

THE PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTOR

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RANDOM NOTES ON PHOTOGRAPHY IN L.A. by Jean Ferro



Jean Ferro: *Christian Dior and Quentin Shih at Art Lexing at photo la*

Photo la, 2012, The 21st Annual International Los Angeles Photographic Art Exposition

Photo la at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium starts the parade of grand receptions throughout Los Angeles, including Barker Hanger, Los Angeles Convention Center, and a new addition, LA Live. This year there was a stellar collaboration with

Pacific Standard Time (PST) that included museums, foundations, and galleries filled with historical references to the 1945–1980 Southern California art scene.

The 21st photo la opening night preview reception was hosted by internationally renowned musician/photographer **Moby** for the **Wallis Annenberg Department of Photography** at the **Los Angeles**

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County Museum of Art. The auditorium lobby was turned into a sound machine with radio KCRW DJ **Aaron Byrd.**

New faces graced the space such as **Argentifrance**, **Erdmann Contemporary** (South Africa), and from Germany: **Jorge Maass Kunsthandel**, **Gallerie Open**, and **Gallerie Deschler**, bringing with them a very contemporary display of work. **Raymond Meeks | dumbsaint**, (Portland), **Behold, Inc.** (New York), and **Art Lexing** (Miami) with subtle color group portraits by **Quentin Shih**. Participating once again was **Queensland Centre of Photography** (Australia) as well as a return of **Czech Center of Photography** (Czech Republic), and **Northern Light Gallery** (Denmark).

A few familiar faces included **21st Editions**, **Nazraeli Press**, **Susan Spiritus Gallery**, **Stephen Cohen Gallery**, **dnj**, and **Smith Anderson North**. **Blind Photographers Association** returned this year with a showing of nude work by **Bruce Hall**. New to photo la 2012 was the eagerly anticipated **Ansel Adams Gallery** hosted by Ansel's grandson Matthew Adams, showcasing their gallery photographers as well as Ansel's classic and most collectible work.

In the midst of all the traditional work there was a mixture of an exaggerated narrative, such as **LA Art Association's** memorable **LARGE** images of just eyes. The **Monroe Gallery** (Santa Fe) stayed very busy with sales of pictures of The Beatles, Marilyn Monroe, and other classic personalities. **Norman Kulkin** was there with his Select Ver-



Jean Ferro: *Weston Naef at Northern Light Gallery preparing for his Watkins lecture at photo la*

nacular Photographs as well as his own artistic renderings.

The new Salon de Tableaux, an area of tabletop presentations, showcased vintage, vernacular, and unique photography. **Women In Photography International** exhibited an array of black-and-white and color photography as well as a special digital presentation of "footwear."

Book signings included keynote speaker **Catherine Opie** signing *Inauguration*, **Zero + Publishing: Roman Cho** and **Tatiana Willis** with *Heroes & Villains*; and **Fatemeh Burnes's** *drift* with foreword by **Peter Frank**. Other signings included **Hunter Drohojowska-Philip's** *Rebels in Paradise: The Los Angeles Art Scene & the 1960s*; **Lloyd Ziff** with *Near North: Photographs of Alaska and the Yukon*; and others.

Keynote Author's Talk: **Weston Naef** (curator Emeritus, Department of Photographs, **J. Paul Getty Museum**) presented "Carleton Watkins and His First Collectors" in conjunction with the newly published book, *Carleton Watkins: The Complete Mammoth Photographs* (J. Paul Getty Museum,

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2011). Artist Talks with **Stephen Shore**, **Jeffrey Henson Scales** (photographer and Photo Editor, *The New York Times*); and other panels on photo collecting by curators and artists filled the lecture rooms.

WHITE ON WHITE...a noticeable change at photo la 2012 was a strong leaning toward more contemporary work. The trendy use of “white” frames to display work as well as large-scale Plexiglas- or aluminum-mounted frameless work was more evident again this year. It was a noticeable change as I looked back at my images from the previous year that showed booths with more traditional black framed work.

Informative events with a focus on the Getty Pacific Standard Time program included “Soho Cameraworks / Cameravision, 1975–1980” and “The Golden Age of Physique Photography, 1945–1970.”

There was an excellent turnout for Moby’s book signing of *Destroyed*, 2011, printed by **Damiani Editore**, the new publishing branch of the printing company, **Grafiche Damiani**, in Bologna, Italy. The EMERGING FOCUS Learning Series showcased Lytro, an awkward oblong-shaped new generation of light field cameras with the unique capability of shifting the perspective of the viewer, and even switching between 2D and 3D views.

The historic Santa Monica Civic Auditorium is situated just two blocks from the beach, providing a convenient space for the event, located near international restaurants, hotels, and shopping.

As always, the four days were packed with programs, lectures, book signings, and events that bring gallery artists and the public together to celebrate the wonderful world of photography.



Jean Ferro: *Crystal Slippers*, Jean Ferro / *Women In Photography International Footwear presentation at photo la*

The Third Annual Art Contemporary Los Angeles

For the Third Annual **Art Contemporary Los Angeles**, **Judy Chicago** recreated her installation *Disappearing Environments*, first shown in Century City in 1968. Positioned at the entrance of **Tim Flemming’s** Art Contemporary at Santa Monica Airport’s Barker Hanger and using 25 tons of dry ice that evaporated over the four-day event, the gentle fog created an aura of mystique on the fair’s opening night.



Jean Ferro: *Judy Chicago’s Disappearing Environments at Art Contemporary Los Angeles*

This year I invited photographer **Rena Small** to attend the opening night event with me. We ran into each other recently at the Bergamot Station exhibit of photographers Jullian Wasser, Edmund Teske, and artist George Herms, part of the historical J. Paul Getty Pacific Standard Time’s “In Focus: Los Angeles, 1946–1980” (October 1, 2011 through May 6, 2012). We reminisced over our self-portrait images. Mine, an image called *Spiderman* and hers a Polaroid SX 70, published in French *Photo* #168, 9/1981.

Seventy galleries filled the hanger, creating a wonderful mixture of installation, large paintings, video, photography, and sculpture. **ACE Gallery** premiered one of LA’s legends, **Ed Moses**, who signed a poster from his recent work with three indelible pens held together in one hand, creating art on the poster itself...of course I had to have one and a picture of him, signing mine!

Since photography isn’t the main focus as at photo la, the audience is more avant-garde, with dynamic presentations and installations by artists from Milan, New York, Mexico, Melbourne, Stockholm, UK, and most particularly, Los Angeles. A few of the photo-based galleries I visited were



Jean Ferro: *Ed Moses*, Ace Gallery at Art Contemporary Los Angeles

Michael Benevento, Angles Gallery, and **Jancar**, all from Los Angeles. **LTD**, also from L.A., had a wonderful video installation called *Land Periscope II* by **Anton Lieberman**. **David Castillo**, (Miami) presented work by **Kate Gilmore**, *Through the Claw*, chromogenic print, 30"x40", edition of 10, and **Highlight Gallery** (San Francisco) showcased **Flip Jardin**, *Medium Photomontage*, inkjet print on pearl paper, 44"x44", edition 2 of 10, both caught my eye. I also found the work of **Abigail Reynolds**, a series of cut and folded vintage bookplates, intriguing and thoughtful — probably my favorite of the show from the gallery **Ambach & Rice** (Los Angeles).

Art Contemporary offered a new program, Paddle 8, an online auction experience that provided VIP users the opportunity to view items such as LACMA'S Paddle 8 page offering a curated selection of special items to benefit museum programs — limited-edition prints by **William Eggleston**, **Barbara Kruger**, and others.

An after-hours event at **Liz Glynn's Black Box**, a bar in the Hollywood area, was set up for artists and gallerist to gather every evening during

Art Contemporary and PST, "where anything can and will happen unannounced" according to the promotion. I wanted to stop by since it's close to my home...instead each night I was eager to get home, slip into something comfortable, have a glass of wine, add to my collection of contact cards and make plans for the next day.

The Los Angeles Art Show

The **Los Angeles Art Show** started off with **Tom LeBonge**, 4th District, Los Angeles City Councilman and President of **Sister Cities of Los Angeles, Inc.**, welcoming everyone to the 17th Annual LA Art Show while the special opening night performance of "Myths of Rape" engaged the VIP attendees in food for thought with artists moving through the crowd, carrying large handheld printed message boards. Artists **Elana Mann** and **Audrey Chan**, working with **Leslie Labowitz-Starus** and **Suzanne Lacy**, recreated "Three Weeks in May," a 1977 performance by Labowitz-Starus. The 2012 reinvention of the work transforms the original piece to raise contemporary concerns around rape, sexual assault, and activism.

David Arquette hosted the Opening Night Premiere Party with a portion of ticket sales donated to **The Art of Elysium**, an outreach program to support artist collaborations with youth education.

Unlike the other shows during January, the downtown LA Convention Center Show has a spectacular grand opening evening with a host of incredible culinary treats including champagne and everything from sushi to pasta — and the best desserts on the planet! Artists from all over the city



Jean Ferro: *Clyde Butcher* at Gallery G2 (Santa Monica, CA) at The Los Angeles Art Show



Jean Ferro: *James Georgopoulos' Guns of Cinema at Axion Contemporary Gallery at The Los Angeles Art Show*

gather to celebrate each other and the city's involvement with the art.

It's been a down-memory-lane year at many of the events. I walked up to this wonderful homemade ice cream stand with the signage "Dandy Don." It turns out **Don Whittemore** is "Dandy Don," the person who gave me my very first photo assignment. I had just gotten my first camera, a used battleship motorized Nikon F out of layaway — remember this was before teenagers could have credit cards! I was working in the promotion department of RCA Records in 1973 when their photographer cancelled for the next day shoot. I walked into Don's office and said, "I can do it." And he said, "You got the job!" The next eight years I enjoyed shooting music industry artists and concerts for RCA from Bowie to Cleo Laine as well as working for other record labels.

But back to LA Art Show. Photography is a minor part of this event compared to sculpture, painting, and installation. I could probably count on one hand the number of photography-only booths.

Each year it seems we see more galleries that represent the growth of the Asian population in LA. In 2010 the **Santa Barbara Museum of Art** exhibited "Chaotic Harmony: Korean Contemporary Photography" and "Everyday Realities," Pacific Rim artists from China and Japan. At the Los Angeles Art Show, **ME Photo Art Gallery**, (Beijing, China) showcased emerging and established photographers from all over China while **See+ Gallery** also from (Beijing), a professional agency and marketing organization, provides a platform for dissemination of fine arts through lectures and seminars by international curators and critics. Both filled their booths with wall images as well as stacks of images on tables.

One of the most prominent photographic exhibits was **G2 Gallery**, (Venice, CA) with a specific agenda — saving the environment. Since 2008, G2

Gallery has organized environmental photography exhibits with proceeds from sales going to leading non-profit organizations with corresponding environmental initiatives. Large-scale black-and-white images by **Clyde Butcher** filled the gallery walls. The gallery's first full-scale exhibition of work by Ansel Adams, "Open to the Public," opens February 21. The theme of the exhibit is accessibility, both in terms of public parks and the availability of Ansel Adams's prints to the public.

Also on hand at LA Art Show was **Modernbook Gallery Editions** (San Francisco, CA), and **Villa Del Arts Galleries** (Barcelona, Spain). The **DTR Modern Galleries** (Boston, MA) presented "Get Lucky Marilyn, 2011" a mixed-media work by **Robert Mars**. Don't think I've been to a January Art extravaganza in LA that hasn't had at least one Marilyn Monroe image! It's possible that Princess Diana may have been most photographed, and Marilyn most artistically interpreted.

Axion Contemporary Gallery, (Santa Monica, CA) hung **James Georgopoulos's** newest 2012 collection "Guns of Cinema," an acrylic and resin coated hand-toned collection of silver gelatin prints on panels, 16"x24"x2". According to his bio, James is confronting controversy questioning "what makes an object inspirational?"

Back in the late '90s I did a photo program with incarcerated gang kids and they were talking about guns so much, I mentioned, I maybe should have one. Three of them jumped up and said, I can get you one by tomorrow!

I must say over the last several years I've grown more impressed with the outpouring of work by **Los Angeles Art Association, Gallery 825**, founded in 1925. Their growth and presence is incredible. At the LA Art show, they had a wonderful installation, "Hydroxia," by **James Peterson**, as well as a very strong presentation at photo la this year.

Amazing, when I spoke to Stephen Perloff about writing pieces about the LA Art shows during January this year, I thought for sure I would do a short take on each event since I would be on site for five days at the booth for the **Women In Photography International** photo la booth. To my surprise, letting things settle, thinking and revisiting, it really allowed the work that impressed, confused, or challenged me the most to come forward. Of course there's even more, but I try to concentrate on the photographic side since this is *The Photograph Collector*.

Affordable Art Show

The new kid on the block was The Affordable Art Show. I finally got to visit the show on its final day, Sunday. It was very enjoyable actually, held at LA Live, a large tented area on top of the main parking lot.



Jean Ferro: Zhou HongBin: Aquarium 11, at Living with Art Gallery at the Affordable Art Show

I was invited by panelist **Julie Navakoff**, Nova Fine Art, for the discussion on How to Grow Your Collection with **Crissy Crawford**, director/founder of **ArtStar.com**; **Lauren Mang**, specialist from **Bonhams Fine Photographs**; **Simmy Swinder**, **Carmichael Gallery**; and **Laura Gatewood**, curator and contributor to **Flavorpill's Art Insider**. It was very informative and it gave me a chance to talk to Lauren about my vintage 1957 Marjorie Cameron sketchbook. Marjorie's work, considered obscene, was responsible for the closing of the Wallace Berman show at the Ferus Gallery in June of 1957 by the LAPD. After that closing Berman never showed in a commercial gallery during his lifetime. Cameron is recognized by the Getty as an influential artist listed under the Pacific Standard Time line-up.

There was actually a good showing of photographs at the fair. **Capitol Culture** (United Kingdom) presented **John Kenny** portraits of African



Jean Ferro: Culture Gallery (UK) at the Affordable Art Show

society, black-and-white C-prints with acrylic face-mount in three editions, the largest 25; **John Sparshatt** images of music and dance from the Latin world, similar style presentation in color as well as platinum prints and large format prints by **Barry Cawston**. Also from **London Bleach Box Gallery**.

Living with Art (New York) had a large extraordinary image *Aquarium 11* by **Zhou HongBin**; interesting to note the image sold very well. The other artist in the booth, **Albert Delamour** invented a layering process using resin and precious materials like gold or silver leaf to create stunning results that elevate the traditional photograph into a high dimensional space. His large-format nature series was very beautiful. It was also good to see a collector purchase Delamour's *Love & Hate* piece. We were in the elevator together and she was thrilled and said it was a perfect gift for her husband for Valentine's Day. From Bloomington, **Indiana Pictura Gallery** presented a contemplative color series by **Osamu James Nakagawa** along with work by **Joe Johnson** and **Matt Nighswander**.

Clic Gallery from New York had a wonderful Madonna image by **Maripol**, who was behind the Jean-Michel Basquiat documentary "Downtown 81," which I saw at a private screening during the MOCA Street Art Exhibition with musician Coati Mundi who appeared in the doc with the band Kid Creole & the Coconuts.

If they decide to come back next year, I think it will be even more popular. It's convenient and situated next to the Los Angeles Art Show at the Convention Center. There were so many events, special openings, installations, and programs provided by the Getty's Pacific Standard Time, so January 2012 in LA was vibrant with art, collectors, and hopefully sales!

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In the next issue, a report on Classic Photographs L. A.



AUCTION PREVIEW

On Tuesday, February 28 **Swann Galleries** will conduct an auction of Fine Photographs & Photobooks that ranges from 19th-century albums depicting exotic lands to classic views of New York City, to thought-provoking works by contemporary