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Asco, *Instant Mural*, 1974, courtesy Harry Gamboa Jr.



Asco, *No Movie Awards Nominations*, 1978, courtesy UCLA Chicago Studies Research Center Library



Asco, *Scissors (Patssi Valdez cover image for Regeracion)*, 1974, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries



Asco, *Walking Mural*, from left, Patssi Valdez, Willie F. Herrón III, Gronk, 1972, photo by Harry Gamboa, Jr.

Pacific Standard Time ASCO, ED KIENHOLZ AND MARIA NORDMAN IN "PACIFIC STANDARD TIME" by Hunter Drohojowska- Philp

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It is not yet the end of daylight savings time but it certainly is the beginning of Pacific Standard Time, the Getty-funded initiative behind dozens of museums and gallery exhibitions focused on art made in Los Angeles after 1945. Along with three art fairs and countless performances, lectures, panels and so forth, it opens officially on Oct. 1, 2011.

Anticipating the melee to come, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art jumped the gun with three exhibitions that exemplify the best intentions and effects of PST, as it is being called. Essentially, the Getty Foundation provided the funding for research, exhibitions and catalogues that plumb the depths of L.A.'s missing art history. It may sound a little dull, but believe me, the results are not.

"Asco: Elite of the Obscure, 1972-1987," organized by LACMA and Williams College Museum of Art, tracks the activities of a lively group of Chicano artists. Gronk, Patssi Valdez, Willie Herron III and Harry Gamboa Jr. were the original members who met at Garfield High School. Later they were joined by Daniel Martinez, Diane Gamboa, Barbara Carrasco, Jerry Dreva and many others.

The word "asco," loosely translated as "nausea," was the effect that their early performance-based art had on their occasional viewers, including other Chicanos. They used the fact of their marginalization from the larger culture of Los Angeles to create a parallel culture of their own.

Asco took on clichés about art that was typically associated with Chicanos, such as painted wall murals. In 1974, they taped Valdez and a friend to a wall and photographed the scene as she broke away, calling this an "Instant Mural." In 1971, they



Edward Kienholz, *Five Car Stud 1969-1972, Revisited*, installation view, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, photo by Tom Vinez, © Kienholz, Collection of Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Sakura, Japan, courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, Ca., and the Pace Gallery, New York



Edward Kienholz, *Five Car Stud 1969-1972, Revisited*, installation view (detail), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, photo by Tom Vinez, © Kienholz, Collection of Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Sakura, Japan, courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, Ca., and the Pace Gallery, New York



Edward Kienholz, *Five Car Stud 1969-1972, Revisited*, installation view (detail), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, photo by Tom Vinez, © Kienholz, Collection of Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Sakura, Japan, courtesy of

dressed in Day of the Dead costumes and carried a large cardboard cross through the street in a procession before depositing it on the door of the Marine Corp recruiting center, in a protest against the disproportionate number of Hispanics being sent to fight in Southeast Asia.

Noting that Chicanos were excluded from mainstream cinema, they created what they called "No Movies," complete with film stills, press kits, and even a No Movie Award, a large gold snake. Wearing elaborate costumes and make-up, they had themselves photographed and used the stills to present what was a convincing if wholly fabricated Chicano film world. They invented their own celebrity in a city that privileges celebrity, hijacking it for their own purposes.

The exhibition is heavy on documentation -- staged film stills or photographs of performances -- and the enormous catalogue presents Asco as the first Chicano conceptual art group. Much of the discussion focuses on their political relevance during a turbulent time, but I think it is important to emphasize that their art is largely irreverent, funny and moving.

Moving but not funny is "Five Car Stud 1969/1972, Revisited" by Ed Kienholz, a legendary installation from a time when the artist's political sensibilities were at their peak. The work is known mostly through photographs, though LACMA curator Stephanie Barron quipped that she had seen it when originally shown at Documenta 5 in 1972. Purchased by a Japanese collector in 1976, it has remained in storage ever since.

In a darkened gallery, four cars and a pickup truck are arranged in a circle with headlights illuminating a horrifying scene: white men wearing rubber masks have pinned down a black man and are in the process of castrating him. A woman in the front seat retches at the sight and her relationship with the black man may be the cause of this torture. All of the figures are made of life-sized body casts and Kienholz's painstaking attention to detail in the clothes and boots, even the jewelry -- one figure wears a gold cross on a chain, another has an elaborate signet ring and watch -- amplifies a sense of these figures as actual people. The black man, however, is an abstraction of utter terror: his face is howling with fear but his body is an open container of black water where the colored letters spelling "NIGGER" float. His black penis is detailed.

Though made in L.A. by one of the city's most influential artists and a co-founder of its seminal Ferus Gallery, the piece has never been seen here. The work is on loan from the Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art and was restored by the late artist's wife and collaborator, Nancy Reddin Kienholz. Presented by the Getty Research Institute and the Getty Foundation, the exhibition was organized by

L.A. Louver, Venice, Ca., and the Pace Gallery, New York



Maria Nordman, *Filmroom: Smoke*, 1967-Present, photo courtesy of the Fundação de Serralves, Museu de Art Contemporânea, Porto, Portugal

Asco, Kienholz and Nordman at LACMA - artnet Magazine

the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, where it goes on view July 6-Oct. 21, 2012.

After that shock, it was a delight to walk into the serenely lovely work by **Maria Nordman**, *Film Room: Smoke*, 1967-Present. Like a time machine carrying us back to 1960s Malibu, the black-and-white silent film shows an attractive young man and woman, professional actors with long hair and their jeans tucked into their knee-high boots, sitting on an overstuffed white armchair on the beach, chatting and smoking cigarettes while the tide slowly comes in around them.

The film is projected on either side of a white wall. The right-hand side is static, filmed with a camera on a tripod; the left-hand side is active as Nordman held the camera. A plump white chair covered in plastic, similar to the one on the beach, is sitting in the installation and at the end of the short film, the smoke, the surf and the chair all fade to white, not black.

Nordman was finishing her installation when I was there and she explained that it was the last project she did as a student at UCLA, where she studied with Josef von Sternberg and Jean-Luc Godard's cinematographer. (Around that time, she also worked for architect **Richard Neutra**.) The wall dividing the film's static and active components was the first wall that she had ever built. "I didn't know that my life would be changed by it," she said. She is extending the work for the PST opening on Oct. 1.

This is L.A.'s missing art history resurrected, works that were created in L.A. by L.A.-based artists at important moments in their careers and brought to life again through the initiative of PST. I say, let the melee begin!

Asco is on view through Dec. 4, 2011 and travels to Williams College Museum of Art, Feb. 4-July 29, 2012; Kienholz and Nordman are on view through Jan. 15, 2012.

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