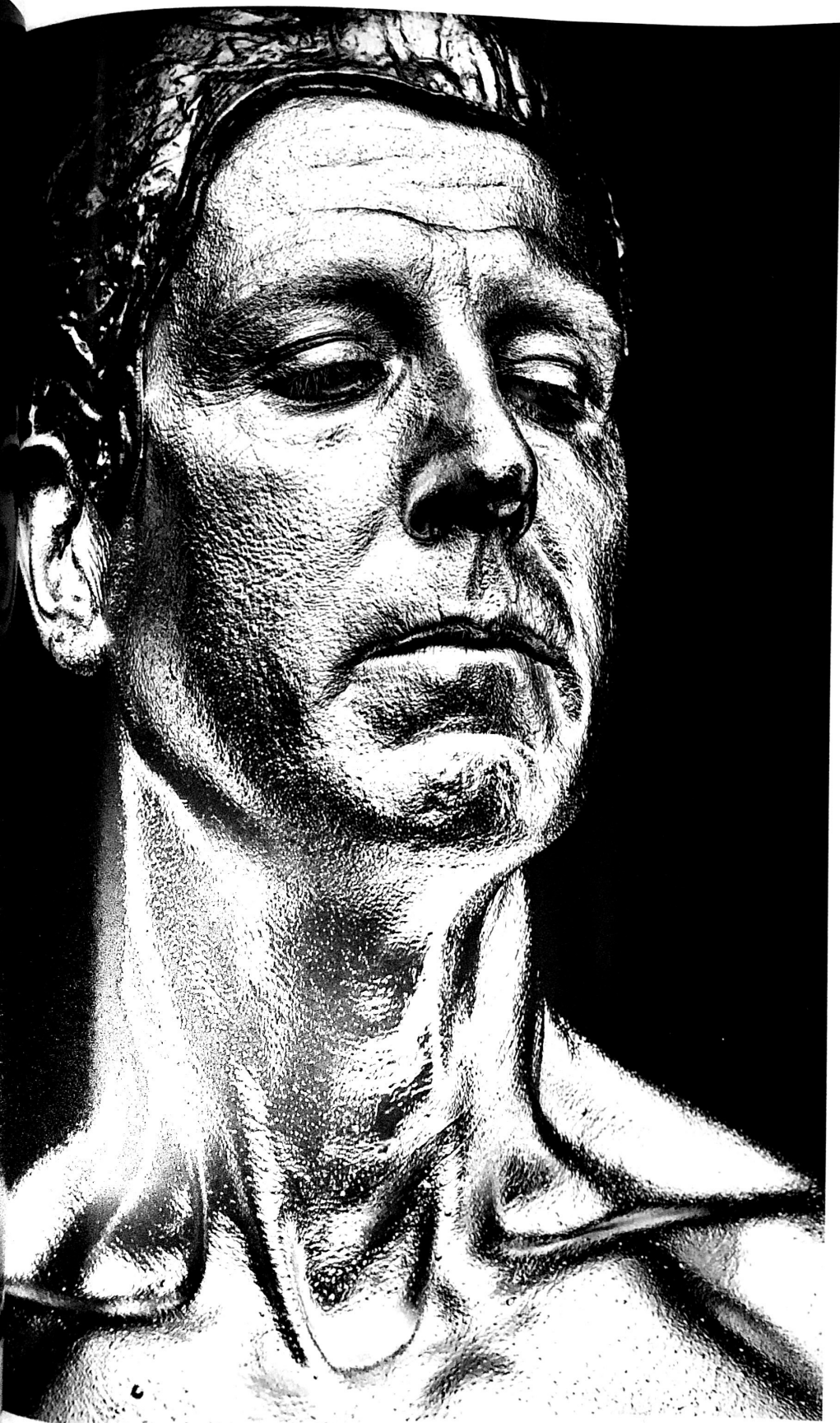


DesignLA

Los Angeles Times

ROSETTA GETTY / ANALIA SABAN / NAIMA KEITH /
BRENDAN RAVENHILL / MICHAEL GOVAN
TIM STREET-PORTER / ROW DTLA / BARBARA

A WEST SIDE HOUSE BY
ARCHITECT CHRISTOPHER MERCIER



ART PEOPLE

The legendary *Pageant of the Masters*, a mainstay of Laguna Beach summer culture, is a kind of mysterious wonder. People in makeup and costumes pose in convincing emulation of art masterpieces from Leonardo da Vinci to David Hockney. Whether applauded for its astonishing veracity or derided as kitsch, these tableaux vivants have attracted sell-out crowds for 85 years. One young visitor was Matthew Rolston. "The theatricality of it made me want to be what I am now," he says. Now, of course, he is famous for glamorous celebrity portraits and ground-breaking music videos. He also pursues his own photographic art, which led him to revisit the pageant in 2016 to take portraits of the volunteers dedicated to the annual production.

With extreme makeup and hair, outfitted in papier mâché or painted canvas, each individual is presented by Rolston as much larger than life. The nine-foot-tall digital print of a naked man coated in silver paint shown here is based on an Art Deco sculpture. An exhibition of Rolston's prints, "Art People," opens at the Ralph Pucci showroom on October 27. For centuries before photography, artists were praised for their ability to mimic the visual world. In his "Art People" portraits, Rolston adds another layer of inquiry to art about art about art. •

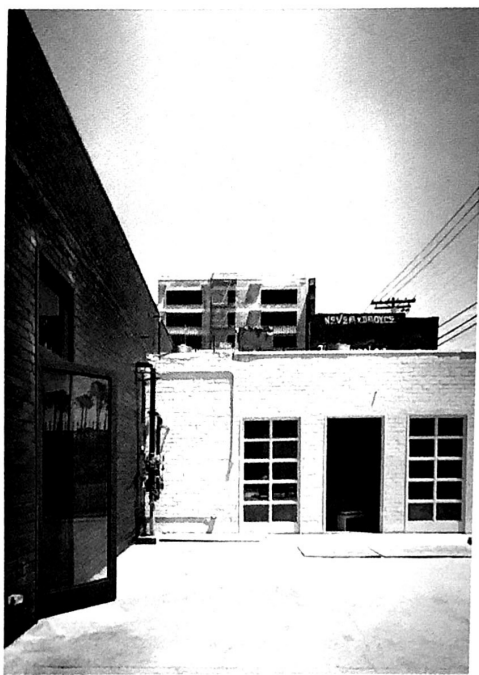
—Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

ralphpucci.net
matthewrolston.com

Matthew Rolston
Frishmuth, The Dancers (#1), 2016, diptych

ICA LA RISING

A New Public Art Institution
Debuts with a Social Conscience



Top: ICA LA director Elsa Longhauser with architect Kulapat Yantrasast, who converted a warehouse space into galleries and offices for the museum.
Above: A cafe will open onto the courtyard by year's end.

Last month, a few blocks from Skid Row in downtown L.A., the city's newest public art space opened: The Institute of Contemporary Art. The location is strategic, since the ICA LA's director, Elsa Longhauser, intends it to be a site of political and social activism as much as a venue for showing art. While ICA LA joins the ranks of other nonprofit institutions mushrooming across the revitalized downtown district—including the Mistake Room and the beta version of the nascent Main Museum—ICA LA wants to define its mission as being distinctly its own. "We have an important program that's different from a collector's museum or a collecting museum or a smaller organization," says Longhauser. "People are so interested in having cultural experiences—there's a hunger—and I don't think you can have too many."

Architect Kulapat Yantrasast of the firm WHY was an early ICA LA supporter and helped Longhauser find an appropriate building for the venture. With the substantial aid of downtown developer Yuval Bar-Zemer, who is now on the ICA LA board, a roughly 10,000-square-foot garment-production warehouse was leased on a distinctly unfashionable block across from the Greyhound bus terminal. It was important to Longhauser, however, that the same block already housed Inner City Arts and Para Los Ninos, two organizations with the goal of supporting and inspiring less-advantaged young people.

The building itself—though nicely proportioned, with existing skylights and a double truss across its high ceiling—was a challenge. There is only one entrance, on 7th Street, which meant there could be no loading dock

and no way to unobtrusively bring in art and materials for an exhibition. That one consideration led to Yantrasast's unusual conception for the renovation. Instead of creating a formal reception area at the entrance, he arranged rooms for office work, meetings, exhibition preparation (including carpentry and storage), education, a book store and a cafe. Large front windows and a roll-up door open to a small courtyard and parking area on 7th Street, so passersby can look in and see people at work.

"I wanted to turn that experience around," says Yantrasast, sitting on a bench of his own design in the main gallery. "I thought, Let's have a public space that's totally open and transparent. The first thing you see is the activity of staff, storage, offices." He felt that emphasizing that would underscore the ambience of community. "I like people," he says. "I feel that we are the solution and we are also the problem." The Thai-born Yantrasast, who worked with architect Tadao Ando for 13 years before opening WHY, has gained a reputation for his renovations of buildings for contemporary art. "Very few things can change the way you think about life," he explains. "Art is designated to do that. It is a good disruption that is necessary."

ICA LA is a young organization with mature roots, a living offshoot of the now-deceased Santa Monica Museum of Art (SMMOA), which had been an anchor of the Bergamot Station art center since 2000, when Longhauser became director. Like ICA LA, SMMOA did not have a permanent collection but hosted rotating exhibitions, including the influential "Black Male" show of 1995 and a 2008 architectural installation by Michael Asher, a pioneering conceptual artist and teacher.



Top: Yantrasast worked with the existing urban fabric of 7th Street, preserving original elements while maximizing light and space.
Above: The architect designed benches for the main gallery.

Right: Offices and a gift shop were placed near the entrance. "I thought, Let's have a public space that's totally open," Yantrasast says. *Below right:* Longhauser and Yantrasast on one of his benches.

When Bergamot Station was slated to become a metro stop on the Expo line, it seemed as though the museum and the galleries in the complex would benefit from increased attendance. Instead, the forces of redevelopment took over and the long-established art center was adversely affected. Important galleries closed or moved. Developer Wayne Blank (also co-owner of the Shoshana Wayne Gallery) and Longhauser found themselves at odds over the future of Bergamot. The end result was the closing of SMMOA in 2015.

Some board members left, but those that stayed backed Longhauser's goal of reorganizing as the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. After a two-year capital campaign, they had raised close to \$5 million; hired curator Jamillah James and deputy director of advancement Samuel Vasquez, both from the Hammer; and convinced Mark Bradford—whose work was shown in "Black Male" and who was this year's U.S. representative at the Venice Biennale—to design their smart yellow logo. Like the Hammer, ICA LA is free to the public.

In recent years, contemporary artists often have assumed a more politically active stance, and Longhauser—typically outfitted in flowing, patterned dresses, her hair wrapped in complementary scarfs—is often seen at talks, performances and events that reflect those shifting priorities. "The Santa Monica Museum always had a commitment to social action and social justice, but because of our new location in a very diverse neighborhood downtown, we feel we can do even more important programming to involve the community," she observes. To that end, she brought in an artist advisory counsel spearheaded by Charles Gaines, who is also on the board of directors.



ICA LA's opening exhibition is "Martín Ramírez: His Life in Pictures, Another Interpretation." The Jalisco-born artist had a schizophrenic breakdown after immigrating to California in 1925 and was housed at state psychiatric hospitals for 30 years. He took refuge in his art, obsessively elaborate drawings that have long been of interest to art historians and collectors. The show was partially funded by the Getty's Pacific Standard Time initiative. Longhauser, who acted as curator, has an abiding interest in outsider art but also saw the potential for connecting to the larger community. "We are certainly about showing art and having art presented for a knowledgeable audience," she says, "but we also want to present and explain for audiences that might not ordinarily go to a museum, particularly a contemporary art museum."

In addition, curator James organized an installation of found materials addressing social displacement by New York-based artist Abigail DeVille. And L.A.-based artist Sarah Cain was commissioned to do one of her site-specific paintings on one wall of the courtyard. "ICA supports art that sparks the pleasure of discovery and changes the way we see," Longhauser notes. "It's about upending hierarchies. It may seem lofty, but it is true to our belief system." •

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theicala.org





Top: Artist Sarah Cain (left) and ICA curator Jamillah James stand by Cain's mural in the courtyard.
Above: A staircase leads to offices.
 Custom bookcases by Yantrasast define the spaces.