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Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Pacific Standard Time: Artists on the verge

September 17, 2011 | 8:13 am



Hundred of artists stand to gain exposure through the upcoming museum-fest known as Pacific Standard Time. In a story running this Sunday as part of our fall preview section, curators involved in the project identify over a dozen artists they feel are especially ripe for reappraisal.

Some are largely unknown. Ever heard of Robert Kinmont? Chauncey Hare? Didn't think so. Others--like Suzanne Lacy--are prominent L.A. artists who have not, curators argue, received the widespread recognition that they deserve.

Lacy is an interesting example, a feminist/activist/artist/teacher chosen for this story by two curators independently of one another: Paul Schimmel, who organized "Under the Big Black Sun" for MOCA, and Karen Moss, who co-curated "State of Mind" for OCMA.

And they chose her for different bodies of work. Moss talks about her roots as a solo performance and a particularly disturbing installation from 1973 called "Lamb Construction" made out of animal organs. (It will be re-created for the show with human organs preserved using the same plastination method used for Body Worlds exhibitions.)

Schimmel praises her "Three Weeks in May" project from 1977 documenting rapes in Los Angeles, giving it one of the highest compliments a curator can offer:

He says he wishes he had the money to buy it, adding "I would be shocked if this piece doesn't end up in a major museum collection."

For other picks from other curators, [read the full story](#) on discoveries, rediscoveries and reappraisals.

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--Jori Finkel

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Image from Robert Kinmont's Eight Natural Handstands, 1969-2009. Photo by Bill Orcutt. Courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York.

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Lesser-known artists are poised for a breakthrough

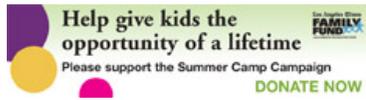
The Pacific Standard Time museum extravaganza will give some of the unsung heroes their due as well as their more celebrated colleagues.

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

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



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

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

The San Diego show includes Corse's all-white canvases, which have glass micro-beads embedded in the acrylic paint to create a surface that shifts dramatically with the light. It also features examples of Pashgian's acrylic spheres — globes with an unreal glow, seemingly lighted from within. (Davies is not the only one betting on these artists: Pashgian just had a

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solo show in L.A. with Ace Gallery; Wheeler and Corse have shows coming up with David Zwirner in New York and White Cube in London, respectively.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It documents a sort of social atrocity in this very physical way," the curator says, suggesting that its blend of art and activism was ahead of its time. "I would be shocked if this

piece [on loan from Lacy] doesn't end up in a major museum collection."

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

The curator's final pick was Bas Jan Ader, the Dutch-born L.A.-based conceptual artist presumed to



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have died in 1975 while trying, in the name of art, to complete a solo sail across the Atlantic in a 13-foot boat. The boat was recovered; his body was not.

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

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

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D Frazell at 9:51 AM September 18, 2011

Hard to be "rediscovered" by so many when you are "in so many museums and collected by so many", it just means no one cares outside of academic and collector society page types. Its meaningless materialism, all veneer, and no soul. He and these others were discovered, but obviously didnt exactly strike a chord in Angelenos. Rather see photos of real hotrods and lowriders, those guys were much better artists then Chicago, just hadnt bought art degrees to tell other artscene lemmings they were "artistes'.

Nothing much interesting here, then or now, just alot of noise about nothingness. Bells and whistles, no substance, no seeking the essence of things, of US, of Our world. Artistes dont matter, art does. And academic types who are the ones benefitting form this hubub even less.

art collegia delenda est

maandrews213 at 8:50 AM September 18, 2011

Artist Ron Davis is in so many museums and collected by so many it's about time he was rediscovered for the great artist and visonary he is.

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