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COLA09

INDIVIDUAL ARTIST FELLOWSHIPS
This catalog accompanies an exhibition and performance series sponsored by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs featuring its C.O.L.A. 2009 Individual Artist Fellowship recipients in the Visual Arts, Literary Arts, and Performing Arts.

EXHIBITION DATES
May 14, 2009–July 12, 2009
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery
Barnsdall Park

PERFORMANCE DATES
June 19, 20, 2009
Grand Performances
THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS (DCA) both generates and supports high quality arts and cultural experiences for Los Angeles residents and visitors. DCA advances the social and economic impact of the arts and assures access to arts and cultural experiences through grant making, marketing, public and community arts programming, arts education, and creating partnerships with artists and arts and cultural organizations in every community in the City of Los Angeles.

DCA grants $3.2 million annually to over 280 artists and non-profit arts organizations and awards the Artist-in-Residence (A.I.R.) and City of Los Angeles (C.O.L.A.) Individual Artist Fellowships. The Department provides arts and cultural programming in its numerous Neighborhood Arts and Cultural Centers, theaters, and historic sites, and manages several arts and education programs for young people. It directs public art projects and manages the City’s Arts Development Fee and Percent for Arts Programs, and the Art Collection and Murals Programs. DCA markets the City’s cultural events through development and collaboration with strategic partners, design and production of creative promotional materials, and management of the culturela.org website.

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FOREWARD  On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, I would like to acknowledge the exemplary fifteen C.O.L.A. Individual Artist Fellows recognized in this catalog. Moreover, an ongoing commitment by the City to the C.O.L.A. Fellowship Program solidifies it as a cornerstone initiative of the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

These grants produce a group exhibition and catalog, a companion website, and a performing artists’ showcase to accomplish what no other initiative can do. Through C.O.L.A., DCA supports, honors, and partners with master literary, performing, and visual artists to premiere a spectrum of new artworks that celebrate Los Angeles as powerful center of creative genius.

Juried by three panels of respected curators, artists, and past fellows and coordinated by DCA staff, this thirteenth annual selection of dynamic artists and artworks appeals to multiple tastes and interests.

Municipal support for original artists is critically important. Living and working among us, these unique citizens symbolize our community’s dedication to linking Los Angeles with inspired ideas and skillful innovations. Through their work, we are able to strengthen our claim that Los Angeles is one of the most vibrant creative economies in the world.

OLGA GARAY
Executive Director
Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Los Angeles

FOREWARD  No doubt the inclusion of support for arts and culture in the recent U.S. federal stimulus package signals a renewed wisdom that artists, arts organizations, cultural activities, and the entertainment industry matter for jobs, exports, educational attractions, and social spending.

I sincerely hope that beyond our collective motivation for quantitative economic results, we do not overlook the fact that arts and cultural activities also provide multiple regenerative qualities: revitalizing individual souls by fostering senses of self, empathy, and destiny; deepening family adventures; reinforcing shared beliefs; and encouraging greater community awareness. Unlike other business activities, the arts uphold a win-win, something-for-everyone mentality, which is a vital factor for maintaining democracy.

Contemporary Los Angeles has developed as a national center of global creative significance, due in part to the fact that public money is available to stimulate artists, products, and audiences. For example, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) invests a portion of City of Los Angeles tax revenue to provide fifteen $10,000 fellowships to artists who have demonstrated fifteen-plus years of professional production. We present and promote the results of these fellowship grants to showcase L.A.’s spectrum of fantastic artist-entrepreneurs. Overall the C.O.L.A. program reinvigorates interest in Los Angeles as a creative place to live, work, and visit.

DCA’s Cultural Grant Program was formed in 1981 as a response to the overwhelming need to support Los Angeles’s cultural organizations and artists as key catalysts in the synergy of our city. DCA’s granting process is community driven. We ask local art experts, educators, and community leaders to serve as peer panelists for the review of applications. The makeup of these panels changes each year to ensure a fair and broad-minded selection of proposals. DCA has awarded honors in the visual arts for the past twelve years, in the performing arts for the past nine years, and in the literary arts for the past five years.

I salute the 2009 Fellows for their remarkable careers and contributions. I trust that the multiple, durable affects of their careers will validate why we should continue to finance and enjoy local and national stimulus of our creative industries.

JOE SMOKE
Cultural Grant Program Director
Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Los Angeles
The Department of Cultural Affairs has an abiding commitment to the artists of Los Angeles and supports the proposition that some of the most significant innovations in the arts come from our city’s creative community. Nowhere is this more in evidence than in the work produced by recipients of the C.O.L.A. Individual Artist Fellowships. The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery is both pleased and honored to present the work of this year’s distinguished C.O.L.A. Fellows.

Each spring we celebrate the achievements of fifteen of the city’s artists in a nonthematic exhibition and through a series of performances featuring their most current work. Artists’ applications are reviewed annually by a panel composed of a changing cast of former fellows, writers, performers, curators, and arts professionals. Financial need is not a determining factor in making the awards, but we have found that these grants provide a significant opportunity for creative exploration that might otherwise be deferred.

Fellowships are awarded based on artistic accomplishment through past work, demonstrated artistic excellence in current work, and the anticipated impact the award might have on the artist’s ability to create new work. While artists may begin the fellowship with the idea of continuing in a particular direction, given such creative license, it is not unusual to find them changing course, often with surprising and unexpected results. The panel process does not always lend itself to a cohesive exhibition, and the interchange among vastly different works is sometimes unpredictable, but the outcome has been consistently positive.

The curatorial challenges that such an exhibition poses are formidable, requiring placement of the work in a way that will allow each individual project to be seen to its best advantage. One of the more intriguing aspects of this fellowship is the degree to which the works becomes a reflection of the time and place in which they were created. I cannot resist the urge to speculate as to whether the panel’s selection process was influenced by something in the zeitgeist, given the inescapable political atmosphere of the past year. That said, C.O.L.A. is in many ways a barometer measuring the region’s creative climate, bringing to the fore new ideas and innovations that have influenced artists both locally and nationally.

This year’s fellows are representative of the various communities that embody the culturally rich diversity for which the city has become known. Their work is generally concerned with social interactions, the human condition, perception, history, and investigation. Its themes and strategies are reflective of contemporary artistic practice, but not at the expense of those traditional markers that allow for universal engagement. The result is an accessible and thought-provoking exhibition and set of performances by quite possibly the best creative minds in the city.

This publication offers expanded information about the 2009 C.O.L.A. artists. Contributors were, in most cases, selected by the artists and represent a broad range of arts professionals respected for their experience and scholarship. I would like to acknowledge the exceptionally fine work and cooperation of the artists, who have made this a most pleasurable experience. I am grateful to the panelists, who faced the difficult and unenviable challenge of selecting these fellows. I also want to recognize and thank the staff at the Municipal Art Gallery and our partners at Grand Performances, without whose help this program would be impossible. Finally, I want to thank the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery Associates for helping to facilitate this and other programs throughout the year, and for their continued commitment to maintaining the Municipal Art Galley’s highest traditions.

MARK STEVEN GREENFIELD,
Curator and Director of Exhibitions
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery
Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Los Angeles
VISUAL ARTISTS

Natalie Bookchin
Jane Castillo
Joe Davidson
David DiMichele
Bia Gayotto
Willie Robert
Middlebrook, Jr.
Maureen Selwood
Eloy Torrez
Shirley Tse
Natalie Bookchin

Birthplace and Year
Bronx NY, 1962

Located in
Los Angeles, 1998

Area of
Los Angeles
in which you
currently reside
Elysian Heights

What places in the city do you go to
for inspiration
the hills of Pasadena, Elysian Park, Youtube

What, if
anything, about living in Los Angeles
influences your work?

I wouldn’t
say that this is a direct influence, but I am endlessly fascinated
by the geographical, social, and cultural diversity in Los Angeles.

I feel like I can never completely grasp Los Angeles as (I thought)
I could with, say, New York or Barcelona. This excess — of distances,
landscapes, freeways, neighborhoods, and cities within cities —
variously disturbs and inspires me.
We invent everyday life through a thousand forms of poaching.
—Michel de Certeau, “The Invention of Everyday Life”

The range of gazes explored in Natalie Bookchin’s production implies a revision of the political, productive, and aesthetic spheres, conditioned, in turn, by a complex and sophisticated technological regime, which regulates and models our understanding of places, the body, digital archives, and social identity.

Toward the end of the 1990s, the artist’s interest in working with digital media such as the CD-ROM or the Internet prompted her to produce, among other works, two projects that anticipate the global-net poetics that she is currently exploring. Through the exaltation of technology and its personal use, The DataBank of the Everyday (1996) attempted to become a locus for the documentation of everyday life, a limitless archive—in short, everything that the Internet has become nowadays, in all its potentiality. A year later, Marking Time (1997) was conceived around a triple execution that took place in Arkansas. While a description of the activities of the prisoners during the days before their execution was being projected on the wall, a computer screen called upon the visitor by registering the movements of a mouse while participants interacted with the prisoners’ faces.

In her recent projects Bookchin explores the transformation undergone by our perception of space, time, and distance, once again taking up the Internet as a work space, although, in this case, the formal resolution of the project adopts the form of a documentary essay. As an Internet-based cinema that expands the grammar and the languages inherited from 1970s experimental cinema, Bookchin’s work reflects an awareness of the power of contemplation implied in the online circulation of the image in order to radically transform it into an antagonistic space. The YouTube online portal has become the visual lab from which she explores hundreds of sequences: how the new global imaginaries that inhabit the Net are produced, reproduced, and consumed.

Bookchin bases her work on formulas of critical distance, producing an effect of othering of the experience of these images of daily life that allows for new ways of seeing and helps to reveal some of the tricks of media hegemony. The archive of ephemeral materials compiled as narratives of othering implies a poetic and political landscape that prompts us to deploy the gaze as a device for capturing and reinventing everyday life.

Bookchin’s new work for the C.O.L.A. exhibition, Mass Ornament Two Point Oh!, is a three-screen installation that explores historical representations of mass movements of bodies in formation—mass gymnastics in eastern Europe, the films of Busby Berkeley and Leni Riefenstahl—and their contemporary equivalent: masses of self-produced videos of people alone in their rooms dancing in formation. As Bookchin explains: “The work draws on Siegfried Kracauer’s concept of the ‘mass ornament,’ which analyzed chorus line dancers as enacting the logic of a Fordist, Taylorized economic system. So too each YouTube dancer reenacts a system that reaches further into private space in its transformation of individuals into instrumental units performing partial functions. At the same time the dancers make small claims for embodiment and publicness in the face of their seeming disappearance in the disembodied virtuality of the Internet.”

MONTSÉ ROMÁN AND VIRGINIA VILLAPLANA; TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY KAMESN IVANOV NEDEV
CASTILLO

Birthplace and Year
Los Angeles.
1970
Year located in Los Angeles 1970
Area of Los Angeles in which you
currently reside
Beverly Hills
There are times when the creative path of an artist is dictated by revelations that well up from the recesses of forgotten memory on an almost genetic level. Inspiration is taken from cultural priorities that are imprinted on mind and spirit, leading the artist to reflect on existence in ways that are expressed in the obvious and the mysterious in equal measure. Jane Castillo’s Colombian, Filipino, and African heritage subtly permeates every aspect of her work to such a degree that the viewer may get the sense that she is channeling the combined experiences of her forebears.

Castillo’s selection of the most common of materials lends itself to the minimalist character of her work, giving the otherwise mundane new and complex meaning. While she manipulates the elements of her often room-size installations in a manner that gives them an alternate visual presence, many times there exist meanings known only to her. She is satisfied if the work resonates with the viewer on a purely aesthetic level but hopes that it will provoke contemplation and reflection on history and sociopolitical issues. She uses natural hair (sometimes her own) as a metaphor for identity. Sometimes she uses ships’ rope or chains in a veiled reference to ancestral journeys, both forced and voluntary, made on ships.

In my opinion, Castillo’s use of paper elicits the most thoughtful engagement with the work. It is her belief that throughout much of our lives we are arguably preoccupied with paper in the form of letters, documents, certificates, advertisements, reports, records, contracts, and currency. Paper can be benign in appearance while holding devastating information with life-altering ramifications. It is deceivingly strong yet fragile. We are inundated by the material, which carries weight in the form of pulp but is otherwise of little value until words or images are put down on it. By tearing paper, she at once consciously and intentionally violates the material’s integrity in favor of revealing its aesthetic value, compromises its worth as something to hold information, and forces a new interpretation of its purpose. The act of altering that which is familiar causes it to be viewed in unconventional ways. This is the dominant thesis behind Castillo’s work, and it is in evidence consistently. In contemplating this, I am reminded of my initial interpretations of the title of Lawrence Weschler’s biography of Robert Irwin, Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees. Castillo’s deconstruction and ultimate reconfiguration of artistic elements destroys assumptions of their identity in favor of that which is “unfamiliar.” This “unfamiliar” must be accepted on its own terms as representing nothing other than itself. It provides a fertile blank matrix on which can be projected the intentions of either the artist or the viewer. Castillo uses rice and sugar in her work in homage to her ancestors who labored in those industries. In one of her more memorable installations, she used inflated paper bags to contain one’s breath, suggesting that that which is fleeting can be captured.

Castillo’s installation for the C.O.L.A. exhibition employs burlap sugar bags, chosen for their rich cultural symbolism, evoking the history of sugar-cane plantations, slavery, and Spanish commerce. MARK STEVEN GREENFIELD
JOE DAVIDSON

Birthplace
Milford, MA, 1969

Year located in Los Angeles
2001

Area of
Los Angeles
in which you currently reside
Hollywood/Larchmont Village

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration?
Anyplace where you can get a clear view of the LA basin. Those outlying industrial areas where light and heavy manufacturing is going on at all hours of the day. I always enjoy driving through the oil field between La Brea and La Cienega. Downtown. Galleries, particularly the shoestring budget, DIY galleries.

What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work?
Los Angeles is a city whose influence slowly seeps into my consciousness. It's not a city that you understand over a weekend; it takes time for Los Angeles to expose its immense breadth and depth. It can be a city that seems generic and flat when you drive its streets, but LA constantly gives you gems when you pay attention.
Living in an ever-expanding and growing city creates specialized opportunities for an artist. The city is a vast consumer, breathing in the natural and breathing out structure. It is impossible not to notice this tremendous force — its exhales and inhales, its flotsam and jetsam.

For Joe Davidson this experience has translated into bodies of work that speak to the notion of producer and consumer as symbiotic forces necessary to perpetuate the vastness of experience. When a tree falls in the forest, its decay provides the sustenance for a new generation of life. Everyone and everything is part of the larger transformational process.

Davidson is deeply committed to process and processes. His two current bodies of work are the Bottle Landscapes and the Tape Works. The Bottle Landscapes are collections formed from casts of myriad travel-size bottles of “notions” that he has amassed from his own use. The cast is repeated over and over until the landscape fills a space. There is a ritual nature to these landscapes, remarking on the daily rituals in the care of one’s physical body, on care and nurturing, and on beauty. These are carefully made objects, defining a circular pattern in which the potions nurture the artist, who then honors the potion by making it infinite and endless.

The Tape Works involve the laborious process of layering clear tape over and over and over. Tape is a binder and a container: it pieces things together — like the streets of a city. Every action Davidson takes is whispered in each ghostly stratum. While the tape is transferred into well-traversed art archetypes of the picturesque, its fundamental nature is left intact.

Davidson is keenly interested in the intangible essences of beauty that sustain us. His output is not highly decorated; nor is it swathed in color. He wishes for each object to exist on its own within the larger landscapes that he has devised in much the same way that we most certainly identify who we are by what surrounds us.

A life lived is a life of consumption. We are consumers, yes—the body needs nourishment and cleansing—but we are also consumers of that which nourishes the spirit and the mind. Every sip we take and every thought we think moves us along the timeline. By discussing the processes of consumption, Davidson plays the kind of chicken-or-egg games that lead us to questions of the spirit, the soul, the afterlife.

As Walt Whitman wrote in the last section of the poem “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” from his book *Leaves of Grass*:

We descend upon you and all things—we arrest you all;  
We realize the soul only by you, you faithful solids and fluids;  
Through you color, form, location, sublimity, ideality;  
Through you every proof, comparison, and all the suggestions and determinations of ourselves.

For his C.O.L.A. project Davidson is creating a new Bottle Landscape made from soft foam. This work will change over time as the material responds to the air around it. Colors will alter slightly, and the thing will settle into itself. He will also present large-scale Mountain Landscape tape works. Though the depictions are of specific spaces in the American West, the mountain is universal in form, much like the ubiquitous material from which Davidson’s peaks are crafted.
DAVID DIMICHELE

Birthplace and Year: Los Angeles, 1954
Located in Los Angeles: 1990
Reside in Los Angeles: Altadena

Places you go for inspiration: Angeles National Forest

What influences your work? Conversations with other artists.
Stacked and strewn, hundreds of gigantic shards of glass refract the crossbeam lighting of a massive space. In another hangerlike gallery, gargantuan strips of bark form a towering gothic web. From the windows and ceiling of an industrial space, thick, winding streams of molten metal puddle on the floor. Elsewhere, fed from a forty-foot-high skylight, coils of massive tubing violate a pristine white space. Another sanitized gallery is dominated by six huge monochrome white paintings and three immense white cubes, the largest of which is thirty feet high. And then there are the enormous towers of ice, two huge mounds of salt and asphalt, the Jupiter-size steel thunderbolt, and a bird’s nest snag of withered forty-foot tree branches.

David DiMichele is the creator of these prime examples of the urge in contemporary art to shock and awe. Like the artists who have made huge puppies, humungous funhouse mirrors, and towering steel passageways, he gives viewers little chance not to pay attention. This is the heroic work of our time, requiring complicated fabrication, huge transportation budgets, and teams of workers to install.

The big dogs and steel corridors of today’s global art world become known largely through installation photographs. Published in magazines and newspapers and exhibited in museums and galleries, these photos demonstrate megascale at work and suggest the kind of perceptual shifts that such sculptures and installations inspire. DiMichele’s installation photographs take standard documentary format to a new level. They are large LightJet prints, scanned from shots taken with a 4x5 view camera, usually in low-angle long shot with humans included for scale, and with careful attention to lighting, deep focus, and composition.

Unlike most installation photos, however, DiMichele’s documentations are themselves artworks. As their titles reveal, they are “pseudodocumentation,” depicting masterfully made models for works whose full-scale perceptual tricks and awe-inspiring sublimity can only be imagined. DiMichele has described his photographs as “not parody but homage,” referencing works by artists such as Michael Heizer, Richard Serra, and Robert Smithson. The photos are fantastical enablers, allowing DiMichele to emulate his mentors and make art from difficult-to-obtain media on a wildly lavish scale. Working vicariously through his models, he can show photographic evidence of his imaginative leaps.

After years working as an abstract painter, DiMichele has expanded his range and capabilities in this project, now fully realized for the C.O.L.A. exhibition. Suddenly an artist of epic scale and limitless ambition, he can blithely ignore the postmodern roadblocks that have stymied so many of his generation. Gigantic scale and extravagant materials invite an indulgence in loaded imagery and rich metaphor, activating an emotional power that abstract painting now seems too cautious or cynical to pursue. DiMichele’s room-size mounds of black sand emerging from a deep fog of billowing dry ice evoke the grandeur of traditional Chinese landscape painting. Rivaling the best California Light and Space work, his interlocking web of Lucite tubes containing and reflecting light conjures a new, scientifically inspired sublime. An elevation of natural phenomena and perceptual experience is behind all DiMichele’s imagined installations. Pushing the envelope of what seems possible, he is creating inspiring art fantasies for his personal, homemade MASS MoCA, Dia:Beacon, L.A. MOCA, and MoMA. Endearing and slightly comic, these lyrical flights of fancy document big-time art dreams.

Michael Duncan
BIA GAYATTO

Birthplace and Year
Florianópolis, SC, Brazil, 1962

Year located in Los Angeles: 1993

Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside: Altadena

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration? Walking allows me to reflect and get in touch with my thoughts and feelings. Living in Altadena, the point where nature meets the city provides an easy way to escape and retreat. Hiking in the San Gabriel Mountains gives perspective of LA’s urban and natural landscapes with vast views all the way from the mountains to the ocean.

What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work? LA’s mixed urban center reflects what America is about, providing constant interaction with cultural influences from all over the world. I am inspired by this city’s rich ethnic and cultural diversity as it gives me an amazing opportunity to experience, collaborate, and exchange with a wide range of people in their unique environment.
It is reflective of Bia Gayotto’s experience of living in several distinct cultures that for the past twelve years she has utilized photography, video, and performance to explore the spectrum of differences and correspondences that exist among individuals. Her work frequently charts a selected group of participants’ varied and overlapping interpretative responses to a theme, directive, or question. Influenced by conceptual and performance art, Gayotto introduces unpredictability into serial and durational structures through her collaborations with others.

In the mid-1990s Gayotto began to employ photography to explore the translation of an instruction into an interpretative act. In *Thirteen Friends Jumping* (1998–99), she photographed friends and family performing twenty-four consecutive jumps in a location and an outfit of their choice, introducing individual idiosyncrasies into an otherwise formal structure of serial repetition. By the early 2000s she had begun to experiment with video. This was accompanied by a shift in focus from individual interpretation to the construction of cultural difference. In *Danço Te* (2005), Gayotto and four other artists perform a sequence of traditional Brazilian dances. The participants’ varied rhythmic interpretations demonstrate how culture is translated through the prism of one’s own ethnic and social experiences, and her flawed attempt to master the choreography serves to interrogate her own experience of cultural discontinuity as a Brazilian American.

Although Gayotto’s initial collaborations involved her friends and colleagues, more recently she has solicited the participation of less familiar subjects. For *Towers Apartments I-VIII* (2003), she asked the residents of a Pasadena apartment complex to turn their lights on and off during a seven-day period based on their answers to a confidential survey, then documented the exterior light patterns in a suite of seven photographs. The artist’s use of the questionnaire and the emphasis on geographical specificity make this project an important bridge to her current focus—the travelogue.

Since 2007 *Gayotto has utilized the video travelogue to explore her own and a local community’s responses to a specific locale*. While the artist’s use of fixed framing and durational repetition suggests the influence of structural filmmaking, her travelogues also foreground an ethnographic process, which includes field trips, phenomenographic observation, and structured interviews with her collaborators. In *Wild Hearts* (2008), which juxtaposes timed shots of Cascade Mountain with footage of twelve female nature explorers in the Canadian Rockies, Gayotto employs the split screen and the voices of her collaborators to explore progressively more varied and nuanced interpretations of a theme.

Gayotto’s C.O.L.A project, *The Sea Is Not Blue/O mar não é azul*, focuses on the ocean as a vehicle of global interconnectedness. The three-screen video installation contrasts views of the aquatic landscape recorded from Terceira Island, in the Azores, with footage of the isle taken from an orbiting boat. In a third screen, a hand flicks through nautical-themed photographic images, while the voices of the islanders reflect on their complex relationship to the sea. The temporal, spatial, and aural disconnect of voice and moving and still image demonstrates the cultural construction of place through representation, as well as the cognitive mapping of personal interpretative geographies onto the landscape. **DONNA CONWELL**
WILLIE ROBERT MIDDLEBROOK, JR.

Birthplace and Year: Bronx NY, 1957  
Year located in Los Angeles: 1998

Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside: Elysian Heights
Revealing softly introspective and deeply layered self-explorations is the work of Willie Middlebrook. In his recent series Looking for God, we embark on a short, passionate journey of birth and death, his proof of love and the starting point of a realization of why and how he exists. It is an investigation not of whether God exists but of whether he, Willie Robert Middlebrook, is living.

That is an incredible trip for an artist whose works already take you through rich layers of color mixed with complex movements. It is more than just skill; it is an insightful and compassionate collaboration between him and his subjects, a personal commitment to saying what he feels. It is the heart that produces the touching stories in his compositions, more than his previous way of seeing.

In Willie’s people-centered compositions, we see the capture of a moment when the subject—sometimes unsuspecting, other times fully aware—allows him a few revelations of him or herself—not just a smile for that particular shot, but a secret revealed that somehow someone else would not be able to get.

As he matures (grows older) and continues on this ever-going progress and process of learning, Willie says, “the found image, by itself, is not enough for me anymore.” It is not enough for him simply to shoot an excellent image. His “found images” are taken apart and intersected with several different environments and elements that support the deeper stories he tells of himself and his subjects.

Looking fulfills his need to say what bothers him and what chases him inwardly. Why we are here and what needs we are to fulfill are questions we have all asked and continue to ask. Willie’s rediscovered light floats ethereally behind the text as he wanders from one question to the next until he emerges, his sense of purpose saved from irreparable decline. The work is a course of redemption and rebirth of faith in himself and spirituality.

With Willie, however, he needs to know how our eyes look outwardly with love but inwardly we fear to trust. How is it possible to be angry and not be an angry person? What is an artist without a soul? All of these are he. The distrust is replaced by respect for the subject, the anger replaced by images that represent the underrepresented, and his soul is revealed with an openness that leaves his vulnerability unshielded.

Middlebrook does not avoid confrontation or controversy. He is brazen in his willingness to lay it all out the way it should be told! If that means that his deeper self is open to ridicule, then that must be the real purpose of the story he is telling. If an image creates a blatant truth that most have denied, then that image has lived up to the reason for its creation.

Only the greatest among us can hold praise and criticism with the same reverence. ETHEL POWERS
MAUREEN SELWOOD

Birthplace and Year
Dublin, Ireland
Year located in Los Angeles
1990

Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside
Beachwood Canyon

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration? What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work?

By moving eastward in the city of Los Angeles I became aware of the forgotten characters and the deserted landscapes from film noir. I starting filming the broken steps, under ocean piers and expressways and then drew over them creating a commentary on the artifice of cinema and memory. I reimagined the character of Velda from Robert Aldrich’s Kiss Me Deadly in the film Mistaken Identity to create a personal meditation of romantic myth and self-deception. When I went to Rome in 2002 I renewed this process to further develop new works based on this system of looking at the city.
“Art is a mirror held up to nature, but nature itself is the prime material in the construction of the artwork,” said Guillaume Apollinaire. The work of Maureen Selwood is made up of fragments of reality that reveal the inner recesses of reality. Her work takes back experimentation as a path to knowledge, using activity for reflection and logic. In this way, art attains a poetic function.

Selwood’s work often uses animation layered over live footage. In *Mistaken Identity* (2001, film, 28 min.), the female voice-over reveals the contradictions of the post–cold war era to comment on gender, romance, and self-deception. Despite her feminist perspective of a world changing, she is tied to a fatalistic attachment, a game, ending in regret when the door closes. In *As the Veil Lifts* (2007, installation), a dragonfly tells a woman that her father is missing and that her mother is weeping. Return home, he tells her. She is unable to and instead moves, weaving a dance of grief alone on a beach at night, waiting for passage. Her movements are part of a visual layering of scrims (veils) that represent paper, demonstrating in their display the process of animation layered upon her, an illumination of the pathways afraid to be taken. The site piece *Ombre dal Lupercale* (2006, installation) returns to the myth of Romulus and Remus and the origins of Rome, in which the twins suckle on a howling she-wolf who has saved them from drowning. In *As You Desire Me* (work in progress), a series of projections become verses. In the first one, *I Am Measuring You*, a spectacle of refugees seeking relief and shelter is animated over a landscape at the entrance to a city. A Shoe Falls slowly reveals sorrow on the faces of those who have been affected by loss and dislocation, with the animation placed over a moving river. In *Empire of Dreams*, based upon a poem by Charles Simic, a panting dog runs around the ancient city of Rome.

In these pieces the participation of the spectator provides continuity and gives significance to the creative process. I don’t remember where the boundary is between what I’ve seen and what I’ve imagined. There is meaning to be found in the silence between words, like the shipwrecked person who finds salvation in an abandoned suitcase, grabbing onto it to survive the storm. The dog continues his running. His instinct says that something is amiss. What happens as the suitcase opens and spreads out its contents and spits out a grenade in a downpour of the detritus of a life? During this journey the marks tell many stories.

Maureen Selwood understands the artistic experience as a free and generous act. It’s a place of transition that belongs as much to the spectator as to the creator. This dynamic gives the creative process an agile character yet is still concerned with the outcome. The work, the result of life experience, is the landscape, the battleground the artist comes to face with.

*Maureen Selwood* understands the artistic experience as a free and generous act. It’s a place of transition that belongs as much to the spectator as to the creator. This dynamic gives the creative process an agile character yet is still concerned with the outcome. The work, the result of life experience, is the landscape, the battleground the artist comes to face with.

**ISABEL HERQUERA**
COLA PROJECT TO COME

[Images of architectural and natural elements]
ELOY TORREZ

Birthplace and Year
Albuquerque, New Mexico on January 27, 1954

Year located in Los Angeles

1975

Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside
Silver Lake

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration? What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work?

I spend the majority of my time in the studio, which borders Lincoln Heights and Chinatown. It's a microcosm of what Los Angeles represents to me. I feel very comfortable being in a city that more closely resembles the world being created as a function of diversity and migration from every corner of the globe. I can visualize a better society as result of these intersections. My time away from the studio, mural painting or teaching is usually spent attending art events and collaborating musically with fellow musicians. I am intrigued by unexpected circumstances, chance encounters with people that often later lead to the realization that a noteworthy moment has occurred. These subtle and often dismissed “in the moment” human experiences are what I attempt to convey to the viewer.
Eloy Torrez has hands that were forged in the 1980s L.A. punk art fires. It was an era when emerging artists sought a break from traditional constraints. It was also a period when the art establishment was almost, but not quite, ready to understand and welcome the Mexican mural movement that had fueled Chicano art.

Born under the fluorescent desert sunsets of New Mexico, an Otis-bound Torrez trekked to Los Angeles via Barstow, determined to find a muse. The song and the paintbrush were there, innate, if he could integrate the voice and the vision. Within, he sensed that he could grow into something unlike but still related to the house-painter father who might have preferred a less solitary son, a son less curious about the world.

It was the age of Asco and experimentation, of art-form fusion. It was X and the Vex and a flirtation with proto-Brit pop. The Psychedelic Furs and the Smiths were meeting Mexican American Goth, and the going was good. Chismearte magazine and High Performance held hands, like Kent Twitchell’s blue tuxedo wedding couple on a downtown wall, which struck Torrez because he had never seen something on that scale.

Enter the young man who was not mentored by any of the homegrown movimiento masters, those streetscapers who cornered the mural market in the wake of the Eastside protests and high school blowouts. Nor was he intimately acquainted with the Latino punk aesthetic eloquently propagated by Asco’s Diane Gamboa, Patssi Valdez, Harry Gamboa Jr., Gronk, and Willy Herron. Here was Eloy Torrez, caught between all those worlds, an art student imagining the color and brilliance of the ‘manito (Spanish New Mexican) past that left golden, lilac, rust, and burgundy arcs on his palette.

Two decades later, here is Eloy again, appearing in a wine bar with his guitar, or sketching bodies and faces that will become a painting on canvas, his tribute to the city of tainted angels and tortured saints. I want to call him a changeling, want him to know that I am a slightly younger version of him, a mutant who doesn’t always know how to belong. I find myself in the quiet conversations, shared in the confined Chinatown studio where Eloy paints and stretches canvas, where he drinks coffee and tries hard to keep the demons at bay while the large panels of his latest piece take form.

We joke that he passes for Jew, Armenian, or Hungarian—anything but Mexican. There’s no shame there, because looking down at us at Broadway and Third is his seven-story mural of Anthony Quinn, an iconic figure who imparts certainty that every hue, every skin tone, and every chiseled cheekbone is beauty.

Eloy Torrez knows it. He doesn’t have to defend it. He paints it, erasing divisions and filtering pop culture without rejecting our roots. There is room in his heart. From here to Saint-Denis, France, where he painted a mural in 1991, he is exuberant.

This new painting, his C.O.L.A. project, is like a dream “where you’re naked and everyone else is dressed,” Eloy notes. It reveals him as so much more than a muralist. “[It] gives me a chance to get out of my skin,” he says. “And it’s fun.”

The four-panel canvas reverberates. With mountains in the distance, the foreground features club kids, art mavens, and a banda musician. It is any day in L.A. on foot from Silver Lake to Echo Park. It is, in Eloy’s words, “life as a journey, where we’re sharing energy.” ABEL SALAS
SHIRLEY TSE

Birthplace and Year:
Hong Kong, 1968

Year located in Los Angeles: 1992

Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside:
Highland Park

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration?
Ocean, pine trees

What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work?
1) The sun rays of Los Angeles: all aspects of it. 2) The fact that Los Angeles won’t allow me to decide whether it is the indifference or the openness of Los Angeles I love or hate.
Shirley Tse's sculptures — after their initial and persistent formal impact — operate as indicators of a deep and complex understanding of the relationship between humans and plastic, encompassing and acknowledging plastic's pop-humanist demonization as an important but reductivist aspect of a much larger, finely nuanced, multilayered, and multivalent narrative.

Tse avoids the plausibly deniable irony that characterizes Pop usages of this most modern of materials, as well as the mute fetishism of its Minimalist incarnations. But she has cast a much wider net. Before even leaving grad school, she had identified the circulating global stream of cheap plastic consumer goods — in which both Los Angeles and the artist's hometown of Hong Kong act as major hubs — as a central underlying motif in her work's formal and conceptual gestation.

The geopolitical and systems theory implications arising from this specific template are extensive yet only hint at the mycelium of interlaced ideational threads underlying the mandala of synthetic 'shrooms that make up Tse's oeuvre. Through intentional reference and research as well as unusually lucid intuitive and associative connections, she has imbued work that reads at first glance as playful but enigmatic formalism—brightly colored inflatables, intricately incised slabs of foam, mutated beverage coolers — with the distinctive sense of elaborately interwoven symbolic sets lying just outside our comprehension, elaborately modeled entry points for a vast interdimensional metro system (if only public art looked half as good!)

Most recently, beginning in 2004 with the installation Power Towers at the Pomona College Museum of Art, Tse's work has begun adding further — or perhaps closer — layers of meaning to the already complex moiré of secret histories, grounding them in newly accessed realms of representational physicality and personal history. There has always been a hint of autobiography in her choice of plastic as the subject and substance of her art — not only because of Hong Kong's centrality in its political realities and popular mythologies but also because of her position in the art world. As an Asian woman staking out a place in contemporary Western art history by way of the schizophrenic L.A. art scene, she has had to devise a persona and practice as malleable and adaptive as her chosen medium.

Quantum Shirley, her most recent work (destined at the time of writing for the C.O.L.A. exhibition), combines Tse's recent interest in figuration and autobiographical allusion in a sculpture that takes this ambivalent equilibrium to a new level of literalness, conflating — among the usual polymer-theory referents — Tegmark and Wheeler's “balanced playing card” illustration of the Schrödinger equation (which demonstrates the paradoxes of quantum superposition with the assertion that a perfectly balanced playing card will fall face up and face down simultaneously — a variation on the more familiar “Schrödinger's cat” paradox) with a moment in her childhood when the artist's mother was contemplating sending her to live with wealthy arts-oriented relations in Tahiti.

Webster's defines plasticity in part as “the capacity for continuous alteration of the neural pathways and synapses of the living brain and nervous system in response to experience or injury.” I can't recall hearing a better statement about the ideal function of art. Mirroring this physiological process in the external, material world, Shirley Tse's resolutely indeterminate, continually evolving sculptures manifest both as the blossoms of her own subterranean psychic rhizomes and as depth charges to reconfigure ours. DOUG HARVEY
HAVE NOT HEARD FROM TO COMPLETE INTERVIEW AND APPROVE EXCERPTS

GLORIA ENEDINA ALVAREZ

Birthplace and Year: Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, 1955

Year located in Los Angeles? Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside?
Gloria Enedina Alvarez, who grew up in South Central Los Angeles and left home at age sixteen, speaks for the feminine dark side of this city in language that shifts image and shadow, mixes Spanish and English, articulating the profound daily wonder of survival. Beyond the glare of Hollywood, this city on any given late afternoon remains a blur of shadows and taillights in traffic on Sunset, Alvarado, Vermont, Olympic. Behind a city of appearances, her tone vibrates in the very air like the gently struck tone of wonder, like a plumed trill on the codex.

Through a quarter-century of poetic production, Gloria has crafted herself into a singular poet with a voice unmistakably her own, recognized as one of the preeminent Los Angeles poets of her generation. In Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities (2007), UC Berkeley professor Laura Pérez writes: “Gloria Enedina Alvarez is well known in the Chicano/o and avant-garde arts community … for her poetry, performed throughout the city since 1982, and more recently for her highly praised translations and Chicano/o cultural adaptations … Alvarez’s work, like [Marisela] Norte’s, has been heard in numerous group readings, performances, art exhibitions, and local college campuses. Her medium, the spoken word, is by definition ephemeral, but her published bilingual poetry is also marked by her concern for what escapes translation as excess or the culturally unfamiliar or unspeakable.”

Gloria says that her collaborations with artists flow organically from many friendships, but her participation in women’s collectives starts at the Woman’s Building in the early 1980s, when she initiated the first of many many women’s writing workshops she would lead: “Outside of the first group I went to led by Mitsuye Yamada—she was really helpful—there weren’t really any models, and nobody to talk to about what we were trying to do,” she recalls one evening at Philippe’s in Chinatown. “There was really no support and no established groups for Chicanas. There was no one who could give helpful feedback in two languages. They were only in English, so I decided I had to start my own.” At age eighteen, as a young poet literally making her own way in the world and a young mother, Gloria initiated Taller Espejo Voz, a collective that published chapbooks of Chicana poetry at the Woman’s Building. The braided (Gloria’s term) bilingual poetics of Spanish and English that she championed has been described by Alfred Arteaga as “an interlingual style that emphasizes the form of the form … double-voiced in its eclectic hybridization. Its style opposes standard English and opposes the canonical literary telos. It conflicts with the authoritative discourse; it is dialogic.”

Gloria Alvarez’s braided double-voice has been pronouncing the fact of Chicana survival for decades in a city utterly unconcerned with that fact, and more importantly, more impressively, her poetry has throughout the same years with gentle insistence articulated the survival of Chicana desire. Gloria’s voice, through its susurration of soft huskiness and mystic imagery, offers us an essential poetry of our city, seemingly ephemeral against its walls and shadows, against the traffic of its business in appearances, but alive, sensuous, impassioned—that is to say, “Woman ablaze ascends/…Born from her own fire/ The maize maiden/ The color of hot summers/ Roja mujer.”

The Story of a Soldier, libretto by Gloria Enedina Alvarez, directed by Peter Sellars, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, artwork by Gronk, Los Angeles Philharmonic, 1999; performance still with actor Alex Miramontes and dancer Tiana Alvarez

The Story of a Soldier, MacArthur Park, Los Angeles, 2000; performance still with actor Alex Miramontes

The Story of a Soldier, Hollenbeck Park, Los Angeles, 2000; the cast with Esa-Pekka Salonen

Gloria Enedina Alvarez at Self Help Graphics, Los Angeles, 2008

Cover of Center Ground CD, poetry and spoken-word anthology, 2004-5
Mujeres Totémicas

May she always walk in Beauty
Beauty behind her
Beauty in front of her
Beauty to the sides of her,
Beauty above,
Beauty below her,
Y siempre,
Always and forever,
Beauty from her Center.

Blessed by good wishes a través del eterno femenino, through women’s native wisdom, medicine and ceremonia, prayers with mil bendiciones are offered by these artistas: Judith Baca; Barabara Carrasco; Emilia García; Yolanda González; Poli Marichal; and Linda Vallejo of the fifth Maestras Atelier curated by Yolanda Gonzalez at Self Help Graphics & Art.

This poemáximo minus essay comes as a manner of introduction, a collaboration inspired by the works of the authors, visual artists, with crossings, backgrounds and histories linked to mine in this artistic, spiritual and historical moment in this place, the city of Los Angeles. As women, compañeras of the arts and letters, we initiate and continue to construct our totems out of ourselves with the help of all maestras who have been present, who are present and who will present themselves, as the eternal feminine that we must be, that we no longer allow to remain dormant under our skins.

Within this timeless moment, etched in the history of Self Help Graphics, plasmado con tinta sobre papel, infused with red and black ink, the way of the mujer becomes the way of the guerrera, del amantecatl, the artist, integral and self-possessed. Red is the color of summer, the color of the mujer, color del día, color cariño, verano roja mujer, the tenderness of color, the color of this day.

Sueños Quietos II

Sueños quietos en silencio vuelan flotan sentimentos encajonados mueren congelados en un vidrio espasmos de fragmentos nadan vuelan silencio en quietos Sueños

Still Dreams in silence fly float away boxed sentiments die frozen in a piece of glass shard spasms swim away fly silence in dreams Still
BRUCE BAUMAN

Birthplace and Year: Brooklyn, NY, 1954
Year Located in Los Angeles: 1998
Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside: Mar Vista
What places in the city do you go to for inspiration?

Everything I absorb outside of me comes out in my studio at The Santa Monica Airport. Meandering in book stores and libraries, which are perfect places to sit, read, think, dream, have conversations with strangers and to people watch. Daydreaming while walking my dog Lulu. Any place that reminds me of past or future L.A.s.

What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work?

It’s doubtful anyone can ever fully understand America, but living here—the sounds, the smells, the colors—the rhythms of the vast panorama that is Los Angeles has influenced and broadened both my work and vision of the country.
Bruce Bauman’s fiction excavates the treacherous terrain of lamentation and revelation beneath the bedrock of art, politics, religion, and language. Sadness and wonder permeate his characters as they roam through worlds of lost memory and twisted words. His writing investigates the mysteries of grief, guilt, faith, and redemption.

In Bauman’s first novel, And the Word Was, Neil Downs is transformed from a trauma doctor in New York City into a bereaved wanderer in New Delhi after his son’s death in a high school shooting. Searching for the reclamation of meaning in the emotional maelstrom of his loss, Downs encounters his literary hero, the Holocaust survivor and bilius sage Levi Furstenblum. Passages from Furstenblum’s writings make up many of the book’s most unforgettable sections, including an alternate reality in which Hitler wins the Nobel Peace Prize. Synthesizing stories from Greek and Hindu myths and biblical lore, And the Word Was is a haunting novel about sacrifice and survival.

Bauman’s short stories explore characters grappling with identity and history: a film editor recognizing a new cinematic and personal chronology, two veterans haunted by ghosts of the Vietnamese dead, the sister of Lewis Carroll’s Alice in analysis with Sigmund Freud. Bauman’s writings on contemporary art, his reminiscence of a Television concert at CBGB’s, and his acclaimed interview with critic Leslie Fiedler all share his urgent and incisive vision.

Bauman’s dedication to his students at the California Institute of the Arts and his work as senior editor of the national literary magazine Black Clock demonstrate another facet of his commitment to unlocking emotional truth through writing. An Angeleno for more than a decade, he still considers his native New York City fundamentally influential to his work. His Jewish heritage informs both the rabbinical inquiry and the irreverent and insurrectionary humor in his writing.

Bauman’s novel-in-progress, Broken Sleep, hurtles the reader into an artistic and political landscape of anxious wakefulness. This epic saga, encompassing elements of the picaresque and speculative fiction, follows the intertwined destinies of Moses Teumer and the Savant family. The quest of this Moses for his biological parents leads him to avant-garde artist and Savant matriarch Salome and her son Twilight, a rock-star-turned-politician, an archetype of American consumption and a nation’s last gleaming. As Broken Sleep moves across more than a half-century, from the 1950s to the 2030s, through the bleak shadows thrown by concentration camps, 9/11, and Guantánamo Bay, four narrators present disparate stories in the manner of present-day Gospels.

Broken Sleep could be considered the author’s great American retort to Stephen Dedalus’s declaration in Joyce’s Ulysses that history “is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.” For Bauman, history is not so much nightmare as a reason not to put one’s head down, and his reply to Dedalus would be he ought to consider himself lucky to sleep or to suffer from disturbing dreams. This is an author who thinks seriously and deeply about dreams; thoughts and dreams mingle in the “thoughtdreams” in his novels and in the title of his Bob Dylan-inspired stream-of-confessional-consciousness litany “33 Thoughtdreams on Why My Head Belongs inside a Guillotine.” Bauman understands that insomnia constitutes a form of exile from one’s own subconscious.

Bauman’s philosophical, humorous, and compelling storytelling ponders many different riddles of exile—personal, political, spiritual—“with an always acute eye and an unfailingly intense empathy.” ANTHONY MILLER
MY NAME IS Downs. I am a Jew. Whether or not that is essential to the story I am about to tell only you will be able to judge. Maybe you could read through my whole tale and never know until — kabbalah-krishna-kaboom — comes the HollywoodBollywood car-crash denouement and my dilemma is, at last, resolved. But I am no trickster, so it is best I tell you in the beginning.
PERFORMING ARTISTS

Alejandra Flores
Lionel Popkin
Houman Pourmehdi
Cheng-Chieh Yu
ALEJANDRA FLORES

Birthplace and Year: Mexico City, 1961

Year located in Los Angeles: 1987

Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside: Elysian Park / Chavez Ravine

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration? Everywhere.

What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work? Diversity, Immigration, Racism, Technology and Politics.
Alejandra Flores knows that drama cannot be limited to a representation of reality, an artistic illusion, or make-believe; in her view, drama is a ritual reenactment that strengthens the ties of a community, reminding it of its unresolved history, its uncertain present, and its unclear horizon of probable futures. Born in Mexico City, Flores studied in the theater conservatory of the National University, reading and acting in ancient European and Spanish Golden Age plays, thereby mastering two classic traditions that have shaped Mexican colonial and modern theater, from the Catholic dramas of the post-Conquest era to the postmodern theater. As a resident of Los Angeles, she draws from this classic and avant-garde dramatic tradition, often bringing daring creativity and innovative ideas to difficult situations and low-budget productions. After years of experience as a professional bilingual actor, creative artist, and director, Flores now specializes in theatrical productions for the entire family, teaching the art of drama to children and adults.

Flores’s university studies, professional training, and diverse acting experiences led to roles in films directed by Oliver Stone and Alfonso Arau, and to featured roles in television. Throughout her thirty-five-year career in the performing arts and cinema, Flores has never forgotten that theater is her primary calling. She has directed classic and modern plays, including Don Juan Tenorio, by José de Zorrilla, and Pedro Páramo, adapted from the novel by Juan Rulfo. In terms of acting in theater, Flores has been distinguished with leading roles in House of the Spirits, Frida: Self-Portrait of Pain, and, among others, Bless Me, Ultima, presented as part of the cultural activities hosted by the County of Los Angeles and the City of Dallas in conjunction with the National Endowment for the Arts' Big Read initiative.

Flores conceives of drama as a legacy of stories that teach us how to re-create language, to utilize technological media to communicate with others, and to document our history through plays of our own making. Her C.O.L.A. project stems from her recent collective drama titled Crónicas de inmigrantes (Chronicles of Immigrants), a transnational play that portrays the often tragic, sometimes humorous, and always very real stories of U.S. Latino immigrants. This play grew out of her Spanish acting improvisation class, producing an immediate success that resulted in being registered with the Writer's Guild of America West. This new dramatic piece represents in a bilingual format (Spanish-English) the daily life of the Hispanic community in Los Angeles, illustrating their shared experiences, choices, and challenges. The theatrical setting will simulate past newspaper events in black-and-white, transitioning to stories in full color to suggest current news. The historical back-and-forth movement of newspaper stories will give way to cellular telephone calls, the iPod, and the Internet as media of daily comedy and tragedy. Thus the clean freeze of a newspaper page and other tech media will come alive in Flores’s multivoiced performance, dramatizing timely topics impacting the Hispanic community and, by extension, all Angelenos. According to Flores, her goal is to have the audience think of what they have learned from the play, and of how they are going to write, tell, or text a different story when history repeats itself over and over again.

ROBERTO CANTÚ
LIONEL POPKIN

Birthplace and Year
Bloomington, Indiana, 1969

Year located in
Los Angeles, 1998

Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside
Santa Monica

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration?
the beach, the airport, and recently a lot of playgrounds

What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work?
the light, the vastness, the solitude
Dances by Lionel Popkin are meticulously detailed works of choreography that flow with surprising ease and are marked by intimacy and openness. Popkin narrows the distance between dancer and viewer, not through formal means, but through a directness and immediacy that assert the human scale of dance.

Popkin is a nimble, quick-witted dancer and a thoughtful, deliberate choreographer. Throughout his creative life—he has been actively making dances for more than eighteen years—he has performed in the works of a number of distinctive choreographers, including Stephanie Skura, Terry Creach, and, most notably, Trisha Brown. But his own body of choreographed works owes more to his lifelong interest in improvisational dance forms.

In the midst of tightly choreographed material, Popkin and his dancers retain an inquisitive nature and open gazes that amplify the unassuming virtuosity of their dancing. He exquisitely pairs abstract movement with fine-tuned gestures, creating dances legible to an untrained eye while surprising trained viewers with his unconventional and acutely distilled simplicity. One feels the conversational possibilities of dance in the back-and-forth of his phrasings and in his welcome presumption that audiences are listening.

Watch one of Popkin’s duets, and you will see what I mean: his duets are dialogues. Like improvised movement, the physical and psychological exchanges he navigates flicker with immediacy and honesty. His dancers converse with each other in a thread of ideas expressed in movement. At any moment, one feels, the conversation could easily spill into words.

The surprising source of this quality is the muteness of movement itself. Popkin bypasses the side effects of translation by building his dances from the exquisite literalness of human action. In the way that physically holding someone up defines being “upheld,” he seeks out elemental physical metaphors that serve to ground the meanings of his dances in movement itself. In Your Hand / My Mouth (2008), for example, two dancers share an extended duet, intermittently bound by an awkward physical connection (to which the title is a not-so-subtle clue). The movement material undermines the dancers’ abilities, and the resulting imagery is by turns infantile, maternal, erotic, and simply absurd. Through an essentially physical exploration, Popkin is able to enact the uncomfortable moments of choice that ultimately define us as we attempt to negotiate the limits that our interpersonal ties place on our individual freedoms.

Through his choreographic eloquence and nuanced direction, Popkin is able to bring such directness to bear on all aspects of the dance. Instead of layering thematic ideas upon his work, his concise crafting allows multiple readings to emerge from within. There Is an Elephant in This Solo, the work that he is creating with support from C.O.L.A., employs the presence of a man-size plush elephant head to evoke references to both the obvious and the unspoken—from religious iconography to personal cultural heritage to the arrival of parenthood. Popkin startles the viewer by subtly animating the object while simultaneously using it to reconfigure his dancing body. With sly humor and vivid imagery, he exploits the viewer’s growing attachment to a constructed “body” to slowly unearth the complexities and multiplicities that are housed within our skins. In There Is an Elephant in This Solo, the slippery qualities of abstract movement become a suitable map to the kind of interior spaces where people stop performing and start communicating.
HOUMAN POURMEHDI

Birthplace and Year
Tehran, Iran, 1966

Year located in Los Angeles: 16 years

Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside: West Los Angeles

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration: Sufi House, Ocean

What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work? L.A. offers a diverse art culture with many possibilities for collaborations. This has given me the opportunity to meet and work with a variety of artists from here and around the world.
I guess my favorite anecdote about my friend Houman Pourmehdi describes the concert he had with Carlos Stasi in Brazil, in which Houman played the cajon, a box drum, for a transfixed crowd that had never heard the instrument played in such a unique and masterly manner before. After the encore, once the curtain closed and the roar of the audience had subsided, Carlos immediately and lovingly told Houman that he could flake off (he didn’t say flake) for making two hundred years of Brazilian cajon musicianship seem stagnant and antiquated.

Houman’s personal path as a world musician began long before he came to the United States from Iran in 1988. Even as a youth learning Persian percussion in Tehran, he was prescient enough to understand the value of learning from not one, but two masters. One, Grand Master Amir Nasse Efteteh, taught him classical Persian tonbak, while his other teacher, Master Morteza Ayan, taught him broader, more improvisatory techniques on the tonbak. It was no easy task, learning to transition from one master’s techniques to another, oftentimes within the span of a few hours. Yet how sublimely that early musical dialectic has paid off, as anyone who has heard Houman’s music can attest.

Today, a resident of Los Angeles for fifteen years, Houman finds himself at the very forefront of the burgeoning world music scene, a gifted musician (daf, tonbak, cajon, ney, tanbur, zarb-e-zoorkhoomeh, dayereh, and setar), singer, and composer whose deep understanding of classical Persian music is sonically blended with Sufi sensibilities and an openness to and affinity for other musical traditions. What the listener hears, ultimately, is the human spirit’s passion for mystical union, brightly and precisely wrought from a universal palette that includes everything from tight Persian dastgah and improvisation to expansive Sufi crescendos, colored deftly with the farthest reaches of world music, and fashioned with complex rhythms to serve, Sufi-like, the listeners in their eternal connection with the one God. Listen to all the voices in this music, and hear how every note defers to Tawhid, the unity of existence.

Houman is still working as hard as ever. He is a cofounder, along with Pirayeh Pourafar, of the internationally recognized Lian Ensemble, which has played concerts all over the world and produced more than a dozen music CDs; the guest performers in the discography include such luminaries as Master Djivan Gaspanyan, Miroslav Tadic, Master Rajeev Taranath, Master John Bergamo, Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith, Khaled Jubran, Swapan Chaudhuri, and Master Mohammad Reza Lotfi. Houman is a professor of music at California Institute of the Arts, and he founded the Society for the Advancement and Preservation of Traditional Persian Music in 1988. He has also somehow found the time to work on the sound tracks of a half-dozen movies.

For his C.O.L.A. project, Houman is developing a collection of five compositions for solo performance that focus on the Sufi mystical practice of Zikr. Similar to a mantra, Zikr is the repetition of a name of God in which the devotee learns to remember the real even while immersed in the transitory. The second and fourth of these pieces will integrate classical Persian poetry into the music. He will also create a multimedia presentation entitled “One God,” which will combine Persian music with photography and video footage in examining the ancient, sophisticated, and misunderstood culture of Iran.

Richard Barton
CHENG-CHIEH YU

Birthplace and Year: Taipei, Taiwan, 1965 Year located in Los Angeles
2001 Area of Los Angeles in which you currently reside: Mid-City
adjacent to Korea Town

What places in the city do you go to for inspiration? the Asian diaspora dance communities of Monterey Park and neighboring San Gabriel Valley Cities

What, if anything, about living in Los Angeles influences your work? (I am) immediately enamored with the ethnic diversity in Los Angeles. The many Asian diaspora communities in the area comprise a rich Pacific Rim context for (my) intercultural dance projects. (I am) excited that this diversity is expressed in the demographic of (my) students.
Cheng-Chieh Yu rarely creates movement for movement’s sake. Though her dances can be admired solely for their athletically rigorous, martial arts-infused, and viscerally evocative movement vocabularies, they are rarely without multiple layers of subtext, context, and undercurrents of cross-cultural commentary about gender and identity. In Yu’s choreography, intriguing and relevant collisions continually occur between East and West, ancient and modern, masculine and feminine, mythic and mundane. Sometimes comic, other times poignant, and often provocative, Yu’s oeuvre, at its heart, reveals the choreographer’s relentless quest to excavate and illuminate her own Taiwanese heritage, the Asian diaspora at large, and the myriad ways in which personal and global narratives can intersect.

Born in Taiwan, Yu embraced a multiplicity of performance styles and influences early on as she majored in modern dance and minored in Chinese opera at the Taipei National University of the Arts. She toured with the internationally acclaimed Cloud Gate Dance Theater before decamping to New York, where she received an MFA in choreography from New York University in 1991. For a decade she worked with a number of prominent choreographers such as Ralph Lemon and Bebe Miller and honed her own postmodern sensibility within New York’s thriving experimental contemporary dance world. Her Bowl Problems (1999), originally a duet, was expanded in 2004 to include six performers slyly subverting popular perceptions of female Chinese acrobats as they clumsily balanced bowls on their heads and faked various physics-defying contortion routines to hilarious effect.

Yu’s integration of her cultural heritage with Western dance forms underwent significant evolution when she relocated to Los Angeles in 2001 and found herself both pursuing intensive martial arts training and paying close attention to the city’s vast Asian diaspora. Trade (2005) incorporated research about the use of endangered species in Chinese medicine, while Swallow Touches the Water (2006), created in collaboration with Japanese Taiko drumming artist Kenny Endo, featured the Chinese martial art form ba gua zhang as an integral component of the choreography.

In 2007 Yu spent six months in Taiwan working with the Sun-Shier Dance Theatre on a commission that became the critically acclaimed Hood, Veil, Shoes. Finding potent subject matter in the gender politics inherent in Taipei’s chaotic traffic culture, Yu created a dance that fully embodied an East-meets-West ethos with its sophisticated fusing of Western contemporary movement, martial arts, video projections of Taipei street life, and the evocation of multiple cross-cultural references, including the Little Red Riding Hood tale, the 1948 ballet film The Red Shoes, and the tradition of female foot binding in China.

Equally dedicated to the ongoing East-West cross-fertilization of her work and taking new artistic risks, Yu will use her 2009 C.O.L.A. Fellowship to create a solo dance called Dancing Mother Courage. A transmutation of Bertolt Brecht’s 1939 play Mother Courage and Her Children, the solo will be part of a larger evening-length series of thematically linked dances.

Yu says of this process: “It is unusual for choreographers to undertake mythic narratives from seminal works of literature as the basis for a dance without spoken dialogue. The rhythm of the text and its momentum will have to be studied and translated into corporeal form. Primarily the staging references the emotional tone and psychic conflicts of the play rather than any linear story form. It’s all very exciting!”

Susan Josephs
EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Dimensions are given in the following order: height, width, depth; unless otherwise noted, all works are courtesy of the artist.

Natalie Bookchin
Mass Ornament TWO Point Oh! 2009
Digital video

Castillo
Brown Sugar, 2009
Installation: burlap bags and mixed media
Dimensions variable

Joe Davidson
Landscape (San Gabriels I), 2009
Scotch™ tape on vellum 38 × 125 in.
Landscape (San Gabriels II), 2009
Scotch™ tape on vellum 25 × 190 in.

Untitled Landscape, 2009
Floor piece: toiletry bottles cast in flexible urethane foam 7 × 84 × 180 in.; 15 × 84 × 180 in. on plinth

David DiMichele
Pseudodocumentation:
Holes and Light, 2008
LightJet print 44 × 56 in.

Bia Gayotto
The Sea Is Not Blue/
O Mar não é azul, 2009
Two-channel video installation with sound
Dimensions variable

Willie Robert Middlebrook
Looking for GOD—ANGEL 1, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Looking for GOD—ANGEL 2, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Looking for GOD—ANGEL 3, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Looking for GOD—ANGEL 4, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Looking for GOD—GRACE, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Looking for GOD—HIS FALL TO GRACE, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Looking for GOD—MOON, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Looking for GOD—SPACE, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Looking for GOD—SPIRIT, 2009
Eight-color fine art giclée on archival paper 42 × 52 in.

Maureen Selwood
As You Desire Me, 2009
Installation with four parts:
I Am Measuring You
A Shoe Falls
Empire of Dreams
Digital projections on hanging scims 60 × 45 in. each

Rules of the Universe
HD DVD on framed flat-screen monitor 30 × 46 in.

Animation assistance: Maria Vasilkovsky
Sound track composer: Alvin Curran
Musical director: Anna Oxygen
Acknowledgments to Duck Studios for its generous support

Eloy Torrez
To Be Continued, 2009
Oil on canvas 66 × 300 in.

Shirley Tse
Quantum Shirley Series: Double Comfort of Soft Filled Space, 2009
Polyurethane, fiberboard
Variable dimensions

Quantum Shirley Series: Flotsam and Webs, 2009
Polyurethane foam, cherry veneer 36 × 72 × 50 in.

Quantum Shirley Series: Superposition, 2009
Polyurethane, foam core, digital print, paint, metal 42 × 102 × 60 in.
READINGS AND PERFORMANCES

LITERARY ARTISTS

Gloria Eanedina Alvarez
TierraCentro: Echoing Lines/Grabado entre memorias, 2009
Poetry performance: memories etched across geographies, destinios, and time, which span generations, lands, gender, and circumstance through poetic landscapes of sound

Bruce Bauman
Reading from his forthcoming novel Broken Sleep

PERFORMING ARTISTS

Alejandra Flores
NEWS, 2009
Solo performance
Collaborators: Ted Owens, live music; Ricardo Nuñez, visual projections
Thanks to: Elysian Therapeutic Recreation Center, World Post, Coyote Films Inc.
Special thanks to: Vicente Baldwin (1964–2009), writer-producer

Lionel Popkin
There Is An Elephant in This Solo, 2009
Written and performed by Lionel Popkin
Costume: Jean Landry; original music: Robert Een

Houman Pourmehdi
Self-Portrait, 2009
Words and music composed and performed by Houman Pourmehdi, joined by musicians Pirayeh Pourafar and Mani Bolouri
Multimedia play based on a here and a hereafter, a visible and invisible sensible and supersensible world, rather than the typically Far Eastern view of an ever-turning and returning wheel of birth and death.
Gloria Ecludedina Alvarez

EDUCATION
Studies in social and behavioral science and Chicano studies, California State University, Dominguez Hills, 1979

BIOGRAPHY

Bruce Bauman

EDUCATION
MA, history, New York University, New York, 1985
BA, George Washington University, Washington, D.C., 1975

PUBLICATIONS
2007 “33 Thoughtdreams on Why My Head Belongs inside a Guillotine” (story), Opiatum Literary Magazine, pp. 137–38
2005 And the Word Was (novel) (New York: Other Press)
2004 “Zimmerman’s Last Dream” (story), Black Clock Magazine, no. 2 (Fall 2004–Winter 2005): 55–69


2001 “Day Time” (story), in Another City: Writing from Los Angeles, ed. David L. Ulin (San Francisco: City Lights), pp. 203–12

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Natalie Bookchin

EDUCATION
MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1990
BA, liberal arts, State University of New York, Purchase, 1984

EXHIBITIONS
2007 Curve, Bandini Art, Culver City, California
2005 More or Less, Rush Art Gallery, New York
2004 Fade, Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles
2003 Castillo / Outterbridge, Crazy Space, Santa Monica
2000 Inland Specific, Montgomery Gallery, Pomona College, Claremont, California

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Castillo

EDUCATION
MFA, sculpture, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont California, 1999
BA, art education, California State University, Fullerton, 1993

BIBLIOGRAPHY


CAN WE EDIT SOMETHING FROM ALEJANDRA?
COLA HISTORY  Department of Cultural Affairs

Cultural Grant Program  The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs awards grants for the production, creation, presentation, exhibition, and managerial support of art projects in the following areas: design, dance, media, music, literary arts, theatre, traditional/folk art, visual arts, arts management, and projects which are multi-disciplinary.

Grants are awarded on a competitive basis to bring the highest quality artistic and cultural services to the residents of and tourists visiting Los Angeles. Since 1990, the Department of Cultural Affairs has awarded over $50 million dollars to local artists, arts organizations, and arts events. In 2008-2009, the Department offered over $2.8 million in project support to more than 280 local artists and organizations through its Cultural Grant Program.

C.O.L.A. Individual Artist Fellowships  Each C.O.L.A. grant recipient receives $10,000 to create new work that is showcased in a non-thematic group presentation series. This annual Spring event greatly benefits general audiences and honors a selection of established and creative artists who live and work in Los Angeles.
Individual Artist Fellowships

EXHIBITION
April 25–June 4, 2000
UCLA Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90024

PERFORMANCES
June 10–June 30, 2000
Los Angeles Theater Center
514 S. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013

ViSuAL ARTISTS
Lynn Aldrich
Nancy Buchanan
Ingrid Calame
Carole Caroompas
Barbara Carrasco
John Divola
Robbert Flick
Michael Gonzalez
Daniel Joseph Martinez
Susan Mogul
Linda Nishio
Millie Wilson

PERFORMING ARTISTS
Amy Knoles
Michael Mizerany
Oguri
Melinda Ring
Rachel Rosenthal

PA n EL iSt S
visual arts
Howard Fox
Todd Gray
Susa Kandel
Carol Ann Klonarides
Michael Zakian
performing arts
Michael Alexander
Luis Alfaro
Duane Ebata
James Forward
Ellen Ketchum
Titus Levy
Claire Peeps

1996–1997
Individual Artist Fellowships
EXHIBITION
April 20–June 22, 1997
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery
Barnsdall Art Park
4800 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90027

ARTISTS
Kim Abeles
Michael Brewster
Carl Cheng
Victor Estrada
Harry Gamboa, Jr.
photography
Tony Gleaton
photography
Joe Edward Grant
Phyllis Green
Martin Kersels
Joyce Lightbody
Michael C. McMillen
Jorge Pardo

PANELISTS
visual arts
Susan Sayre Batton
Bill Calahan
Susan Cahan
Lance Carlson
Francesco Siquieros
photography
Lane Barden
Claudia Bohn-Spector
Elizabeth Cheatham
Lyle Ashton Harris
Anthony Pardines
Jennifer Watts

photography
Lance Carlson
Chusien Chang
Noriko Gamblin
Josine Lance-Starrels
Rose Portillo
Alison Saar
Thomas Schiritz
photography
Nancy Barton
Robert Byer
John Huggins
Pilar Perez
Carla Williams
Tim B. Wride

1995–1996
Individual Artist Fellowships
EXHIBITION
April 22–June 21, 1995
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery
Barnsdall Art Park
4800 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90027

ARTISTS
David Bunn
Eileen Cowin
photography
James Doolin
Alice Fellows
photography
Betty Lee
Robin Mitchell
Bruce Richards
Sue Ann Robinson
Therman Statom
Erika Suderburg
Patsal Valdez

PANELISTS
visual arts
Susan Sayre Batton
Bill Calahan
Susan Cahan
Lance Carlson
Francesco Siquieros
photography
Lane Barden
Claudia Bohn-Spector
Elizabeth Cheatham
Lyle Ashton Harris
Anthony Pardines
Jennifer Watts

photography
Lance Carlson
Chusien Chang
Noriko Gamblin
Josine Lance-Starrels
Rose Portillo
Alison Saar
Thomas Schiritz
photography
Nancy Barton
Robert Byer
John Huggins
Pilar Perez
Carla Williams
Tim B. Wride

PAST CATALOG DESIGNERS
2008
Susan Sizon, SOS, Los Angeles

2007
Michael Worthington and Yasmin Khan, counterspace

2006
Garland Kirkpatrick, helveticaoness.com

2005
Michael Worthington, counterspace

2004
Susan Sizon, SOS, Los Angeles

PAST CATALOG DESIGN TEAMS FROM OTIS DESIGN GROUP
2003
Amber Howard, Rajeswaran Shanmugasundaram, Sharleen Yoshimi

2002
Jessie Pete Alvarez, Hesed Choi, Christi DeFilippo

2001
Bryan Craig, Allison Eubanks, Anouk de Jonge, Kevin Yuda

2000
Josica Berardi, Amanda Cheong, Sayuri Dejima, Trittia Khournso, Christina Kim, Tatjana Lenders

1999
Heather Coughley, Henry Escoto, Vaughn Lai

1998–1996
Laura Clinton, Sasha Perez, C.O.L.A.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs combined the efforts of its Cultural Grant Program staff with its Marketing and Development Division, the Community Arts Division, and the Municipal Art Gallery to produce the 2009 C.O.L.A. Individual Artist Fellowships catalog, exhibition, and performances.

We would especially like to thank the following Department employees for their dedicated work in making the exhibition and performances engaging, educational, and entertaining:

Joe Smoke, Michelle Berne, Don Lee Gaudino, Brandy Healy, and Sherlan Abesamis from the Cultural Grant Program; Mark Steven Greenfield, Scott Canty, Sara Cannon, Michael Lewis Miller, Sidney Taylor, Bob Dale, Marta Feinstein, Gabriel Cifarelli, and Mauricio Vallejo from the Municipal Art Gallery; and Will Caperton y Montoya and Martica Caraballo Strork from the Marketing and Development Division.

We also sincerely thank Grand Performances and Michael Alexander for hosting the performances, Louise Sandhaus and Derrick Schultz for designing the catalog, and Karen Jacobson for editing.

PHOTO CREDITS

Portrait Series
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Los Angeles sky photographs
Ewa Farrelly (flickr user evaxebra) 7
Monica Nouwens 3, 16, 74, 90, 118
Ståle Veipe (flickr user staaleve) 5
Travis (need last name still) (flickr user etravus) 138
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