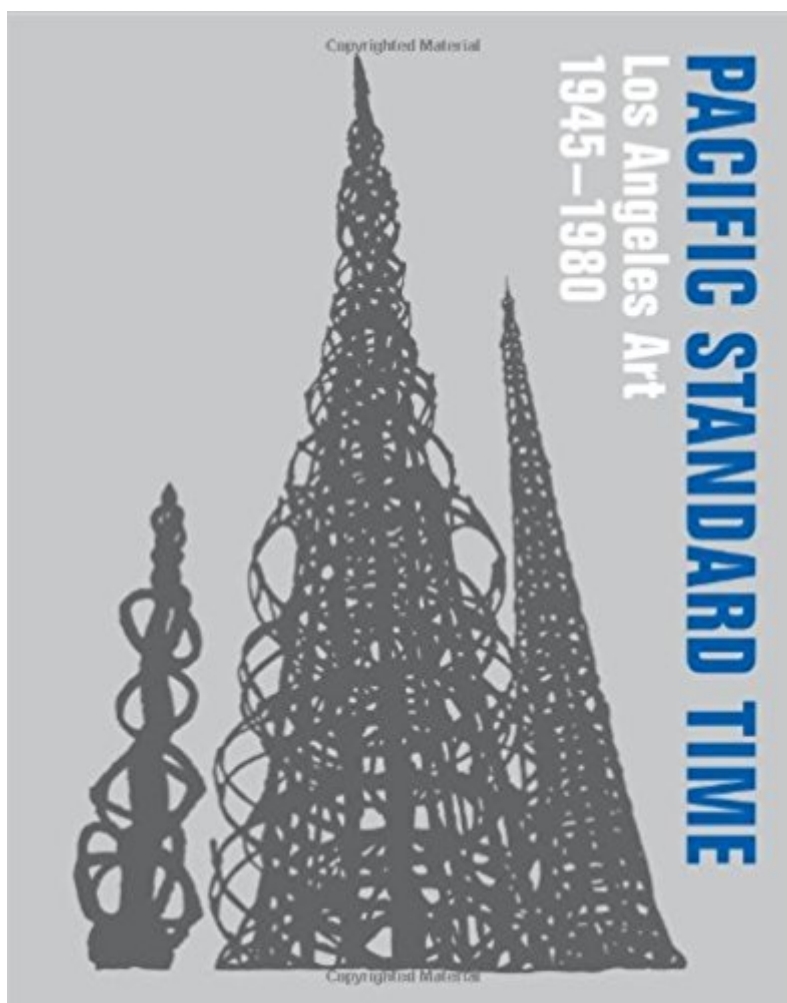


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# Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art, 1945-1980



## Synopsis

"This volume is published for the occasion of the Getty's citywide grant initiative Pacific Standard Time: Art in Los Angeles 1945-1980 and accompanies the exhibition Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture 1950- 1970, held at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"As a journal of record, the volume fills in innumerable lacunae. The post-war New York art scene has dominated the text books for far too long; this necessary resource redresses the balance with authority, wit and academic rigour, convincing the reader that it is indeed time for this history to be set down."—*The Art Newspaper*

"The book is heavy on gorgeous reproductions of iconic L.A. artwork, and, ambitious in scale and scope, represents a significant effort and achievement."—*Publishers Weekly*

"Consider [Pacific Standard Time] the missing general textbook on the rise, fall and transformation of post-World War II art produced in Los Angeles."—Christopher Knight, *Los Angeles Times*

"As Pacific Standard Time amply documents, L.A. had its share of epochal moments during the three and a half decades following the end of World War II."—*Peter Plagens, Los Angeles Review of Books*

"It is, to date, the most comprehensive effort to document L.A.'s emergence as a major locus of important art creation and presents an irresistibly rich panorama."—*Library Journal*, starred review

"With informative, insightful chapters, this book is an excellent addition to the

developing history of 20th-century art in the U.S. Highly

recommended. •Choice • Winner of the Gold Medal • for Fine Art at the 2012 Independent Publisher Book Awards Glenn Goldman Award for Art and Architecture book, Los Angeles Times, 2012

At the Getty Research Institute, Rebecca Peabody is manager of research projects; Andrew Perchuk is deputy director; Glenn Phillips is principal project specialist and consulting curator in the Department of Architecture and Contemporary Art; and Rani Singh is senior research associate in the Department of Architecture and Contemporary Art.

A very thorough walk through the Los Angeles post-war art scene, but the book loses visual appeal because the type fonts are SO SMALL, page after endless page of "very important stuff" that should have been edited down to about 50% of what was used, so that more pleasant and readable fonts could have been employed and pages could have been laid out so they didn't look crowded. As a reference book this is probably very good, but for "pleasure reading", no.

This book, the catalog for the monumental exhibition organised by the Getty Institute, which will later travel to Berlin, is undoubtedly destined to become a collector's piece, so buy it while it is still available at a reasonable price. It documents the burgeoning Southern Californian post-war art scene, with several essays following a more or less chronological order, and hundreds of illustrations of artworks, but also of art people (a wonderful 1963 photograph of Marcel Duchamp playing chess with a naked Eve Babitz in front of a replica of his Large Glass in Pasadena, photographs of artists working in their studios, etc). Some names are well known, others less so, but it is the versatility, the creativity and, above all, the richness and depth of this LA art scene that strike the reader-viewer through these richly illustrated pages. The birth of a genuine pop art in California (thanks to some of the most gifted artdealers in the US), of conceptual art, the creation of a new way of making sculpture, all those aspects are tackled in an informative and erudite (sometimes too erudite, though...) text that makes this book a more than valuable addition to the literature on post-war American art.

Those who wish to know about LA art are happy to have this book; those who know LA art may not be so happy. If you need confirmation of this read the reviews above. It seems some will settle for anything in a shiny package. We should look to our "Getty scholars" to provide a sensible and

complete view of the chosen period 1945 - 1980. Instead we have a book by committee that lacks a coherent view of the recent history of art in the region. An excellent treatment of the "abstract classicists" is mixed into a stew of LA landmarks such as the Watts towers (which are the logo for the cover). However the major force in the early years of this period was the expressionist-surrealist Rico Lebrun, of which we see none of his magisterial work. Instead there is a predictable "rise of modernism" theme - which is to say borrowings from New York and San Francisco vanguards tamed for LA's conservative tastes. The "merry-go-round show" in 1955 was stocked with San Francisco paintings to create a semblance of advanced culture in LA at that time. (The San Francisco art magazine ARTFORUM identified the LA "Cool School" in its summer issue 1964; in October 1965 the magazine moved to LA and then on to New York, where it has been ever since). The internationally revered San Francisco artist Richard Diebenkorn moved to Santa Monica in 1967 to undertake his mature Ocean Park paintings, now on view at the Orange County Museum. Skip the scandalous PST treatment on page 152 and instead obtain the fine catalog from OCMA. Diebenkorn is thrown in with "City of Pop" artists of lesser achievement, is criticized for having only twenty LA shows of his work in his twenty years there (and many more around the world). His exquisite surfaces are said to be, "like the much contemporaneous pop painting, emphatically frontal". Evidently Getty scholars have never heard of Malevich, Mondrian or Rothko. Robert Graham is a conservative LA sculptor of the classical figure; however his early rise to LA prominence came from his "mini-pornographies" (used to introduce Diebenkorn in the PST book) while Graham's later monumental bronzes are not mentioned. PST giggles over the kids screwing in plastic boxes instead. The most important work out of LA was unquestionably the "Light and Space" work, beautifully presented in "Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface" recently published by UC Press for the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, but slipped in under the silver cover of PST as an offshoot of Chris Burden's masochistic sensationalism. When Peter Plagens wrote his modest little 1974 book "Sunshine Muse : Art on the West Coast, 1945 - 1970" he anticipated the need for a sequel when it was republished in 1999. Take note: Plagens is still the better source for a comprehensive treatment of the subject, despite its 200 paperback pages. The 330 big glossy pages of "Pacific Standard Time : Los Angeles Art 1945 - 1980" can't hold a candle to Plagens' light, and is an embarrassment for the Getty. Since I buy hundreds of art books, PST will remain on my shelf; if you don't buy as many as I do, look into the superior alternatives mentioned; you will get a much better value and will not have to endure so many misjudgments. There are many good shows associated with the Getty's PST initiative; the "silver book" does not do justice to the overall effort. It is a shame that it purports to be so. There are some good articles in this book, but mostly it is

grossly misleading of the historical moment and of the truly significant art produced in Los Angeles. As promoted in "Pacific Standard Time" the "cool school" just ain't so cool. Eugene Kupper  
Professor Emeritus UCLA

Finally the exhibition all of Los Angeles has been waiting Pacific Standard Time: Timeline 1945-1980 opens and this is the catalogue that captures the essence of a multifaceted experience that incorporates museums, art galleries, music ensembles such as the LA Philharmonic, theater etc. It is a blockbuster and the book manages to distill the events well. to quote the PR, 'When organizers say that Pacific Standard Time, which focuses on four or so decades of LA art, is "the largest cultural collaboration ever undertaken in the region" they are in no way stretching things. The mega, multi-museum, multi-month show has been years in the making. And the participating institutions? There are over 60 of them around the Southern California area. Imagine trying to wrangle 60 people on one project. Not easy. Now imagine coordinating 60 museums and galleries, venues that have various goals and projects and budgets and space availabilities. The planning and the scheduling have all dovetailed nicely. The book outlines the timeline to be studied very well. 1945: Neapolitan immigrant Simon Rodia is midway through building the biggest, weirdest and least commercially viable sculpture in Los Angeles in the historically black neighborhood of Watts, the Watts Towers. Rumor has it that an alternate site was where the Beverly Hilton is in Beverly Hills, which, some argue, would have been a better long-term real estate deal for Rodia. 1947: Artist Kenneth Anger makes Fireworks, one of his few surviving early films. The Santa Monica native, onetime child actor, avowed occultist and author of movie-industry scandal compendium Hollywood Babylon, with his mix of glamour, power and sexuality, is our first truly significant homegrown Los Angeles artist, even if most people think of him only as a gay magician. 1955: The future co-founder of CalArts opens the most ridiculously successful art project in the history of mankind: Disneyland. It isn't known if any art critics attended the opening. 1956: Venice-based Charles and Ray Eames (that's husband and wife, not brothers) design the Eames lounge chair, the first and only chair inspired by a first baseman's mitt. 1957: Curator Walter Hopps, artist Ed Kienholz and poet Bob Alexander open Ferus Gallery, seen as the origin myth for contemporary art in the city -- especially if you're talking to Irving Blum, who quit selling furniture to take over the gallery in 1958 and turned this ragtag bunch of beatniks into an excellent business decision. 1962: Walter Hopps, now curator at the Pasadena Art Museum, curates the first museum exhibition of American pop art, followed in 1963 by the first retrospective of Marcel Duchamp. His amazing vision, compounded by his practical inability to show up on time, gets him fired in 1967. 1964: David Hockney moves to Los Angeles,

ostensibly to better research two important subjects of his work: pools and boys.1968: Bruce Nauman moves to Pasadena, where he figures out one of the most important breakthroughs in modern art, which later wins him a Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale: Pacing around and drinking too much coffee can be art.1970: John Baldessari cremates his paintings, Allan Kaprow brings his "happenings" West, David Hammons prints his body, CalArts opens as perhaps the first conceptual art school and Paul McCarthy settles in Los Angeles. A pretty damn good year.1971: Although Channa Horwitz was tacitly included in LACMA's famous "Art and Technology" exhibition, the catalog cover pictures 64 participants, all of them men. Much to the museum's surprise, feminists are miffed.And in one of the more dangerous acts of early performance art, Chris Burden arranges to get himself shot. It's widely considered a seminal work of American art, and some critics wonder why more performance artists aren't also shot.1972: Asco claims LACMA as a work of art by spray-painting its members' signatures on the front wall. The museum itself, with characteristic tact, mistakes it for vandalism and paints over it.1977: Raymond Pettibon draws his first cover for his brother's band, Black Flag, along with the band's classic logo of four black bars. Though Pettibon becomes famous for his pen-and-ink drawings, those bars become his most enduring legacy, tattooed on thousands of teenage punks.1978: Jeffrey Vallance buys a chicken at Ralphs, names it Blinky and holds its funeral at Los Angeles Pet Memorial Park. A year earlier he had walked into LACMA dressed as a janitor, installed new electrical outlet covers that had his drawings on them and invited his friends to the "opening." In the 1980s, he took his career to the next logical step: MTV veejay.1980: In October, Public Spirit becomes the largest performance-art festival in North America. The second edition is set for January 2012. Judging by the extent of the genre's appeal, the third seems likely in 2050.Images included in the book include Julius Shulman's photographs of the Watts Towers,Herman Miller's photographs of the famous Eames chair, David Hockney's 'John St. Clair Swimming', Raymond Pettibon's now-classic Black Flag logo, and on and on. It is a splendid appetizer for all the events that will take place, and a fine souvenir catalogue. Grady Harp, September 11

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