

Chris Kraus, Jan Tumlir & Jane McFadden

LA Artland

Contemporary Art from
Los Angeles



HOLLY

Black Dog Publishing

LA Artland is a survey of one of the most vibrant and influential art scenes of recent decades. Having produced world-renowned artists such as Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Chris Burden, Catherine Opie and Jim Shaw, Los Angeles since the 90s has rivaled New York as the US contemporary art capital. With the continuing success of LA-based art programs at CalArts, Art Center and UCLA, as well as a growing gallery scene stretching from blue-chip to artist-run spaces, Los Angeles as an art center continues to thrive, producing increasingly successful generations of artists. The focus of this publication is on extensive visual documentation of contemporary artists working in Los Angeles now, ranging from well-established international names to emerging talent.

Alongside this visual survey are three essays. Chris Kraus (author of *Video Green: Los Angeles Art and the Triumph of Nothingness*) incorporates interviews with artists and gallery owners providing insight into the network of scenes that make up contemporary LA art now. Jan Tumlir (independent art critic) contextualizes contemporary art in Los Angeles, commenting on recent trends and the influence of the LA-based MFA programs. Jane McFadden (art historian currently teaching at Art Center) traces specific trajectories between artists living and working in Los Angeles from the 60s to today, forming a unique history of the area.

The artists in *LA Artland* include:

Amy ADLER
Ron ATHEY
Anthony AUSGANG
John BALDESSARI
Hillary BLEECKER
Andrea BOWERS
Mark BRADFORD
Delia BROWN
David BUNN
Chris BURDEN
Jeff BURTON
Jane CALLISTER
Brian CALVIN

Carole CAROOMPAS
Carolyn CASTAÑO
Liz CRAFT
Meg CRANSTON
Russell CROTTY
Vaginal DAVIS
Sam DURANT
Kim FISHER
Jeremy GILBERT-ROLFE
Mark GROTJAHN
Julian HOEBER
Evan HOLLOWAY
Mike KELLEY
Mary KELLY
Martin KERSELS
LOS SUPER ELEGANTES
Terrence KOH
Liz LARNER

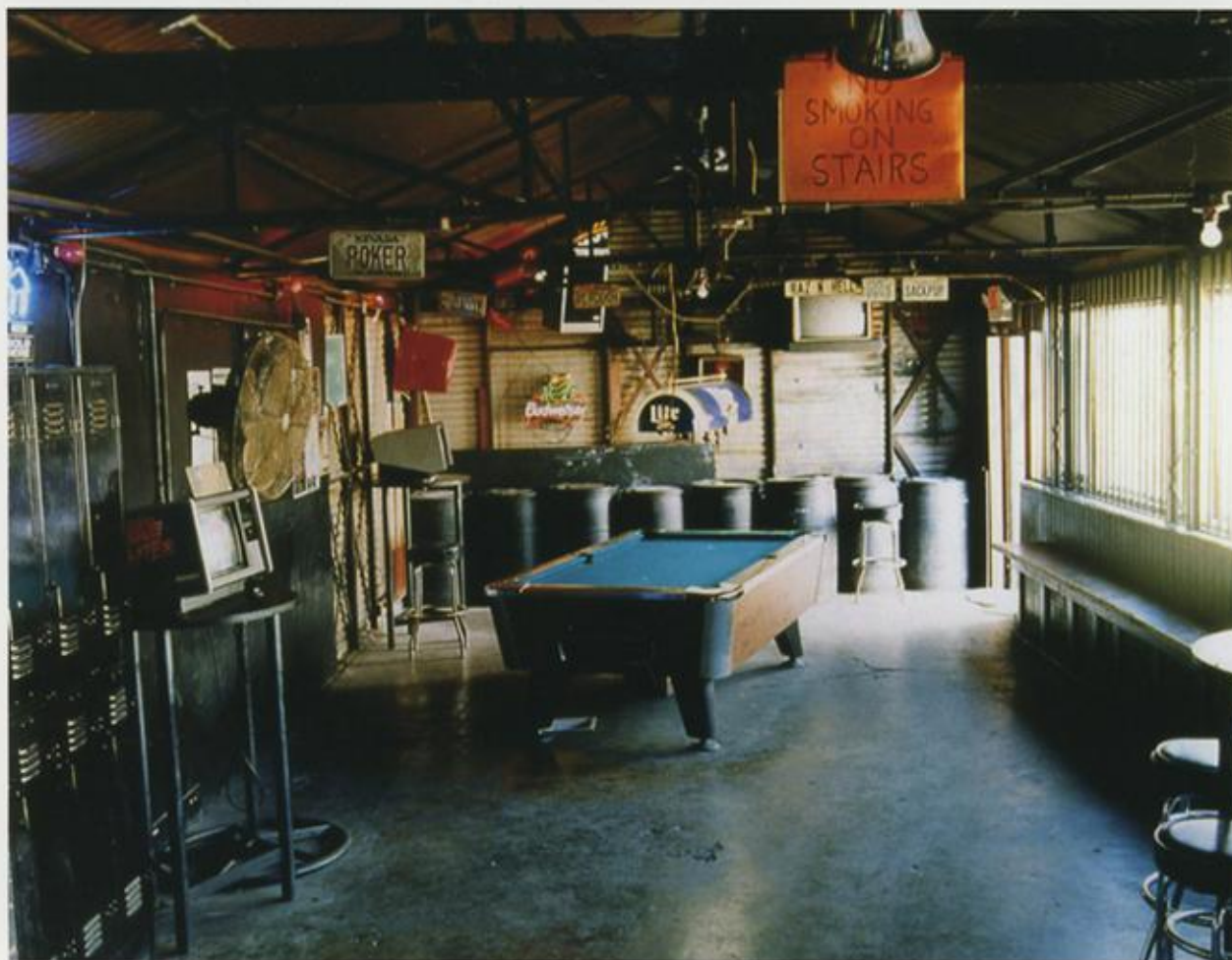
Won JU LIM
Sharon LOCKHART
Nick LOWE
Daniel MARLOS
Paul McCARTHY
Ivan MORLEY
Sandeep MUKHERJEE
Dave MULLER
JP MUNRO
Catherine OPIE
Kaz OSHIRO
Laura OWENS
Jorge PARDO
Jennifer PASTOR
Raymond PETTIBON
Lari PITTMAN
Monique PRIETO
John PYLYPCHUK

Jason RHOADES
Ed RUSCHA
Mark RYDEN
Dean SAMESHIMA
Pauline Stella SANCHI
Jim SHAW
Paul SIETSEMA
Frances STARK
Jennifer STEINKAMP
Ed TEMPLETON
Diana THATER
Mungo THOMSON
Kerry TRIBE
Shirley TSE
Marnie WEBER
Pae WHITE
Wayne WHITE
Andrea ZITTEL



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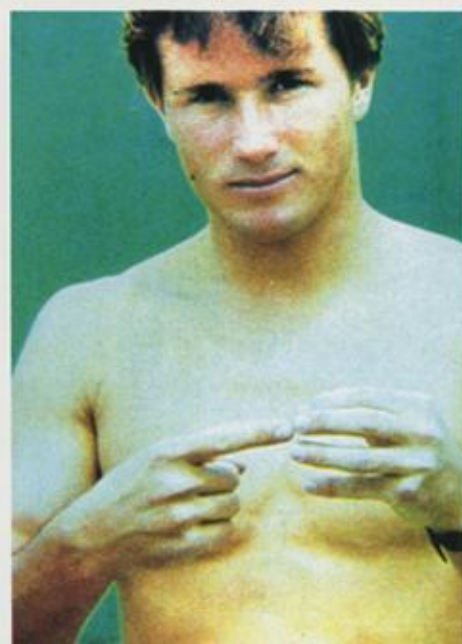
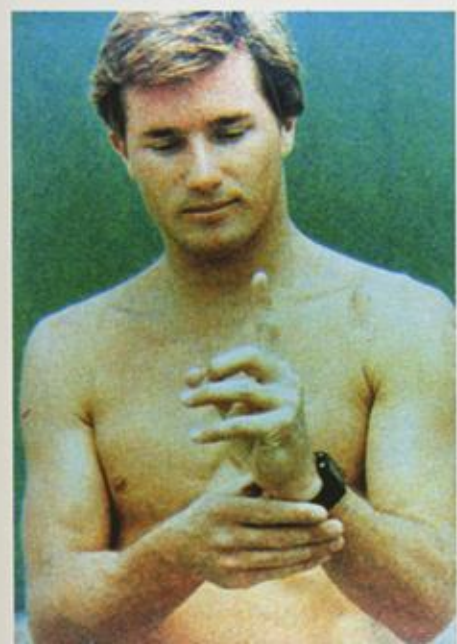
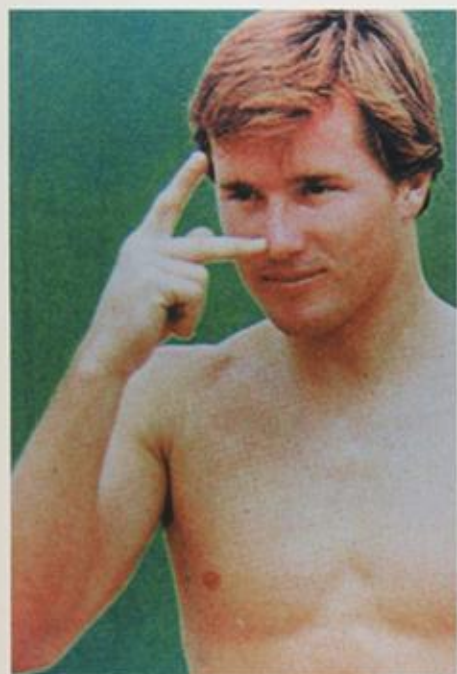
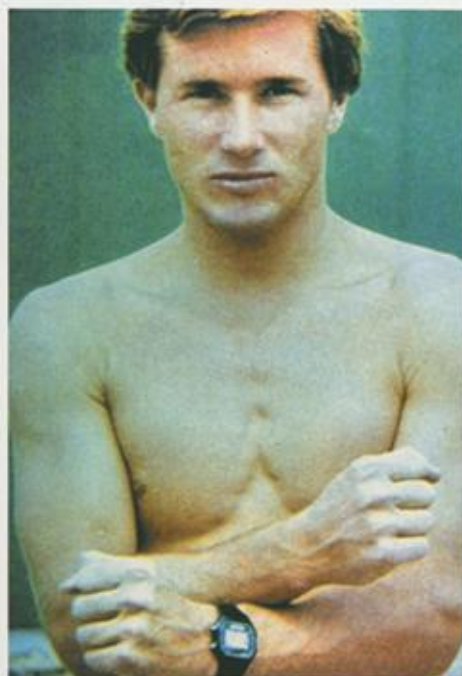
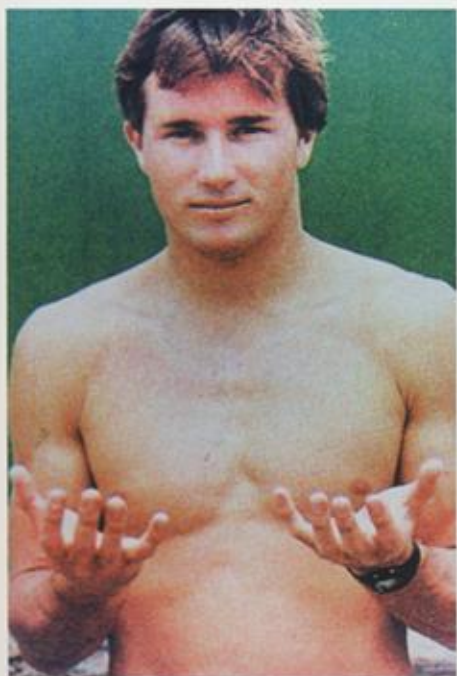
Dean Sameshima belongs to a current generation of photographers who combine sexy conceptualism with frottage politics—using in particular appropriation and seriality—in order to explore sexual desire and underground culture. As much informed by the West Coast photographic practice of John Baldessari and Catherine Opie as by the provocative writings of Michel Foucault and Ronald Camus, Sameshima sidesteps the modernist reverence for originality and flouts puritanical dogma by asserting a specifically queer way of borrowing and re-presenting images. Though Andy Warhol, Richard Prince and even Sherrie Levine may seem like obvious precursors, Sameshima's found pop pictures are neither peppy nor cold. They are not self-consciously critical of art canons and media theories either; his concern is of a more perverse but highly coded language. In the past he has re-photographed images culled from fashion magazines and appropriated "self-portraits" from amateur websites.

In his first UK solo show at Alison Jaques Gallery in 2004 which referred to John Rechy's *The Sexual Outlaw, 1977*—a book that recounted the author's three-day sex binge in LA—Sameshima presented two groups of work further continuing his interest in the notion of a specifically gay sexual dialect. In the first series entitled *Deaf Dude*, the voice's obliteration in the deaf guy echo the interesting paradox in which the mainstream gay culture has come into widespread social acceptance while the queer outsider gets silenced—a silence multiplied by re-photographing the image of a deaf gay man from an 80s softcore porn magazine. While a certain melancholia is apparent in the subject-image, his use of sign language for homosexual purposes (signs include "asshole" and "blowjob") is a glorious indication of possible resistance to normative behavior and surveillance. In the second series, the artist again explores the impending disappearance of queer spaces and sexual banditry as evidenced by the closure of several local gay establishments as well as "no cruising" signs plastered around the area. *Gauntlet II* is a group of photographs depicting an LA leather bar shot in daylight in order to show the seeming banality and normalcy of the space. **v.b.**

Gauntlet II (O Daddy),
2003
from *Outlaw*
c-type print, 16" x 19"

opposite from left to right:
Deaf Dude, 2003
from *Outlaw*
Fuji-Flex prints,
14" x 11"

Untitled (Testicles);
*Untitled (Mutual
Blow Job)*;
*Untitled (Mutual
Masturbation)*;
Untitled (Penis);
Untitled (Screwing);
Untitled (Climax);
Untitled (Erection);
Untitled (Well Hung);
Untitled (Blow Job)





Liz Craft's sculptures are fantastical creations, melded from an array of Californian influences including hippie culture, psychedelia and cowboys, alongside more generic fairy tale fare, including mutant bodies, witches, unicorns and dwarves. Often related to the earlier scatological sculptures of Paul McCarthy, in Craft's work an iconography of the female body takes the gross-out factor in a new direction—with her scrawny sexual *Venice Witch*, 2003, or her semi-self portrait *Foxy Lady*, 1999; a multi-limbed dog-woman whose leash becomes a magical lasso appearing to define both time and space.

Craft works in a variety of media, from realistically painted fiberglass, to found objects worked into complex installations, to the most traditional of sculptural formats: bronze. Whereas the subject matter of her work appears to be culled from dreams, hallucinations and the drugged out street culture of Venice Beach, her technique is glossy and perfectionist, a Disney-esque rendering of the underbelly of the Hollywood dream. Craft's sculptural characters appear as if they have been conjured from an aggressive, freaked out brainstorm, with her 2002 exhibition *A Real Mother For Ya*, in London, bringing together a bronze motorbike made of desert flotsam, a skeleton rider, a treasure map showing the journey from LA, and a private view card depicting the artist astride the plaster cast of the motorbike, wearing a Native American costume and a seductive, challenging look. The conflation of icons—from the machismo of the cowboy, to grand equestrian sculptures cast in bronze, to fantasies of sexually easy biker chicks juxtaposed with some kind of cute Native American character—render a narrative around national and sexual identities that finds an equivalent in the work of Sarah Lucas. Both artists use their specific milieu combined with broader cultural fantasies to create comic, frightening tableaux that challenge both their viewer and the homogeneity of international biennial style art. c.g.

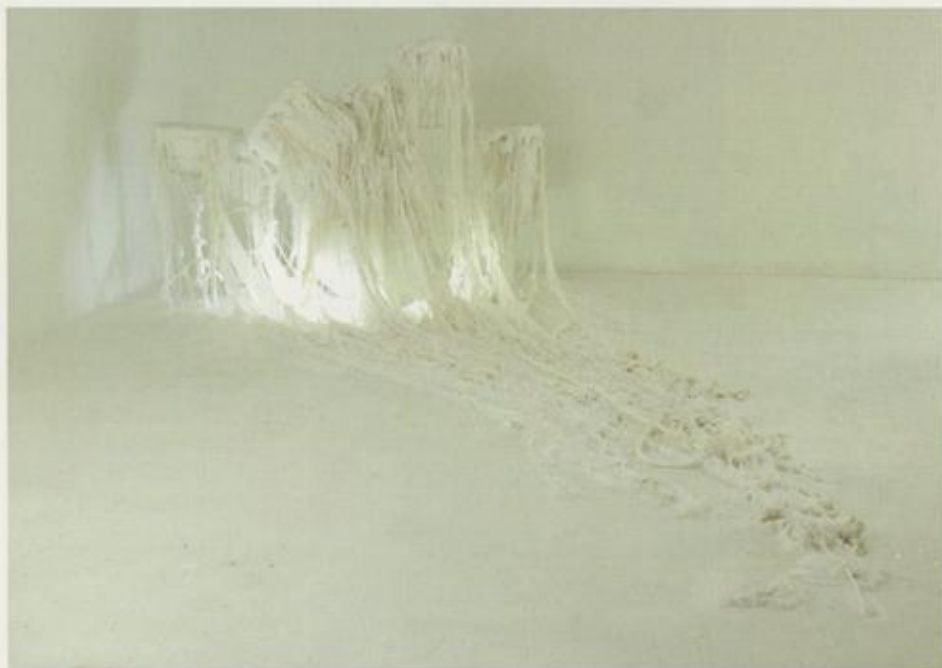
Treasure Chest, 2002
wood, steel, leather,
plaster, bronze, velvet,
43" x 33" x 41"

opposite top:
The Pony, 2003
wood, steel, leather,
plaster, bronze, velvet,
43" x 33" x 41"

opposite middle:
Venice Witch, 2003
bronze, stainless steel
and Venetian beads,
63" x 16" x 84"

opposite bottom:
Venice Witch, 2003
detail





Terence Koh's prolific output includes books, installations, websites and performances, in which seduction and desire are tirelessly charted and mobilized. Working for almost a decade under the alias of Asianpunkboy, he achieved notoriety for his self-titled books and website, which Koh describes as "filled with an infusion of gentle surfaces, dissident eruptions, haikus, mapped pictures, dirty illustrations, moist cum, decadent artificial words, love and all manners of faggy filth."

Since 2003, the year Koh killed off Asianpunkboy "somewhere in a secret park," he has produced numerous installations and sculptures. Typically shrouded in a signature white powder, his sculptures riff on themes of queer sexuality, mortality, the morphing of high and low culture and the evanescent substance of an individual personality. For *gone, yet still*, 2005, Koh constructed a room in which he could live for the remainder of his life. He created over a hundred glass vitrines, filled with found and made objects such as Michael Jackson figurines, busts of Pope John Paul, myriad children's toys and ceremonial African masks. The collection of objects is suffused through with symbols and imagery of gay sexuality, and also with the ritualized imagery of death and transcendence. Everything is cloaked in white, a color with potent significance (depending on one's culture) as a symbol of death, of purity, of virginity or of mourning. A note on the wall, described by the artist as a type of "jisei"—a farewell poem composed by Zen monks or samurai in the seconds before their death—lends the installation its name: "gone, yet still/i lie in bed/watching the stars."

Koh's extravagant performances, such as enacting a "Chinese opera" in the street, are often an integral part of his sculptural installations. Two all-white, pearl-encrusted drums and a low-hanging chandelier constructed using shards of broken mirrors were the basis of a recent performance, in which a pair of boys played the drums while Koh sang and shrieked in an invented language. In a subsequent installation Koh presented all-black versions of the drums and chandelier, which he attempted to have sex with—using an over-sized dildo—again singing and screaming in the same bizarre tongue. **G.S.**

'Zen and cum aesthetic' makes it sound like I do work that would entice rich Beverly Hill's women who do yoga, practice s/m, decorate their backyards with pretty Japanese stones or phallic water fountains and who also collect art. Actually that pretty much describes my ideal collector. I think my work is particularly well suited to be installed within the backyards of LA.

— Terence Koh¹

¹ Koh, Terence, in an interview with Ana Finel Honigman, "The Bunny with Bite," *Artnet Magazine*, 2004.

left:
These decades that we never sleep (drum set), 2004

drum set, plaster, paint, wax, pearls, rope, fur, fabric, plastic, 4' x 7' x 17'

right:
50 star machine of drowning boy, 2004
chandelier, metal, wire, string, plastic, glass, paint, wax, mirror, cotton, 30" x 30" x 69"