



**CASTELLO DI RIVOLI**

Piazza Mafalda di Savoia, 10098 Rivoli (Torino)

tel. 011.9587256/9581547 fax 011.9561141/9563915

## **PRESS RELEASE**

***Sunshine & Noir. Art in Los Angeles 1960-1997.***

**Opening: Friday, 8 May, 1998**

This exhibition was organized by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark

**Curated by Lars Nittve**

**Dates: 9 May - 23 August, 1998**

People generally think that New York is the only influential center for contemporary art in United States, underestimating the creative climate of the West Coast, which has made great cultural contributions, and not only in the narrowly defined realm of the visual arts. This exhibition, which has already traveled to the Louisiana Museum in Humlebaek (Denmark) and the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (Germany), will come to the Castello di Rivoli before its final stop at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, UCLA, Los Angeles (USA). This survey show includes over one hundred thirty works, including paintings, videos, and installations by some fifty artists who have been involved in the latest movements in American art.

The artists represented in the exhibition are:

Laura Aguilar, John Altoon, Michael Asher, John Baldessari, Larry Bell, Billy Al Bengston, Tony Berlant, Wallace Berman, Chris Burden, Vija Celmins, Richard Diebenkorn, Kim Dingle, Llyn Foulkes, Sam Francis, Joe Goode, David Hammons, George Herms, David Hockney, Dennis Hopper, Robert Irwin, Jim Isermann, Larry Johnson, Craig Kauffman, Mike Kelley, Edward Kienholz, Paul McCarthy, John McCracken, John McLaughlin, Ed Moses, Bruce Nauman, Catherine Opie, Jennifer Pastor, Raymond Pettibon, Lari Pittman, Ken Price, Stephen Prina, Charles Ray, Jason Rhoades, Nancy Rubins, Allen Ruppersberg, Edward Ruscha, Jim Shaw, Alexis Smith, Diana Thater, Robert Therrien, James Turrell, Bill Viola, Doug Wheeler, Christopher Williams.

"What does L.A. art most resemble?" Lars Nittve has written (Megalopolis/Exopolis/Cosmopolis/Eteropolis). "Perhaps, putting it most simply, the city itself, that is, its heterogeneous and multi-dimensional being, simultaneously invasive and evasive..."



Piazza Mafalda di Savoia, 10098 Rivoli (Torino)  
tel. 011. 9587256/9581547 fax 011.9561141/9563915

**PRESS RELEASE**

**EXHIBITION** **SUNSHINE & NOIR**  
**ART IN LOS ANGELES 1960-1997**

**CURATOR** LARS NITTVÉ

**PRESS OFFICE** MASSIMO MELOTTI

**DATES** 9 MAY - 23 AUGUST 1998

**MUSEUM HOURS** FROM TUESDAY TO FRIDAY 10 am-5pm  
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 10am-7pm  
FIRST AND THIRD  
THURSDAY OF THE MONTH 10am-10pm  
CLOSED ON MONDAY

**EXHIBITION SITE** CASTELLO DI RIVOLI  
MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA  
PIAZZA MAFALDA DI SAVOIA  
10098 RIVOLI (TORINO)

THIS EXHIBITION WAS ORGANIZED BY THE LOUISIANA MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, DENMARK

LARS NITTVE

# Sunshine & Noir

7

The evening flight from northern Europe crosses the sterile and concrete-encased Los Angeles River just as the dried-out riverbed disappears in the shadows made by the setting sun. As the 747 glides slowly over "gangland," Compton, and Watts, the city is transformed into a surface of lights flickering in unison, punctuated only by the spotlights of some police helicopters, the flames of the oil refineries at El Segundo, and the festive play of searchlights against the sky at some gala premiere way up in Hollywood. What at first glance looks like a gigantic flickering microchip soon turns out to be a seemingly endless flow of red and white. Cars surf the undulating surfaces of the freeways, passing under and over each other in a complex choreography, only to turn off suddenly at an exit and "go surface" – glide into the endless maze of Los Angeles's avenues and boulevards.

These frozen minutes, as sunshine turns into darkness, already raise the perennial question about L.A.: utopia or dystopia? *Sunshine* or *Noir*?

"Helltown" or Eden? That was the question here as early as the second half of the nineteenth century, when galloping murder statistics and rampant racism failed to sully the marketers' promise of orange groves, ocean, and clear blue desert sky. This promise attracted small farmers, teachers, and office assistants from the Midwest in such numbers that the population of Los Angeles increased fifteenfold within a couple of decades. Starting from the car park that, almost too symbolically, marks the location of the original Mexican settlement of 1780, *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles de Porciuncula*, the megalopolis today known as Los Angeles, stretches almost sixty miles in every direction. More than fifteen million people live in more than 160 separate communities in five counties. Helltown or Eden? *Sunshine* or *Noir*? That remains the question. But these black-and-white dichotomies offered no answers then – nor do they today.

Not just built but seemingly formed, from the very

moment of Creation, to be seen as a projection on the windshield, Los Angeles is the capital of visuality. To the west, the ocean; to the north and east, the Santa Monica Mountains and the Hollywood Hills. Together with the city's wide-screen billboards, enormous array of signs, flamboyant commercial buildings, and an endless steppe of houses, these create a continuous flow of almost hallucinatory palm-edged vistas. A perfectly ordinary day in the life of a curator has him moving from the beach community of Santa Monica to the rattlesnakes, avocados, and hibernating hippies up in Topanga Canyon, then down to the vast boulevards of the Valley, edged with condos and with a Blockbuster Video and a Pizza Hut every five blocks. Then on to verdant and cultured Pasadena and its ultrasophisticated Arts and Crafts houses; and to Downtown, with its improbable mixture of sun-baked bank and culture complexes and its mishmash of urban slums, perhaps arriving there via a detour through Rosemead, for many years a rather prosperous community dominated by Mexican working men and now a community executing a multicultural Mexican-Chinese-Korean balancing act. From *Baywatch* to upscale hippies to the bedroom community to end all bedroom communities to a paradise of turn-of-the-century millionaires to *Bladerunner* via Ethni-city: the clichés are piled on top of one another. And there's nothing false about them. They are confirmed with every step you take in Los Angeles, yet they move on the dazzling surface of the city, surfing the freeways or "going surface" on the grid of visuality.

L.A. is the city of healthy digestive tracts, silicon implants, and flat stomachs. It is a city built from the very beginning as an artificial oasis, taking its water from distant valleys through 400 miles of aqueducts. In fenced-in areas like Universal City Walk, where the visitor is treated to a sternly defended, sterilized compression of Melrose Avenue, Venice, Downtown, and the Sunset Strip, it is now also a simulation of itself. But Los Angeles is also one of the largest industrial cities in the world, even apart from the entertainment industry – or *The Industry*, as it is

# Megapolis

3

SUNSHINE & NOIR

simply known. Since the decline in the city's production of steel, glass, and rubber, and the downswing in the defense industry, two sectors have come to dominate Los Angeles, each in its own way extremely flexible, and each centrifugally scattered in what has become a totally new kind of urban model: Exopolis, a city turned inside out. One is a craft-based activity in textiles, furniture, leather, and jewelry, sometimes perilously close to the sweatshop; the other remains the aircraft and electronics industry. There *is*, in other words, a life beyond that which we call Hollywood. A real life, I almost added, naively – but L.A. obviously managed to deconstruct the opposition between fact and fiction long ago. Universal City's *City Walk* is of course every bit as real as Pasadena or East L.A. And as always in L.A., the answer to the question of what constitutes Helltown and what Eden will vary according to the perspective. Thus Los Angeles's long prohibition of labor unions during the first half of this century – the so-called open-shop policy – led to a situation in which more blacks had access to well-paid industrial jobs than anywhere else in America.

Neither *Sunshine* nor *Noir* can be taken singly, then; both appear as paradoxical nuclei of this city without a center. "Gangland" is dominated by working families. The city of smog and environmental destruction is also home to one of the most advanced ecological programs in the world. This "scamscape" of real estate speculation can still offer nature that can only be described as sublime.

Megalopolis and Exopolis, L.A. is also Cosmopolis and Heteropolis. Between 1970 and 1990 this white Protestant bastion was transformed into what some see as a part of the Third World. Twenty years ago the city was over 70 percent Anglo; today it is over 60 percent non-Anglo. After 150 years, Los Angeles has reverted to being a Latin or even a Mexican city. At the same time, the Asian population has grown to outnumber the African-American one. From this perspective, our flickering grid has become a cluster of ethni-cities: little Hong Kongs,

Saigons, Bombays, Beiruts, São Paulos, Medellín. There is of course an old Chinatown, a large Korean town, a Little Tokyo, and beyond them, around them, and between them, the Mexican *barrio*. A long tradition of racism, xenophobia, and ethnic tension casts a dark shadow here – from the brutal Chinese massacre in "Nigger Alley" downtown in 1871, via the Zoot Suit riots in 1943, the internment of 30,000 Japanese during World War II, the Watts riots in 1965, and the rioting that followed the police assault on Rodney King in 1992. On the other hand, in the ethnic and cultural diversity of this Heteropolis lies the key to a new Californian Golden Age. For as Salman Rushdie says in one of my favorite quotations, here is an outlet for the creativity contained in "new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs... hybridity, impurity, intermingling"; a creativity that "rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Mélange, hotch-potch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world."

The art of L.A. (*Megalopolis/Exopolis/Cosmopolis/Heteropolis*) – what does it look like? Well, to put it simply: maybe like the city itself, i.e., heterogeneous, multidimensional, insistent, and evasive at the same time. In other words: hard to put into words. But how is it compared with New York, with its established art market, its art magazines, its collectors, its museums, and its ability to make the Los Angeles art world feel provincial? This is actually a rather bizarre notion, since Los Angeles – through Hollywood – has been the undisputed cultural capital of the Western world for decades. I would even venture to claim that nowhere in the world could you find as many creative people in any one place as in L.A., and that no other city's cultural products have been as widely disseminated, or have had such an impact on our view of the world.

But to resort to clichés (always useful in discussions of Los Angeles), it may be no coincidence that while several of New York's leading artists of the '60s generation started out by making their livings as guards at the Museum of Modern Art, their L.A. colleagues could be found lifeguarding on Venice Beach: MoMA versus *Baywatch*. Or else the New York artist may have worked for an art-handling firm, while the L.A. artist made stage sets and special-effects gear for Hollywood. Life in Los Angeles is just fundamentally different from life in New York. It isn't only the switch from a dense, vertical city to the horizontality and expanse of Exopolis. It isn't only a matter of climate, or of the daily dose of privacy that an Angeleno gets in traversing the city by car, or of Los Angeles's extreme segregation – strangely abstract when seen through the windshield – as opposed to the melting pot you see exemplified in the New York subway. Living and working in New York's SoHo, being able to take in ten or more exhibitions in an hour, maybe bumping into a half dozen other artists, dealers, and perhaps a critic on the way to Dean & DeLuca – all this must have an impact on an artist's life. There is an intense exposure to new art, a pervasive sense of being part of a strong system – and how different must this be from the life

of an artist in Los Angeles, where you are probably half an hour or more away from your nearest colleague, and a tour of the city's ten foremost galleries takes almost a day. It's no coincidence, I think, that New York is a city of team sports, Los Angeles a city of individual sports. And I also don't think it's a coincidence that the categories constructed by the New York art world for grouping or keeping track of forms of art – categories like "Minimalism," for example, or "Pop" – are actually fully functional, while similar attempts in Los Angeles – "Light and Space," say, or "Finish Fetish" – have never really worked as cohesive or explanatory concepts. Los Angeles art seems to evade all attempts at categorization, instead cultivating individualism and impurity – a position that now, at the end of the millennium, suddenly seems almost the only viable one.

At this time of dissolution between center and periphery, it is interesting to note that besides Los Angeles, the creative center that has made at least some sort of mark for itself is London. Two cities, so different yet so alike – both are mass-producers of mass culture, and both stayed more or less isolated from historical modernism in the visual arts. Both have relatively few collectors and a network of galleries that is quite small and unstable in relation to their size and wealth. In both cities, furthermore, art schools play a central role, with young artists often defining themselves in terms of the school they attend or teach at. This is especially important in Los Angeles, where many of the best-known artists are on the staffs of the best-known art schools: UCLA, Otis, CalArts, and Art Center College of Design. In New York, by contrast, artists tend to identify themselves by the gallery that represents them, and they stop teaching as soon as their careers allow. There are probably a number of reasons for this difference in Los Angeles: many say that the city's art schools offer some of few natural places for artists to meet. For a few days a week there, you can meet artists from different generations, teachers as well as students. Others argue that L.A.'s traditionally weak support structure for artists inspires a feeling that no matter how well anchored the rug, it may all of a sudden be pulled out from under you; hence the desire for the sense of security that teaching offers.

It is probably self-evident that the light and the vastness of the Pacific Coast, possibly coupled with the sense of being detached from the cultural heritage of Europe, have had an impact on artists such as James Turrell, Robert Irwin, and Doug Wheeler. In addition, many have spoken of the importance of L.A.'s motorcycle and hot-rod culture to the generation of artists that emerged there in the '60s. The importance of Hollywood, the backdrop to everything that happens in L.A., must likewise not be underestimated, nor must that of the automobile and the freeways. These kinds of examples of the place's specificity abound, but they tend to degenerate into truisms. If you ask an artist working in Los Angeles why he or she has chosen to be there, you are often told, "This is a good place to work" – and maybe it's just that simple. It is comparatively easy to find good studios in Los Angeles, living costs are relatively low, the climate is pleasant, and there is peace and quiet.

The *Sunshine & Noir* project had its starting point in a mixture of fascination and discomfort. Fascination – or at least deep interest – came first. Having grown up with Minimalism and Pop art, with New York as my mecca and *Artforum* as its holy text, I nevertheless discovered that my interest was often piqued by artists who didn't quite "fit." It might be Turrell or it might be Ed Ruscha, it might be Bruce Nauman or John Baldessari or later, in the '80s, Chris Burden, Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley, or Charles Ray. I would see their shows in Europe or in New York, and it often took a while before I realized that their work actually sprang out of a totally different world. And I eventually realized that my ignorance was far from isolated; I would venture to say, in fact, that in Europe it was the rule rather than the exception. It is not hard to see why. The decades-long dominance of New York on the so-called international art scene has meant that almost all Europeans, when they think about American art, think about New York art. Furthermore, it is usually the large New York galleries that export American art.

My discomfort grew out of my first trip to Los Angeles, in the early '80s. After a few days in a city that exceeded my wildest expectations – which it did – I realized that I had missed essential aspects of works that I had thought I knew well. I don't want to imply that there are interpretations of a work of art that are wrong; that would presuppose a "correct" way of viewing it, something no even remotely enlightened person would be foolhardy enough to assert today. But hand-in-hand with this awareness of the fundamental openness of any work of art goes an awareness of the importance of context. Just as the way we experience and interpret an artwork is affected by knowing whether the artist is a man or a woman, and twenty-five or seventy-five years old, so knowing the context within which the work was created – physical as well as cultural – obviously has an important impact on what we see.

Out of this intermingled fascination and discomfort,

# Exopolis

# Heteropolis

along with the knowledge that no comprehensive historical exhibition on Los Angeles art, and no book on the subject, had been attempted since Peter Plagens's heroic *Sunshine Muse* of 1974, sprang the idea of an exhibition that would try to reconstruct for a European public some of the artistic contexts that some of the artists they know call home. The decision to put together an exhibition about the art of a specific city as seen from a European perspective meant I had to break with two firm principles that I had tried to follow in earlier shows: first, I had felt that in this era of mass communication and migration, geography is not a particularly meaningful criterion for grouping artists in an exhibition, and besides, the world has already had too many chauvinist exhibitions with names like "Twelve Swedes," or "New York Art Now." Second, I had tried to maintain a multicultural perspective, since I am convinced that some of the most important things in contemporary art have grown out of multicultural encounters, hybrids, and cross-couplings, and that we therefore have to pay special attention to what is produced on the peripheries of the areas that usually find themselves in the spotlight of the West's art systems.

The first of these principles was easier to abandon than the second. But if *Sunshine & Noir* was not to become yet another of those failed L.A. exhibitions I had heard about – failed simply because, in their eagerness to become "totally representative," they grew too large – it was important to hold on to my original idea of constructing a picture of a unique artistic environment, using artists known in Europe as my departure point. To Ed Kienholz I would add Wallace Berman and Georg Herms, for example, or Joe Goode and Billy Al Bengston to Ruscha. Earlier in this essay, I wrote that the art of L.A. resembles the city itself; this is also true of the way the art is spread out into separate systems or networks, with little communication between them. Anglo painters and sculptors, for example, even the most conceptual of them, may have been part of a loose network that was tied to the commercial galleries

and to the major museums; this network was largely isolated from the lively performance and video scene that was centered around the two poles of CalArts and the Long Beach Museum of Arts in the late '60s and '70s. Thus it was that Allen Ruppersberg and Paul McCarthy – two artists who had been active in the same city for several decades, and who had been working with related phenomena – did not actually meet until the early '90s, primarily because they had been working in different media. The African-American, Asian-American, and Chicano networks have been even more isolated from the gallery and institutional scene. It is probably symptomatic that David Hammons's inclusion in the exhibition has provoked some raised eyebrows – isn't he a New York artist? Yet he, like Nauman, developed the artistic vocabulary for which he would later become internationally known during his many years in Los Angeles. In fact he exhibited often in L.A., but because of the strict separation between the different networks, he did not really attract attention outside the Afro-American context until he moved to New York.

The long and the short of it is that the European perspective is a very limited one, mainly encompassing the "official" Anglo art scene, including a strong component of video and performance from the '60s to the present, and excluding the ethnic vitality of cultural life in L.A.. I am the first to deplore this, while at the same time facing the fact that an exhibition is the art of the possible. I take for granted that the future will bring many and different exhibitions dedicated to the art of L.A., here in Europe and elsewhere.

Being both historical and contemporary, *Sunshine & Noir* is somewhat hybrid in character. The selection criteria for a large group show like this – a show that will tour five museums in Europe and the United States and that spans a time period of almost forty years – naturally become increasingly complex the further along the process gets. One general objective was that each artist should be represented by works that broke new

ground, works evincing both a unique personal sensibility and an artistic expression that would be hard to imagine having developed anywhere else but L.A. It is tempting to list examples here, but it would be equally easy to point to the opposite – to cases in which I have departed from this general objective, I hope in the exhibition's best interests.

The young-artist scene in L.A. is highly impressive, and here more than earlier, the selection has naturally been governed more by personal interest than by a consensus opinion developed over a period of time. At the same time, the vast differences in the positions of, say, Jason Rhoades, Jennifer Pastor, Kim Dingle, Diana Thater, and Laura Aguilar show that the openness and individualism of L.A. art are greater than ever. The selection of works in an exhibition of this kind is obviously the result of a complicated balancing act between a desire for some kind of "historical objectivity" and the curator's own personal passions. This means that while many of the artists represented would probably have been chosen by anyone who had done any homework, others have ultimately been included – or excluded – because of the personal judgments of both myself and my cocurator of the past year, Helle Crenzien. Many people have offered their insights, recollections, books, support, and concern during the years of varying intensity needed to prepare for the exhibition. Their names may also give those familiar with the Los Angeles art world an indication of how my cocurator and I have built up our acquaintance with the city and its art life over time. To this list must be added all of the artists represented in *Sunshine & Noir*, who, apart from the time and effort expended on their own contributions to the exhibition, have also served as inexhaustible sources of information and generous openers of doors.

My warmest thanks to all of you: Richard Armstrong, Pittsburgh; Alyson Baker, New York; Stephanie Barron, Los Angeles; Bill Begert, Santa Monica; Robin Berg, Venice; Shoshana Blank, Santa Monica; Timothy Blum, Santa Monica; Michael Bond, Los Angeles; Wendy Brandow, Los Angeles; Kerry

Brougher, Los Angeles; Patricia Brundage, New York; Susan Brundage, New York; Brian D. Butler, Santa Monica; Susan Cahan, Santa Monica; Shaun Caley, Los Angeles; Laura Cottingham, New York; Lisa Darling, Venice; Hugh M. Davies, San Diego; Mike Davis, Los Angeles; Gregory Evans, Los Angeles; Patricia Faure, Santa Monica; Rosamund Felsen, Santa Monica; Russell Ferguson, Los Angeles; Howard H. Fox, Los Angeles; Ann Goldstein, Los Angeles; Peter Goulds, Venice; Cornelia Grassi, Milan; Claudio Guenzani, Milan; William R. Hackman, Los Angeles; Dick Hebdige, Valencia; Joanne Heyler, Santa Monica; Fred Hoffman, Santa Monica; Robert Hollister, Los Angeles; Henry Hopkins, Los Angeles; Hudson, New York; Ann Janss, Los Angeles; Frits Keers, Amsterdam; Kirsten Kiser, Copenhagen; Christopher Knight, Los Angeles; Anders Kold, London; Richard Koshalek, Los Angeles; Margo Leavin, Los Angeles; Sherrie Levine, New York; Mary-Kay Lombino, Los Angeles; Philomene Magers, Cologne; Timothy Martin, Los Angeles; David and Renée McKee, New York; Jean Milant, Los Angeles; Burnett Miller, Los Angeles; Alessandra Moctezuma, Los Angeles; Terry R. Myers, Los Angeles; Senga Nengudi, Colorado Springs; Adolfo V. Nodal, Los Angeles; Claes Nordenhake, Stockholm; Maria Nordman, Santa Monica; Peter Norton, Santa Monica; Eriko Osaka, Mito; Jeffrey Poe, Santa Monica; Pat Poncy, Venice; Stuart Regen, Los Angeles; David Ross, New York; Ralph Rugoff, Los Angeles; Jack Rutberg, Los Angeles; Paul Schimmel, Los Angeles; Kristin Rey Seagal, Los Angeles; Fran Seegull, Santa Monica; Robert Shapazian, Los Angeles; Stephanie Davis Sherman, Venice; Manny Silverman, Los Angeles; Philip I. Simms, Los Angeles; Howard Singerman, Charlottesville; Elizabeth T. Smith, Los Angeles; Stuart Spence, Pasadena; Richard Telles, Los Angeles; Babs Thomson, London; Jack Tilton, New York; Joel Wachs, Los Angeles; Angela Westwater, New York; Helene Winer, New York; Donald Young, Seattle; Lynn Zelevansky, Los Angeles; David Zwirner, New York; and, last but not least, Lyn Kienholz, who has been a great supporter of the project from its very beginning.

*Translated from Swedish by Kjersti Board*

Los Angeles  
Helltown/maen

## LIST OF ARTISTS AND WORKS

**Laura Aguilar** (San Gabriel, California, 1959) uses her photographs to interpret the social reality of cultural minorities, particularly the Chicano and lesbian communities in California. The artist usually exhibits series of images in which she and her friends are depicted dressed and undressed, as in the works shown here, drawing attention to their discordant relationship with society.

**John Altoon** (Los Angeles, California, 1925 - 1969) created gestural and figurative art, beginning in the Sixties; he was an exponent Abstract Expressionism in southern California until his premature death at the age of forty.

**Michael Asher** (Los Angeles, California, 1943) . From the Sixties on, his projects have underscored the exhibition event itself, with its spaces, installations and advertising influencing the process of experiencing the work of art.

**John Baldessari** (National City, California, 1931) has become renowned above all for his conceptual work. From the start of his career, he has availed himself of a broad range of techniques, including photography and writing. In the Sixties, he began to use his text-pieces to probe the very nature of art.

**Larry Bell** (Chicago, Illinois, 1939). Since the Sixties, Bell's investigations have addressed sensory perception. In the work exhibited, an empty glass cube of clearly minimalist derivation, the artist emphasizes light as an essential element that takes prominence over the object's physicality.

**Billy Al Bengston** (Dodge City, Kansas, 1934) has drawn much of his inspiration from the culture of cars and motorcycles, mythical objects of southern California. Bengston utilizes symbols with militaristic implications, such as chevrons, along with optical and decorative effects of color.

**Tony Berlant** (New York, 1941) uses metal scrap to create small installations, assembling fragments of different colors on wood surfaces and attaching them with steel nails. His work is based on a continuous alternation between abstraction and figuration.

**Wallace Berman** (Staten Island, New York, 1928 - Topanga, California, 1976). A multi-faceted artist, Berman experimented with different expressive languages, ranging from jazz to rock and folk music, from contemporary poetry to underground publishing. Indeed, he became one of the most influential artists of the Beat Generation, in both northern and southern California.

**Chris Burden** (Boston, Massachusetts, 1946). Beginning in the early Seventies, Chris Burden carried performance art to extremes, shooting himself in the arm, closing himself off in a closet for five days, crucifying himself on the hood of a Volkswagon. He has also created impressive large scale sculpture projects and installations. His approach is characterized by an explicit critique of existing conventions in both art and society.

**Vija Celmins** (Riga, Latvia, 1938) began her career in the Sixties, painting everyday objects, such as the lamp, hot-plate and radiator in her studio, and covering them with a grid. This conceptual-procedural approach has accompanied all her work, up to her most recent projects. Her canvases, images of the ocean and the nocturnal sky, urban landscapes, share with those early works a profound interest in uniformity, in a physical, conceptual and metaphorical sense.

**Richard Diebenkorn** (Portland, Oregon, 1922 - Berkeley, California, 1993). His oil paintings on canvas reveal themselves to be intrinsically "Californian" in their attention to the use of light and color. While Diebenkorn did not deny the influence of Abstract Expressionism on his work, he also heeded developments in minimalist painting.

**Kim Dingle** (Pomona, California, 1951) investigates acquired social codes and conventions, changing them into merciless tools of criticism: from personal memories to politics in the United States. In recent years her work has become known for its images based on oppositions (her grandmother dressed in the clothes of George Washington), bringing into question just what it means to be an American today.

**Llyn Foulkes** (Yakima, Washington, 1934) creates work that addresses a troubling side of Los Angeles and the United States, with mixed media pieces that show the illusory nature of myths such as the Far West frontier, Hollywood life style and the American dream.

**Sam Francis** (San Mateo, California, 1923 - Santa Monica, California, 1994) is known above all for his large scale abstract canvases created with subtle brushstrokes of primary colors that float within vast white spaces - as in the *Edge Paintings* series. Francis's work falls within the tradition of Abstract Expressionism.

**Joe Goode** (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1937). Since the Sixties, Joe Goode's milk bottle has emphasized two fundamental and irreconcilable aspects of American culture: the omnipresence of the quart of milk, delivered each morning to the doorstep, and the traditional conventions of abstract painting, particularly the monochrome canvas. (T. R. Myers)



**David Hammons** (Springfield, Illinois, 1943) began his art career in Los Angeles. His work, which maintains a strict relationship with performance art and installations, preserves a visual, verbal and social tie with Afro-American reality. Most of the pieces he produced in the Seventies in California are prints, created using his own body.

**George Herms** (Woodland, California, 1935) calls his assemblages "furnishings for the soul," situating his work within the vein of spirituality that typified the beat movement, which relates back to the dadaist and surrealist tradition.

**David Hockney** (Bradford, England, 1937) has lived in southern California for the last thirty years, experimenting with a vast range of techniques (from pencil to fax). A leading figure in the English art scene of the Fifties, he brings together the most emblematic aspects of Los Angeles, employing vivid color and basic forms.

**Dennis Hopper** (Dodge City, Kansas, 1936). Since the Sixties, his photography has dramatically captured the alternative life style and characters of southern California. His photos, like his work in film, bear witness to urban and suburban Los Angeles.

**Robert Irwin** (Long Beach, California, 1928). Irwin's artistic development began with abstract painting before he arrived at his *Light and Space* investigations of the realm of visual perception. During the Seventies, he focused on art within outdoor and architectural contexts, a practice he continues today, most recently seen in his garden project for the J. Paul Getty Museum.

**Jim Isermann** (Kenosha, Wisconsin, 1955). Since the Eighties, Isermann has created hand-sewn pieces - paintings-carpets - work generally categorized as handicraft in our culture, but which this artist re-elaborates according to the dictates of abstraction.

**Larry Johnson** (Long Beach, California, 1959). Johnson's color photographs are deliberately and strongly polemical, challenging widely accepted clichés about concepts such as personality, responsibility, legitimacy. (T. R. Myers)

**Craig Kauffman** (Los Angeles, California, 1932). Kauffman's *Finish Fetish* acrylic lacquer surfaces are considered the quintessence of L.A. art. Using a vacuum sealing technique once employed for commercial signs, Kauffman has created a series of "seals," works that seem to pulsate when hit by light. His most recent work literally overturns this structure, while maintaining an analogous optical effect.

**Mike Kelley** (Detroit, Michigan, 1954). This artist's most recent sculptures and installations are derived from his performances in the Seventies, which evolved into an autonomous expressive means in the mid-Eighties. Kelley's interest in degradation has pushed him toward an art that re-utilizes relics from pop culture and articles from the folk tradition.

**Edward Kienholz** (Fairfield, Washington, 1927 - Hope, Idaho, 1994). Kienholz's approach to assemblage is considered emblematic, because of both choice of materials and underlying concepts, just as his *tableaux* remain unsurpassed in their magnitude. (T. R. Myers)

**Paul McCarthy** (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1945). Since the Sixties, McCarthy has worked in southern California as a performance and video artist, questioning the typical values on which American society is based. Through his work, he ridicules established authority, particularly the family as an institution.

**John McCracken** (Berkeley, California, 1934). McCracken's panels have always challenged traditional interpretations of Minimalism, not only through their polished and colored surfaces, but also through their references to the artist's spirituality.

**John McLaughlin** (Sharon, Massachusetts, 1898 - Dana Point, California, 1976). Since the late Fifties, McLaughlin's abstract painting has been among the most influential work in the southern California art scene. (T.R. Myers)

**Ed Moses** (Long Beach, California, 1926). In constant fluctuation between abstraction and figuration, Moses's painting avails itself of often antithetical styles. In the *Rose* series, he uses graphite, creating large drawings that refer to the themes of Pop art.

**Bruce Nauman** (Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1940) has used a broad range of techniques to confront the limitations of a stylistic cliché or a standardized work method, characteristics that have had a great influence on Los Angeles art. He has gained international renown for his installations that incorporate neon and words.

**Catherine Opie** (Sandusky, Ohio, 1961). Opie's photographic work is based on self-portraits and portraits of friends who belong to sub-cultures, such as transvestites, transsexuals, etc., depicted against backgrounds of garish or watermarked, gilded colors, thereby creating a connection to 17th-century Flemish and German portraiture. Her more recent work has involved the creation of images with the theme of luxurious houses in exclusive neighborhoods.

**Jennifer Pastor** (Hartford, Connecticut, 1966) emphasizes to excess traditional sculptural values such as mass and volume, basing her installations on an avowed hyper-realism.

**Raymond Pettibon** (Tucson, Arizona, 1957) belongs to a long Los Angeles tradition that moves between the visual and literary arts, a tradition that includes both Beat artists and authors such as Charles Bukowski and Raymond Chandler. In his work, Pettibon utilizes comic book imagery as well as writing.

**Lari Pittman** (Glendale, California, 1952) adopts a very refined, decidedly narrative tone in painting that employs decorative motifs and banal symbols, raised to a level of central significance.

**Ken Price** (Los Angeles, California, 1935). For over thirty years, Price's work has brought together the prestigious California tradition of ceramics and the canons of modernist postwar sculpture.

**Stephen Prina** (Galesburg, Illinois, 1954). *Dom Hotel, Room 101, Cologne*, shown in this exhibition, revolves around a hotel room used both as a set for a scene in a 1965 film and as a place where the artist signs copies of *Johanna Faehmel's Monologue*, a book that refers to the character in the film. Here too, Prina confronts the conceptual themes and issues of ownership and the myth of historic truth. His musical performances have acquired particular importance and are considered by the artist to be examples of visual art.

**Charles Ray** (Chicago, Illinois, 1953). In a series of gradually more expressive sculptures, created beginning in the mid-Eighties, Ray has challenged both the status of quotidian objects such as tables, bathtubs and minimalist boxes and the static state to which they seem condemned in everyday life. In his most recent work, based on the use of photography and film, Ray focuses the viewer's attention on the concept of banality, restoring its significance through absolute immobility.

**John Rhoades** (Newcastle, California, 1965) creates installations that, with their torturous, spiral-shaped and yet well ordered schemes, contain decidedly self-referential and self-controlled structures, as well as furnishings such as polystyrene shelves, stone slab seats and a machine-toy for making minuscule doughnuts. (T. R. Myers)

**Nancy Rubins** (Naples, Texas, 1952) has worked, since the mid-Seventies, with scrap materials such as water heaters and airplane parts. While her work allows an interpretation that alludes to the excesses of consumer culture, the artist has often stated that she is most interested in the energy - or really integrity - of compositional structure, of what usually appears as a jumble caught in delicate balance. (T. R. Myers)

**Allen Ruppersberg** (Cleveland, Ohio, 1944), throughout his career, has always been concerned with the relationship between art and everyday life. His most recent work merges his curiosity about the world of commercial slogans with the publication of books of all types, cultivating, as he himself stated in 1984, "the common object as well as the rarity, their interconnections and interchangeability." (T. R. Myers)

**Edward Ruscha** (Omaha, Nebraska, 1937). Ruscha's painting utilizes the works as image, in a manner that can be compared to Pop culture. His artist's books, which "document" gas stations, small fires and Los Angeles apartments, have contributed to the so-called "Los Angeles Look."

**Jim Shaw** (Midland, Michigan, 1952) is known above all for the series entitled *My Mirage*, which depicts the efforts of "Billy," an imaginary character, who continually exhibits his interests, his fears and his desires, in a rectangle no larger than a record cover. (T. R. Myers)

**Alexis Smith** (Los Angeles, California, 1949) actually changed her name to that of a film star who was popular when the artist was seventeen years old. Smith has expanded the territory of collage and assemblage to include visual and verbal expressions connected to numerous feminist ideas and practices.

**Diana Thater** (San Francisco, California, 1962). Thater's video installations utilize the equipment necessary for their production - not only the active and physical presence of projectors, laser readers and monitors, but also the clear articulation of primary and secondary colors, the discontinuity of editing and/or slow-motion in the ethereal presentation of the tape itself - where images from nature are elaborated within a context that includes and provides the actual presence of a spectator, brought into a participatory relationship with the work. (T. R. Myers)

**Robert Therrien** (Chicago, Illinois, 1947). Therrien's work is evocative of everyday images that seem to partake of a dream. Since the early Eighties the artist has depicted clouds, tables, plates and even the classical outline of a snowman, all placed in provocative formal situations that give the viewer an impression that seems familiar and at the same time strangely indefinable. (T. R. Myers)

**James Turrell** (Los Angeles, California, 1943) began his career in southern California in the late Sixties and was one of the founders of the group of artists who went by the name *Light & Space*. In the mid-Seventies, Turrell began to create works that consisted solely of a projection of colored light, which often took on the aspects of a material presence. (T. R. Myers)

**Bill Viola** (New York, 1951) was one of the first artists to experiment with video technology in the early Seventies. Since 1973 he has created numerous videos and installations that explore the nature of human consciousness, in particular the way in which people react to perceptual functions, both as body language and as a vehicle to achieve self-awareness. (T. R. Myers)

**Doug Wheeler** (Globe, Arizona, 1939). Beginning in the Sixties, Wheeler created works in which light plays a significant role, with UV rays that spread out from the edges, to blur the border between the work itself and its context.

**Christopher Williams** (Los Angeles, California, 1958). Utilizing archives and commercial photographic registers, publications, museums and libraries, Williams creates complex but sober installations that re-examine these elements' "original" contexts, exploring their meaning - or rather