding.org>  
→ See images of *Womanhouse* on the website of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD): <http://aal.ucsd.edu/reserves/art40192/chicago/index.html>  
→ Read *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* by Judy Chicago

Finally, *The Dinner Party*, created in Los Angeles by **Judy Chicago** and hundreds of other artists between 1974 and 1979, constitutes a legendary feminist work of art of the 1970's. (Because of the monumental size of the whole piece, only one element of *The Dinner Party* could be exhibited in "Los Angeles 1955-1985")

## Judy Chicago

*The Dinner Party* pays homage to 1038 real and mythological women whose accomplished lives deserve a place, with that of men's, in the history of humanity. *The Dinner Party* represents a ceremonial banquet, laid on a triangular table, for 39 guests of honor (three times the number in the *Last Supper*). Each setting comprises a tablecloth embroidered with the guest's name (Sappho, Artemisia Gentileschi, Virginia Woolf, Georgia O'Keefe, etc.), a golden chalice, silverware and a painted porcelain plate suggesting female genitalia. The names of the other 999 women were painted in gold letters on the 2300 white floor tiles. Historically, *The Dinner Party* is an important work of art for several reasons. Firstly, it was the first monumental work of art conceived by women to celebrate women's achievements. Secondly, the imagery of the female genitalia overtly represented here was a challenge and a precedent in the androcentric fine-arts world of the time. Finally, it re-established so-called feminine crafts (needlework, ceramics, porcelain painting...) to the rank of fine arts worthy of being exhibited and included in a work of art. When *The Dinner Party* was shown for the first time at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1979, it attracted a record number of visitors. Belonging today to the collection of the Brooklyn Museum, the piece is considered a major work whose "historic and social significance is greater than its aesthetic value."

### **Judy Chicago et al.**

*The Dinner Party*, 1974-1979

Mixed-media, ceramic and textile. 1436 x 1280 x 91,4 cm, (48' x 42' x 3').

The Brooklyn Museum, New York

→ See the image on the website of the City College of San Francisco:

<http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jcarpent/images/Art%20103%20Slide%20List%206/chicago01.jpg>

By the same token, it would be difficult to appreciate **Edward Kienholz's** *Illegal Operation* (1962) solely on its aesthetic value, because the piece is so emotionally stirring. Ten years before the feminist art movement bloomed in Los Angeles, Kienholz already addressed the polemical topic of back-alley abortion with a large assemblage work in which pathos replaces poetry. This is increased by the unequivocal title and the use of real objects which leave no escape route for the visitor's imagination. The subject of the piece is perfectly clear; distress and disgust are evident. An old shopping cart serves as the "operating" table, a shaky lamp as the surgical light, rusty tools and a bucket full of soiled rags suggest the unutterable. A punctured sack of concrete evokes the violated, wounded woman's body. The work is conceived to stir the viewers' feelings.

With these large, raw and brutal assemblages, Kienholz pointed his outraged finger at some of society's most appalling anomalies. Regrettably inspired by a real event, *Five Car Studs*

(1969), for instance, replicated the horror and cruelty of a racist lynching perpetrated by a group of white men.

Without fitting in the category of engaged art proper – since the artist doesn't overtly take side or defend a specific political cause – Kienholz' work is heavy with moral implications, which contribute to raise the viewers' consciousness. A new generation of Los Angeles artists would take on a similar position of social commentator and critic to develop a more political reflection at the turn of the 80's.

## SOCIAL COMMENTARY

⇒ **Jim Shaw, Raymond Pettibon, Larry Johnson, Jeffrey Vallance, Stephen Prina, Christopher Williams**

**Jim Shaw, Raymond Pettibon** and **Larry Johnson** engaged in a critique of consumer society by appropriating the language and images of the media. They were heavily influenced by popular culture and by the punk rock scene that developed in Los Angeles around bands such as **X, Germ, Fear, Catholic Discipline** and **Black Flag**. The latter was launched by the guitarist **Greg Ginn**, brother of the artist Raymond (Ginn) Pettibon who created the group's logo and illustrated their albums, as well as those of other Los Angeles punk rock bands.

### Raymond Pettibon

**Raymond Pettibon** makes paintings and figurative drawings in black ink, usually including words, which address underlying social issues in a humorous tone because, he says, he "doesn't think there is subject matter to consider too important to use humor with." Pettibon's goal is not, however, to "make fun of someone just for the sake of going for some cheap laugh," as he explained in an interview, but to find satirical subject matter in all areas of popular culture. Inspired by cartoons, by police movies and detective novels, as well as by TV series, his drawings will repeatedly represent Richard Nixon or Ronald Reagan, Charles Manson or Patty Hearst (Tania), baseball players or surfers, trains or ships, Vavoom (from *Felix the Cat*) or Gumby, Jesus Christ or Elvis Presley... Generally clashing with the drawings, the texts written in capital letters and sometimes revised by the artist, are borrowed from a large selection of different authors, such as: Ruskin, Henry James, Mickey Spillane, Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett, Fernando Pessoa, and William Blake, and also from the Bible. Polemical or intimate, funny or dreadful, Pettibon's drawings speak of the human condition from all points of views.

### Jeffrey Vallance

**Jeffrey Vallance** (born 1955)

*Blinky's Coffin*, 1989\*

Coffin, plastic chicken, paper towel. 57,7 x 68,5 x 43,1 cm

Collection Barry Sloane

Using a different mode of expression, **Jeffrey Vallance** also privileges satire to critique social behaviors. This is obvious in one of his most famous performances: *Blinky the Friendly Hen, dedicated to the billions of hens sacrificed each year for our consumption*.

In April 1978 Jeffrey Vallance bought a frozen chicken in a supermarket, named it Blinky, and ordered a funeral service for it in the Los Angeles Pet Cemetery, complete with a light blue coffin lined with pink satin, candles, flowers, and grave marker. When Blinky started to defrost, Vallance placed it on a paper towel, which kept its imprinted mark. During the

ceremony, a well-intended cemetery mortician asked the artist how his pet died. The naive question planted a seed in his mind and prompted a continuation of the chicken's saga. In 1988, tenth anniversary of Blinky's death, the artist had the fowl exhumed and its remains autopsied with the appropriate legal, medical and scientific procedures to find out the cause of death. The 1988 part of the performance was video-documented by the artist's friends, **Bruce and Norman Yonemoto**. Vallance had also documented the burial ceremony by means of photos which compose an artist's book. Other elements were also carefully kept, such as the flowers, candles, casket, paper towel which became known as the *Shroud of Turin (from Blinky, The Friendly Hen)*, autopsy report, and exhumed bones which are preserved in an antique reliquary.

Through this tragi-comical performance, at the same time kitsch and disturbing, absurd and mordant, Vallance investigated grave topics by revisiting the legal formalities, religious ritual, folklore and fetishism of modern society, in a meditation on "the cold reality of all death."

## ART AS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**It is often said that some stories can't be told, but that one needs to live them to benefit from the experience. It is the same with art, which sometimes requires to be lived as a direct experience, by the viewer or the artist, in order to take form and be appreciated.**

## CHALLENGING THE SENSES

⇒ **The *Light & Space* movement: James Turrell, Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, Maria Nordman**

As was mentioned above (§ 2), Los Angeles artists found materials of all kinds and from all walks of life to make art with. They could be commonplace, industrial, concrete supplies, or immaterial substances like the light used by the **Light and Space** artists. These artists drew inspiration from multiple sources and fields of studies as well, such as the aeronautic industry, astronomy and physiology, alchemy, phenomenology and oriental meditation. Deserting traditional or Minimalist sculpture that is linked to the production and contemplation of actual physical objects, the Light & Space artists crafted intangible works of art with light. The nature of the works is suitably described in the title of the exhibition which introduced the emerging movement in 1971: "Transparency, Reflection, Light, Space." With sophisticated techniques and different materials, they built environments which defied the senses and the perception of the viewers. The *in-situ*, temporary installations were usually created for a specific space and duration, and they tend to be difficult to capture in photos. The main *Light & Space* artists were Doug Wheeler, Maria Nordman, Robert Irwin and James Turrell.

## James Turrell

### James Turrell

*Alta (White)*, 1967 *Projection Piece Series*, 1967

Xenon light projection

Don de la Clarence Westbury Foundation, 2005. AM 2005-131

© James Turrell

**James Turrell** utilizes light as his main art material, but he insists on the fact that his work concerns human perception. Light surrounds us all the time and we aren't conscious of it, so

the artist uses it as a means to concretely "show" light to us, that is to say, to make us aware of its existence by challenging the perception we have of it. With the *Projections Pieces*, Turrell gave form to three-dimensional shapes made out of light, it could be said that he materialized optical illusions. In installations such as *Alta (White)*, there are no physical objects, painting or sculpture, nevertheless, the viewers can make out a geometrical-shaped volume, white or colored, floating or on the ground. The impression of a solid 3-D volume is in fact obtained by a sophisticated system of light projections which are combined to cast a form in the gallery space.

→ See *Alta (White)* at the Atelier Brancusi, Centre Pompidou, from March 8 to September 25, 2006:

<http://www.centrepompidou.fr/Pompidou/Manifs.nsf/AllExpositions/7792152EAF7A385C125709900303B18?OpenDocument&sessionM=2.2.2&L=1>

In the same manner, Turrell's *Shallow Spaces Constructions* challenge the viewer's perception, but instead of attracting the eye by a form, as in the *Projections Pieces*, they totally submerge the visitors in a colored atmosphere, as in *Raemar Blue*. Turrell finds inspiration in some of the visual experiences he had as a plane pilot, as he explained in an interview: "As you fly, you do see space that is determined not so much by physical confines, but by atmospheric and light phenomena within the space. [...] And so for me, sitting up there in this cockpit, I've seen so many things that reminded me of this other way of seeing, where light is the material and this makes the space." In *Raemar Blue*, the blue light radiates from fluorescent tubes placed behind a partition that seems to float at the back of the room. The light in Turrell's pieces modifies the space perceived by the visitors. In this way, the artist induces a state of auto-reflection in the viewers who become aware of their perception, of the way they look at things. They become conscious of the act of seeing, and of their relationship to the world's physical reality.

## Robert Irwin

**Robert Irwin** (born 1928)

*Untitled*, 1967-1968\*

Acrylic on Plexiglas disc, 62,5 x 137,5 cm

Achat 1981. M. Richard Francis, California. Inv.: AM 1981-254

**Robert Irwin** shares with Turrell an interest in human perception. For him, a new art must come with a new manner of looking at art. The successive stages of his work – from the *Late Lines* (1962-1964) and the *Dots* (1964-1967) to the *Discs* – engaged in a progressive reflection on human visual perception. Influenced first by Abstract Expressionism, Robert Irwin embarked on a succession of radical reductions that put into question the artist's gesture, painting, and the art object itself. Little by little, Irwin managed to blur the contours of the painting so that it absorbed the space around it and was in turn absorbed. Abandoning painting altogether in 1967, he developed the *Discs* which create a play of light and shadow on a circular surface, and seem to dematerialize the work of art by abolishing the boundaries between wall, object and light. Irwin's works point out and make the viewers aware of the difference between perception and the act of seeing: we are made to see things that don't exist and not see others that are real.

## Michael Asher

With a different approach, the conceptual artist **Michael Asher** doesn't use or craft art objects either. Instead, he slightly transforms an exhibition space in order to cause a direct



experience for the visitors and their awareness of the ambient physical space they are in. In the exhibition **Los Angeles 1955-1985**, the visitors can thus go through an air column located in room n°8, *Air Works*, which is part of a late-60's series based on air flow. (It is impossible to show an image of this immaterial work).

The air – an invisible element introduced by the artist in the museum where vision often remains crucial – provokes a slight sensation, the feeling of an insubstantial presence which prompts the visitors to become aware of their own physical reality in the space thus altered. Michael Asher is one of the pioneers of **Contextual Art** (site-specific art), intervening to change concrete features of the exhibition space. The existing environment of the exhibition space, museum or gallery is the material he alters to create works of art. As other conceptual artists, Asher believes that an art object has no universal meaning and that the institution conditions the way we see art.

## BEYOND LIMITS

### ⇒ Performance Art: Chris Burden, Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley

Unlike *in-situ* works mentioned above, which proposed a direct perceptual experience for the viewers, in performances, the artist him/herself carries out a live action which he/she presents as the art work to the audience. Although often performed in front of a live audience (more or less involved and numerous), art performances diverge from theater because they are done by artists with a background in visual arts rather than theater or dance, are original, and are not staged like a play with actors acting in a dramatic plot.

Los Angeles Performance Art has a history whose roots can be found in **Rachel Rosenthal's** Instant Theater started in 1956, in **Allan Kaprow's** happenings such as *Fluids* (1967), in the hippies' Be-ins of the late 60's, and perhaps above all in the *events* performed by feminist artists at the Woman's Building, which often included autobiographical elements and spontaneous actions based on self-examination.

In **Chris Burden's**, **Paul McCarthy's** or **Mike Kelley's** performances, the artist's body was the subject and the material with which they worked. Chris Burden, for instance, submitted himself to dangerous acts which entailed genuine risks for the artist. Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley transgressed all social taboos by performing acts of absurd, provocative, pornographic, scatological, or shocking nature.

### Chris Burden

**Chris Burden** lead the way in provocative performances with a series of actions that deal with violence, danger, pain, and the artist's vulnerability. In 1971, for *Shoot*, he asked a friend to shoot at him with a rifle; the bullet hit him in the left arm. For *Five Day Locker Piece* he crammed himself for five consecutive days in a cubicle measuring 2 x 2 x 3 feet (61 x 61 x 91 cm). In 1973, he crawled, shirtless, in front of a few passers-by on 50 feet of broken glass with his hands held behind his back (*Through the Night Softly*). For *Trans-Fixed*, 1974, he was actually crucified on the back of a Volkswagen: nails were driven through his palms into the roof of the car. The car was pushed out of the garage into the street for two minutes with the motor revving at full speed as if screaming for him.

The artist explained that being crucified on the "car of the people" was meant to liberate himself as well as others. With these actions, Burden sought to demystify pain, violence, and fear by making them familiar and knowable, both for himself and for the audience. This was also a way for the artist to regain the control of his body from the power of social order and politics which render it impotent.

Burden systematically kept records of his first performances with photos, short descriptive texts, and "relics," such as the lock that closed the locker and the nails of the crucifixion, both shown in the exhibition.

Like Burden, other performance artists wanted to get away from the pure form of conceptual and minimalist performances (by Kaprow for example) to explore the darker areas of social and personal inhibitions. Performances by Chris Burden, by Mike Kelley, and, above all, by Paul McCarthy, evoke Edward Kienholz' large tableaux, in which the artist would copiously smear the objects with shellac varnish to increase the gloomy quality of the depicted scenes.

## Paul McCarthy

In the middle of the 70's, **Paul McCarthy's** performances took on a new direction. Stopping the dangerous and private actions of the beginnings, he started a series of performances, carried out in front of a small crowd, in which he would smear his body with ketchup, mayonnaise, hand cream, and other such substances recalling bodily fluids like blood or semen. He also made use of suggestive objects – meat and sausages, masks and outfits of popular characters – that incited the improvised performances, often obscene in content. Always riding the edge between the aptly critical and the politically incorrect, McCarthy pushed the boundaries of performance into outrageous farce, absurdist expressionism, and grotesque exaggeration. By doing so, he caricatured society's violence and brutality and defied societal taboos, values, and order. Although they evoke semen and blood, McCarthy's mayonnaise and ketchup never pretend to be anything but food stuffs, and his props are always unequivocally shown for what they are. Notwithstanding, degradation, humiliation, and revulsion are components of the artist's work – even if to denounce them – and his performances often feel profoundly disturbing and shocking. For instance, *Sailor's Meat*, one of the first performances to use food, finds McCarthy dressed in a blonde wig and woman's underwear simulating sex with a piece of meat in a cheap hotel room.

In 1972, in a conceptual performance entitled *Carving A Traditional Sculpture*, **Eleanor Antin** also use her body as material for a "traditional sculpture" (a female nude) to critique aesthetic canons and art conventions. She deprived herself of food for several weeks, and regularly took photos of herself naked to record the physical transformations of her body. The work comprised the performance itself (momentary) and of the 120 photos that were taken during its duration.

→ See the image of *Carving* on the website of Mount Holyoke College:  
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/awlee/art242/feministphotographers/image1.html>

In all of the performances mentioned above, the separation between art and life is patent. Even when the artists are physically involved, the viewers are still aware of their role as spectators and do not directly participate. Other artists, on the contrary, sought to glorify ordinary events in order to explore the boundary between art and life.

## PRAISING THE ORDINARY

Several Los Angeles artists chose to praise the ordinary and to tell stories built around the mundane and the banal. One of them is **Eleanor Antin**, who elaborated the strange saga of a hundred big black rubber boots, who go to church, take the ferry, throw a party, go on a vacation, face the sea, turn the corner, enter the museum... The artist related their various everyday activities over the course of two years (1971-73) on fifty-one postcards sent by mail

to a thousand people around the world as a sort of "unannounced, unasked for pictorial novel" that "came in the middle of people's lives." Another artist who likes to create stories is **Michael McMillen**. With the most ordinary objects brought to the LACMA, he recreated an ideal, timeless "Garage", inspired by a dream or a childhood memory, where the most extraordinary inventions seem in the making (*Central Meridian (The Garage)*, 1981).

→ See images of *100 Boots* on the PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) website:

[http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antin/art\\_boots.html](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antin/art_boots.html)

→ See an image of *Central Meridian (The Garage)* on the LACMA website:

<http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcqi/mweb.exe?request=record&id=70545&type=101>

## Allen Ruppersberg

While McMillen built a "Garage" in a gallery space at the LACMA, **Allen Ruppersberg** sought to get away from the artist studio and conventional exhibition space and was interested in art forms that could escape trends and traditions. *Al's Café* reconciled fine art and popular art, public space and private space, ordinary objects and art objects, the city and nature, the myth and the everyday.

In 1969, Ruppersberg opened *Al's Café*, perhaps recalling the installation *Barney's Beanery* by Edward Kienholz who, in 1965, had recreated this popular Los Angeles artists' hang-out. Ruppersberg' *Café* didn't look like a work of art that's meant to be exhibited but was a hybrid belonging both to art and to life. As the artist explained in an interview, having noticed the lack of meeting places for artists in Los Angeles, he set out to provide a place where people could gather together and talk. At the same time, he was "attempting to introduce an audience to a social reality, rather than the context of the gallery – switching contexts without anyone knowing it."

So, the *Café* functioned like a bona fide eating place, every Thursday nights from eight to eleven, where Ruppersberg's friends, artists, members of the Los Angeles art world people, and others would get together. The place had been meticulously decorated in a non-descript style that didn't suggest any particular time period – as if the *Café*, albeit temporary, had always existed and had evolved in the course of time. The *Café* represented a standard American diner, where customers feel comfortable. But strangeness was also part of the scene at *Al's* since the menu offered surprising "dishes", put together by Ruppersberg himself and brought to the table by a "beautiful waitress." You could order some *Toast and Leaves*, a *Desert Plate and Purple Glass* or *Simulated Burned Pine Needles à la Johnny Cash, Served with a Live Fern*. "From salad to desert, *Al's Cafe* mediated nature into sculpture, brought the forest and the desert to your table," recalls a patron.

This was a time when Land Art, Earth Art, and other *in situ* art trends were developing, as well as an interest for so-called "primitive" rituals borrowed from ancient cultures, or, as already mentioned above, transgressive or even regressive performances. Whereas many artists looked for sources in nature, primitivism, a "pure" past, or the repressed, Ruppersberg, on the contrary, reproduced the simple act of sharing a meal in a classic American diner. He wished to remind us of the significance of everyday rituals, of ordinary events in the construction of a particular individual culture.

Sophie Dannenmüller

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- *Shotgun Freeway, Drives through Lost L.A.*, produced and directed by **Morgan Neville and Harry Pallenberg**, Photo: David Morrison, King Pictures. DVD.

These documentary movies can be watched on monitors in the exhibition space, as well as in a movie theater as part of the film program (see schedule).

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## AROUND THE EXHIBITION *LOS ANGELES 1955-1985*

- **James Turrell at the Atelier Brancusi:** exhibition of *Alta (white)*, 1967.  
8 mars – 25 septembre 2006, 2-6 PM.
- **Imaginer Los Angeles** : film program.  
Cinéma 1 and cinéma 2. 22 March to 23 April 2006
- **Cycle de rencontres : Autour de Los Angeles** [Series of discussions about Los Angeles]  
8 March – 1 June 2006  
<http://www.centrepompidou.fr/Pompidou/Manifs.nsf/AllExpositions/7D29ACCEA81305BBC1257073002CE208?OpenDocument&sessionM=2.1.2&L=1&form=Prochainement>

\* Artwork featured in the exhibition.

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