

## PREVIEWS OF EXHIBITIONS

### "LACPS AND THE POLITICS OF COMMUNITY"

(USC Fisher Museum of Art, Downtown) While many art institutions under the auspices of Pacific Standard Time are investigating how different communities - often segregated by location, race or gender - asserted their presence, it is important that the Los Angeles Center for Photographic Studies (LACPS) is also included in this history. Artist run organizations like LACPS that first emerged in the 1970s offered not only spaces to exhibit works not being shown by mainstream venues, but provided a sense of community. The impetus behind such organizations was to bring together a group of like-minded people to talk about ideas and issues that could develop into exhibitions as well as publications.

"Sight Specific: LACPS and the



### PACIFIC STANDARD TIME: ART IN L.A. 1945-1980

"Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980" is a series of exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout Southern California that examine local art history during the decades following World War II. Many of these exhibition opened in September, but ArtScene features additional exhibitions that continue or open during much of the 2011/2012 season.



Don Antón, "Little Prayer Before the Journey," c. 1983.

"Politics of Community" explores this organization's vital contribution to the development of Los Angeles' photographic community between the years of 1973 and 1985. This time period reflects when LACPS was the only photography organization in Los Angeles — between the closing of the Pasadena Museum of Modern Art (1974) and the founding of LACMA's Photography Department in the mid 1980's. While LACPS continued to promote artists, sponsor publications and exhibitions into the twenty-first century, this exhibition looks at its nomadic roots and the powerful and influential curatorial vision of its members and directors.

The exhibition is curated by Tim Wride, a former LACMA photography curator who is intimate with the recent history of Los Angeles photography. Wride sifted through the organization's archives and, rather than just present didactic materials that document the history of the exhibitions, he sought out the artists in order to recreate fragments of many of the thematic shows that brought the organization into the spotlight. Alternating between solo exhibitions and theme-based group shows, LACPS presented works that were experimental in nature and pushed the boundaries of the medium. Image-text juxtapositions, photo-sculpture and alternative processes were the norm.

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Many of LACPS' members were educators in Southern California who reached out to an expanding community. Because the shows were of cultural and historical significance and drew crowds of artists, collectors and other institutions began to take notice. This helped to catapult some of those involved into the national scene. That a small artist run nomadic organization could gain international recognition for its exhibitions expanded the scope and import of the Los Angeles photographic community.

Wride has organized the exhibition into three sections. The first serves as an introduction to the organization, pointing out what LACPS did to build community and how, as a nomadic organization (it did not have a permanent exhibition space until the mid 1980's) it was able to collaborate with other spaces, create portfolios and broadsheets and assert its presence as an intellectual hub for a changing medium. The organization was sought out because of the quality of its exhibitions and the level of scholarship within those shows. The second section focuses on reclaiming and framing history. Some of these exhibitions included Paul Outerbridge (curated by Gram Howe, January/February 1977); Marion Palfi (curated by Suda House, January 1979); William Mortensen (curated by Deborah Irmas, November 1980); and James Van Der Zee (May 1980). The third section of the exhibition deals with issues and concerns that remain important today. These shows spanned topics from bodybuilding (September, 1981), to the relationship be-

tween words and images (July/August 1982), to appropriation ("Playing It Again: Strategies of Appropriation," April/May 1985), to investigations of multiculturalism, photo-constructions and gesture.

Among the artists included in these expansive shows whose work is represented in "Sight Specific" are Darryl Curran, Eileen Cowin, John Divola, Robbert Flick, Barbara de Genevieve, Jo Ann Callis, Todd Gray, and Richard Misrach. The list of who showed at LACPS reads like a who's who of Southern California photographers. But what remains significant is not who might have shown at LACPS, but the impact the organization had on contemporary art and photography in Los Angeles and how it set the stage for what was to come. Artists have long created their own communities and, when there was no institutional support for what they did, banded together to promote their ideas and vision, thereby creating a presence that was noticed. The artists and curators who worked with and for LACPS broadened the acceptance of photography as an art medium and expanded the notion of what a photograph could be, say and do. Through this presentation of over one hundred images (along with ephemera and video documentation), "Sight Specific: LACPS and the Politics of Community" illustrates how LACPS was vital in framing the discussion of contemporary photographic practices in and beyond Southern California.

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