



## INTRODUCTION

“It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969–1973” is a groundbreaking and extraordinarily ambitious project for Pomona College. With twenty-nine artists utilizing all of the galleries of the museum for the entire academic year, this is the largest exhibition the Pomona College Museum of Art has ever mounted. The first kernel of an idea for this project took place over ten years ago, during my conversations with Mowry Baden while planning his 2001 exhibition “Freckled Gyres: Sculpture by Mowry Baden.” Baden, a 1958 Pomona alumnus, relayed fascinating stories about Hal Glicksman’s tenure as director and curator, Michael Asher’s seminal installation in 1970, and other remarkable projects that took place at Pomona College. A couple of years later, I began working with another Pomona College alumnus, Barbara T. Smith (’53), on an exhibition, “The 21st Century Odyssey Part II: The Performances of Barbara T. Smith,” that opened in January 2005. Smith, an active performance artist since the 1960s, also regaled me with stories of the Pomona College gallery and art department.

In 2006 and 2007, I had several opportunities to meet with alumni James Turrell (’65) and Peter Shelton (’73), while planning for the exhibition, “James Turrell at Pomona,” and installing Shelton’s sculpture *GandhiG* at the Museum. (Both projects were organized by museum director Kathleen Howe.) Baden, Turrell, and Shelton were all in Claremont during the late 1960s and early 1970s. They fondly remember their respective times at Pomona College, where they reveled in the experimental and open nature of the art department and exhibition program. More stories emerged: public nudity; urination inside the gallery; burning matches thrown at a naked woman; mind-altering excursions into a reconfigured gallery open twenty-four hours a day; lost rare videotapes; experiments with balloons, water, and broken windshields; the resignation of the entire art faculty in 1973; and many others. These tales indicated a period of such intrigue and sustained inquiry that I set out to study this era in more depth.

I knew that Pomona College had played a vital role in the history of art in Los Angeles. An early example of Pomona College’s leadership in the arts is *Prometheus*, a fresco painted in 1930 by the Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco. Orozco was commissioned to paint the mural in Frary Dining Hall at the urging of José Pijoan, a popular professor of Hispanic civilization and art history at the college. Recognized as one of Orozco’s great masterpieces, *Prometheus* was Orozco’s first work in this country and the first piece by a Mexican muralist in the United States.

It was in the 1930s that the gallery, which would later become the Pomona College Museum of Art, began to serve as the primary visual art facility of Pomona College. Originally established as part of the art department, its programming was developed by a series of prominent scholars who served as chair of the art department and as director of the gallery. Professor Pijoan was the first director, followed by Seymour Slive (1950–54), Peter Selz (1954–58), Bates Lowry (1958–64), and Nicolai Cikovsky (1964–68).

But it wasn't until the late 1960s and early 1970s that the museum and art department at Pomona College became almost legendary. The site of ground-breaking installation and performance art work, the museum presented a number of intensely creative and innovative projects that reflected a confluence of art faculty, curators, visiting artists, and students who would go on to make significant contributions to contemporary art history. From 1969 to 1973, this era was a time of intense intellectual and artistic ferment at Pomona College.

It all coalesced in the fall of 1969, when Baden, the newly arrived chair of the art department and professor of sculpture, hired Hal Glicksman as gallery director and curator. From the fall of 1969 through June of 1970, Glicksman devised a unique series of exhibitions for a program that he called the Artist's Gallery. Under this program, the gallery functioned as a studio-residency for Conceptual artists in Southern California. Michael Asher, Lewis Baltz, Michael Brewster ('68), Judy Chicago, Ron Cooper, Tom Eatherton, Lloyd Hamrol, and Robert Irwin, among others, presented work or created different environmental situations in the gallery.

Following Glicksman, Helene Winer became the gallery director and curator in the fall of 1970. She organized exhibitions of Bas Jan Ader, Ger van Elk, Jack Goldstein, Joe Goode, William Leavitt, John McCracken, Ed Moses, Allen Ruppersberg, and William Wegman. She also presented performance work by artists such as Chris Burden ('69), Hirokazu Kosaka, and Wolfgang Stoerchle.

In concert with the innovative exhibition programming by Glicksman and Winer, the art department thrived under a unique group of faculty members: Baden, Baltz, Turrell, David Gray, and Guy Williams. In addition to Burden, other outstanding students at the time included Brewster, Thomas Crow ('69), Judy Fiskin ('66), Shelton, and Hap Tivey ('69).

This vital period ended abruptly in the spring of 1973. "It Happened at Pomona" sets out to explore this avant-garde time at Pomona College, and to shed light on a series of exhibitions and events that culminated in the mass resignation of the art faculty and gallery director, and resulted in a dramatic shift in the programmatic direction of both the Pomona College Museum of Art and the art department.

In the fall of 2007, I submitted a grant proposal to examine this history to the Getty Foundation's Curatorial Research Fellowship, which was ultimately awarded. I spent the fellowship traveling and interviewing Baden, Brewster, Glicksman, Shelton, and Winer, among others. I also began digging through the museum archives and its minimal files, which in some cases consisted of only one or two pieces of correspondence. I started sorting out a chronology of exhibitions and a record of which artists exhibited which works of art. The early stages of research involved quite a bit of detective work, as the impetus for this project was really the alumni's stories about memorable

exhibitions and my interest in uncovering the story behind the resignation of faculty, which had grown over the years into mythic status. Thus, I found myself on two different tracks— uncovering the plentitude of important exhibitions and performances that took place at Pomona and trying to find out what exactly led to the shift in the art department in 1973.

While I was conducting research for the fellowship, the Getty Foundation approached the museum about the Getty's grant program examining the history of art in Los Angeles from 1945 to 1980. In the fall of 2008, the Getty Foundation awarded the Pomona College Museum of Art a grant to conduct research into the history of fine art at Pomona College during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This grant propelled our project forward, shifting the focus from the captivating stories about the art department, art faculty, and students at Pomona College to a realization of the profound contributions and significance of the art being made then.

Finally, in fall 2009, the Getty Foundation awarded Pomona College a "Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980" grant to help realize the "It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969-1973" exhibition and accompanying publication. In totality, the support of the Getty Foundation has helped to accomplish several noteworthy goals, beginning with research into the ways in which the avant-garde practices and exhibitions at Pomona College during this pivotal period paralleled exciting developments in the art world in Southern California, which include groundbreaking advances in Conceptual art, video, performance, installation, and Light and Space work. The artists and curators active at Pomona College between 1969 and 1973 not only engaged with the developing legacies of Conceptualism and Minimalism, but also forged transformations of these ideas and concerns that ultimately became prototypes for future generations. In addition to the new scholarship and the uncovering of overlooked artists and stories, the Pacific Standard Time grant has supported the recreation of several important works of art, including Michael Brewster's 1970 installation *Configuration 010 Audio Activity*; Chris Burden's 1967 untitled sculpture; Tom Eatherton's 1970 installation *Rise*; David Gray's 1965 sculpture *L.A./5*; Lloyd Hamrol's 1969 installation *Situational Construction for Pomona College*; and the conservation of Mowry Baden's 1965 sculpture *Delivery Suite*; Peter Shelton's 1973 *Roll and Spread* paintings; and Guy Williams's 1972 painting *Slamfoot Brown*. The three Getty Foundation grants have been instrumental in bringing to light new works of art and scholarship and creating a permanent record of a vital and significant moment in the art history of Pomona College, and ultimately, of Los Angeles and its place in the art of our time.

With support from the Getty Foundation, the "It Happened at Pomona" project was able to bring together an impressive team of artists, critics, curators, and scholars who assisted with all aspects of this project's development. Principal team members include, as co-curator and editor, Glenn Phillips, principal project specialist and consulting

curator, Department of Architecture and Contemporary Art at the Getty Research Institute, and as research associate and co-editor, Marie Shurkus, curator of academic programs at the Pomona College Museum of Art. Key advisors and catalogue authors include: Dr. Thomas Crow, Rosalie Solow Professor of Modern Art at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts; Hal Glicksman, retired curator; and Helene Winer, owner, Metro Pictures Gallery, New York. Additional team members include Julie Joyce, Curator of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara Museum of Art; David Pagel, writer and professor of art at Claremont Graduate University; and Rochelle LeGrandsawyer ('08) and Carrie Dedon ('10), research assistants at Pomona College.

Meeting over several years, the core research team—Phillips, Shurkus, Crow, Glicksman, Winer, LeGrandsawyer, and I—helped to select the twenty-nine artists in the exhibition and to craft the unique format of the exhibition and publication. To recreate a sense of how this era's provocative aesthetic concerns unfolded and developed, "It Happened at Pomona" has been organized into a series of three exhibitions anchored by an extensive and dynamic timeline designed by Lorraine Wild of Green Dragon Office. The timeline traces the development of significant social and art historical events at Pomona College and Southern California through words, pictures, sounds, and moving images. The first two exhibitions are designed to articulate the distinct and historically astute curatorial visions of Pomona College Museum of Art curators Glicksman and Winer. The environment at Pomona College and the successive curatorial work of Glicksman and Winer during this period frame several fascinating groups of artists whose works are rarely examined together. The third and final exhibition focuses on the extraordinary arts faculty and students at Pomona College. In addition to paintings, sculpture, video, and photography, each of the three exhibitions will feature site-specific installations and environments that have not been seen since their original presentations, including recreations of works by Brewster, Burden, Cooper, Eatherton, Goldstein, Hamrol, Tivey, and Turrell. The exhibition will also be complemented by recreations of performances by Judy Chicago, James Turrell, and John M. White.

The catalogue has likewise been organized around this guiding tripartite principle. Designed by Wild and Xiaoqing Wang of Green Dragon Office, the catalogue is a central component of this project. It brings together four newly commissioned scholarly essays, two new extensive interviews with curators Glicksman and Winer, new interviews conducted with eighteen of the twenty-nine artists, short commissioned essays on nine artists, and three reprints of rare material. To provide a context, the book also includes a detailed timeline of exhibitions at Pomona College, events at Pomona and at the other Claremont Colleges, key events in the Los Angeles art world, and concurrent social and political events in the United States. A list of art faculty and students in the art department at Pomona College from 1965 to 1974 is also included. The book concludes with artist's biographies and a selected bibliography.

Focusing on Pomona College and this moment in Southern California art history demonstrates how related sets of themes and artistic concerns develop across what are typically seen as discrete artistic movements. The book provides new insight into the relationship between post-Minimalism, Light and Space art, and various strands of Conceptual art, performance art, and photography in California, while contributing substantial new findings about lines of influence between artistic developments in Los Angeles and New York. Each of the four commissioned essays treats different aspects of this history; collectively they present substantial new scholarship dealing with this complex and transitional period of art making.

Serving as a broad introduction to the topic, my contribution sets forth a history of the visual arts at Pomona College in the late 1960s and early 1970s, drawn from my research in the Pomona College archives, interviews with students, faculty, and administrators at the college, and conversations with other artists and curators. Emphasizing the ways in which the exceptional presence of the visual arts in Claremont played an important role in activating an essentially conservative Pomona College campus, Thomas Crow's essay elucidates how the art department and gallery had a profound impact on art instruction at several area colleges and universities, and how its impact radiated out into the Los Angeles art world and beyond. Glenn Phillips's essay examines the era through the career of Wolfgang Stoerchle, a post-Minimalist sculptor and performance and video artist—about whom there has been almost no scholarship—whose time in Southern California coincided with the period covered by the exhibition. Marie B. Shurkus's essay explores how Winer's experiences as a curator at Pomona College fundamentally shaped the seminal 1977 "Pictures" exhibition at Artists Space in New York. Shurkus also establishes how theatricality was a primary aesthetic concern for artists in Southern California in the late sixties and early seventies, and she traces the influence of their examinations on the development of participatory art practices in the twenty-first century.

As a whole, this book chronicles the experimental artistic practices that emerged in the late 1960s and the role that Pomona College played in supporting and advancing these practices. Ultimately, the scope of the exhibition and the publication offer groundbreaking and thoughtful new interpretations and historical insight on the development of art in Southern California during this period.

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