Pomona College Museum of Art Receives National Award of Excellence

The Pomona College Museum of Art has received the 2011 “Outstanding Exhibition in a University Museum Award” from the Association of Art Museum Curators, for it’s year-long three-part exhibition “It Happened at Pomona College: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969-1973.” The award was presented at the national organization’s annual meeting in Boston, Massachusetts this week. This marks the first time the Pomona College Museum of Art has been honored by the AAMC.

The AAMC gives Awards for Excellence in the categories of exhibitions museum catalogues. The four other exhibitions category winners were: Outstanding Monographic or Retrospective Exhibition - “Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty” at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Outstanding Thematic Exhibition – “The Steins Collect: Matisse, Picasso, and the Parisian Avant-Garde” at SFMOMA; Outstanding Permanent Collection New Installation (or Re-installation) – “Artist’s Eye, Artist’s Hand: American Indian Art Gallery Reinstallation” at the Denver Art Museum. Awards are determined by the organization’s membership.

"Each year the awards become more and more competitive as the nomination pool grows,” says Sally Block, Executive Director of the Association of Art Museum Curators, “As the only awards where curators honor their fellow curators, we are proud of the substantial achievements of the profession and are especially pleased to honor this year’s winners.”

“It Happened at Pomona” was part of Pacific Standard Time: Art in LA 1945-1980, a collaboration of more than sixty cultural institutions across Southern California. Together, the exhibitions and events told the story of the birth of the Los Angeles art scene and how it became a major force in the art world.

Curated by Rebecca McGrew, senior curator at Pomona College Museum of Art, and Glenn Phillips, principal project specialist and consulting curator at the Getty Research Institute, “It Happened at Pomona” explored the time from 1969 to 1973, a period when a series of radical art projects took place at the Pomona College Museum of Art. Here, Hal Glicksman, a pioneering curator of Light and Space art, and Helene Winer, later the director of Artists Space and Metro Pictures in New York, curated landmark exhibitions by young local artists who bridged the gap between Conceptual art and post-minimalism, and presaged the development of postmodernism in the later 1970s.

“This is a great honor for us,” stated Kathleen Howe, Director of the Pomona College Museum of Art. “This critically acclaimed exhibition exemplifies our ongoing commitment to curatorial excellence, to dynamic intellectual discourse, and to campus engagement, all with the primary goal of connecting our community with extraordinary art and creative programs.”

“For a small college museum,” explains McGrew, “the AAMC award demonstrates what can be accomplished with major support from the Getty Foundation, the College administration, and an exceptional project support team and staff.”

The series was accompanied by an illustrated timeline, a 386-page publication, and a series of public programs featuring artists from the exhibition. In addition, the museum organized an ambitious program connecting courses across the College curriculum to the PST initiative, sponsoring almost 1000 student and class visits to PST venues.

During the exhibition’s ambitious three-part run, “It Happened at Pomona” received a number of accolades. Los Angeles Magazine included it on a list of the essential 12 shows not to miss” and called it the exhibition “having culture vultures drooling since early summer.” For Harpers Bazaar China, writer Bettina Korek included Tom Eatherton’s “Rise” among her “100 Favorite Artworks of 2011.” And Richard Koshalek, founder of the LA Museum of Contemporary Art and now director of the Hirshorn Museum, listed “It Happened at Pomona” among his list of 10 Pacific Standard Time exhibitions “not to be missed.”

For more information on the Pomona College Museum of Art, call (909) 621-8283 or visit www.pomona.edu/museum.