

index: conceptualism in california

from the permanent collection

A survey of conceptual and post-studio practices in California, *Index: Conceptualism in California from the Permanent Collection* draws on MOCA's substantial holdings of work by California-based artists who have contributed to the international lexicon of conceptualism. Since its inception, the museum has played a significant role in both defining and expanding the parameters of conceptual art, presenting comprehensive benchmark surveys including *A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation* (1989) and *1965–1975: Reconsidering the Object of Art* (1995).

Conceptual art developed during the late 1960s in response to the preceding pop and minimalist movements, as well as to tumultuous events including the Korean and Vietnam wars and civil rights and labor movements. Intellectually rigorous and often humorous, conceptual practices emphasize the primacy of ideas over objects, often employing language, repetition, and documentation and incorporating historical and cultural references. In addition, many works present critical responses to the institutions of art themselves (an approach literalized in Chris Burden's *Exposing the Foundation of the Museum* [1986/2008]). At the core of *Index* is an emphasis on the crucial period spanning the late 1960s to the mid-'70s, when Michael Asher, John Baldessari, Douglas Huebler, David Lamelas, William Leavitt, Allen Ruppersberg, Edward Ruscha, and Allan Sekula, as well as proto-conceptualists like Wallace Berman and Bruce Conner, were creating work that would come to epitomize the tenets and strategies of conceptual art.

Recognizing the important legacy and long-ranging influence of the 1960s and '70s, *Index* also presents post-conceptual explorations by the next generation, including Jack Goldstein, Barbara Kruger, Mitchell Syrop, James Welling, and Christopher Williams. During the late 1970s, California Institute of the Arts in Valencia; University of California, Los Angeles; and San Francisco Art Institute were among the many influential schools in California where artist-teachers like Asher and Baldessari advocated a pedagogy rooted in intensive individual studio practice balanced with critical discussion. Informed by pop, minimal, conceptual, and feminist art, the work of second-generation conceptualists coming out of these schools is characterized by its ironic distance and concern with gender roles, sexuality, the construction of identity, and the wide-ranging psychological impact of media and corporate cultures. Many of these artists joined a variety of media into single works: Nayland Blake, Meg Cranston, Richard Jackson, Mike Kelley, Martin Kersels, and Stephen Prina combined sculpture, performance, painting, drawing, and photography to startling effect, often using found objects and mundane imagery to rethink autobiographical narratives through conceptual frameworks.

As is well documented in the writing about California art of the 1990s, the physical and cultural landscape of the region fosters diversity in art practices, as does the multigenerational makeup of the artist community. Responding to earlier conceptual modes, artists including Cindy Bernard, T. Kelly Mason, and Dave Muller cultivated multifaceted practices resulting in works in media that are melded or invented, with an emphasis on social interaction as an aesthetic activity. Research-based content and highly specific installation details inform the practices of artists like Richard Hawkins, Sharon Lockhart, Sarah Seager, Diana Thater, and Lincoln Tobier, while works by Jim Isermann, Jorge Pardo, and Pae White quote directly from the decorative arts and innovative 20th-century design to explore a cultural understanding of furniture, architecture, and sculpture.

As the vocabularies of contemporary art are shaped by California's rich artist community, the roots and influence of conceptual art are constantly and simultaneously present and evolving. With generations in dialogue within art schools and in studios throughout the region, California artists continue to innovate from the solid foundation of conceptualism.

RELATED EVENTS

ART TALKS

These informal discussions of current exhibitions feature artists, curators, critics, writers, and other arts professionals. Unless otherwise noted, talks take place in the exhibition galleries, attendance is free with museum admission, and reservations are not required.

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

THURSDAY, AUG 28, 6:30pm

THE GEFGEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

David Lamelas, artist

SUNDAY, NOV 23, 3pm

THE GEFGEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

George Baker, associate professor of art history at UCLA

Art Talks are made possible by The Times Mirror Foundation Endowment, Good Works Foundation, and the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles.

THIS LANGUAGE OF IMAGE: INDEX COLLABORATIVE POETRY READING

SUNDAY, SEPT 14, 3pm

THE GEFGEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

Poets Elena Karina Byrne, David St. John, Paul Vangelisti, and Gail Wronsky read works written in response to the exhibition.

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

FREE with museum admission

TEENS OF CONTEMPORARY ART (TOCA) EVENT

SUNDAY, SEPT 14, 3–5pm

THE GEFGEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

Hear artist Christina Fernandez talk about her work in relation to the exhibition.

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

FREE; no reservations required

Teens of Contemporary Art is made possible by the Joseph Drown Foundation and UBS

FIRST SUNDAYS ARE FOR FAMILIES WORKSHOPS

SUNDAYS: OCT 5 and NOV 2, 1–3:30pm

THE GEFGEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

Join an interactive spotlight tour of *Index: Conceptualism in California from the Permanent Collection* and create a conceptual work of your own using unusual materials.

INFO 213/621-1765 or fflores@moca.org

FREE; no reservations required

First Sundays are For Families is presented by Bank of America. Generous support is provided by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

COURSES

Contemporary Art 101

SATURDAYS: OCT 11, 18, and 25 and NOV 1, 10am–12:30pm

MOCA GRAND AVENUE AND THE GEFGEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

Inspired by the exhibitions currently on view, including *Martin Kippenberger: The Problem Perspective*, *Louise Bourgeois*, and *Index: Conceptualism in California from the Permanent Collection*, and drawing from the museum's permanent collection, participants will explore the language and movements of art from the 1960s to the present day. The four-session course will include exhibition walkthroughs and slide lectures.

Instructor: Mary Beth Carosello, art historian and exhibitions liaison, J. Paul Getty Museum

Advance registration required; no refunds

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

\$130 MOCA members; \$150 nonmembers

Sculpture and Installation:

Exploring the Third Dimension in Contemporary Art

SATURDAYS: NOV 22, DEC 6, and DEC 13, 10am–1pm

MOCA GRAND AVENUE AND THE GEFGEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

In conjunction with the exhibitions *Martin Kippenberger: The Problem Perspective*, *Louise Bourgeois*, and *Index: Conceptualism in California from the Permanent Collection*, MOCA will offer a three-session course exploring the ideas of sculpture and installation from the end of the 20th century. Participants will have the opportunity to investigate how the notion of three-dimensional artwork has changed in the past 40 years through exhibition walkthroughs, slide lectures, and discussion.

Instructor: Gwen Robertson, art historian and MOCA educator

Advance registration required; no refunds

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

\$90 MOCA members; \$120 nonmembers

Education programs at MOCA are supported by The James Irvine Foundation; the William Randolph Hearst Endowment for Education Programs; Jean and Lewis Wolff and Family; The Lura Gard Newhouse Charitable Lead Trust; the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission; Wells Fargo; The Green Foundation; and David Hockney.



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MOCA THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES

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