

## FOCA @ 40 @ MOCA

### Karen Moss Introduction

Thank you Linda and thanks also to MOCA for hosting FOCA@40 and to David Bradshaw and Santi Vernetti for their assistance with this event. I'd now like to introduce our panel of distinguished curators/colleagues: Connie Butler, chief curator of the UCLA Hammer, Helen Molesworth, chief curator here at MOCA and Franklin Sirmans, Dept. Head and Curator of Contemporary Art, at LACMA. You can see their full bios in program notes. Sponsoring California artists, curators, their exhibitions, and activities is the heart of FOCA's mission and its three programs. The Curator's Award for exhibitions initiated in 1976 has been most the most visible program. In the interest of time, I've selected highlights from each decade to illustrate the history and trajectory of FOCA exhibitions

In the 1970s, FOCA's auspicious beginning included solo exhibitions such as: Ed Moses, curated by Joseph Mashek, who became editor of *Artforum*, Wallace Berman, curated by Hal Glicksman, director of the Otis galleries and Vija Celmins, curated by Betty Turnbull, the first curator at Newport Harbor Art Museum.

FOCA continued sponsoring major one-person exhibitions like artists Craig Kauffman at the La Jolla Museum and James Turrell here at MOCA in the 1980s. At this time they introduced group exhibitions in the *Variations* series. Constance Mallinson's show about the current painting at Security Pacific Bank an important corporate gallery in LA and Melinda Wertz's emerging artists exhibition was at LACE, located at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Broadway downtown.

In the 1990s Lita Albuquerque exhibited at SMMOA's original 8K former warehouse space at Edgemar on Main St., Lynn Foulkes at the Laguna Art Museum, and Eleanor Antin at LACMA, all examples of how FOCA provided opportunities for established artist long-deserving a solo show with a major publication. Ralph Rugoff's *Scene of the Crime*, was a group exhibition of artists whose work considered the art object as forensic evidence at Hammer and Karin Higa organized *Bruce and Norman Yonemoto* at the Japanese American National Museum.

In the 2000s one sees group exhibitions addressing both aesthetic/formal and socio-political themes. *Whiteness, A Wayward Construction*, a group exhibition of 29 artists, explored representations of whiteness in art and in the public imagination, while *THING* probed new materials, forms, and methods of sculpture. More recent solo shows include Kori Newkirk, curated by Thelma Golden at the Studio Museum in Harlem (outside of LA) and John Altoon at LACMA.

FOCA's direct unrestricted Fellowships to mid career artists have been awarded every other year since 2006 --Jennifer West & Lesley Vance most recent, (pls go to website to see others) The Curator's Lab, started in 2009 to funds exhibitions in the FOCA space in Chinatown. Each curator posts full documentation, on FOCA's website.

FOCA's 40 years of significant support to exhibitions and publications that elucidate and record developments in contemporary art since 1960s and how today they've expanded with their support to mid-career artists in the fellowships and emerging curators at the Lab. FOCA is truly a unique non-profit that has nourished and impacted the LA's constantly shifting cultural landscape for the past four decades, which our panel will discuss soon.

## Exhibitions

**Kim Abeles *Encyclopedia Persona*** surveying Abeles' work from 1979-1993, was initially presented at Santa Monica Museum of Art. Abeles' practice is best described as research-based: she chooses a subject, investigates it thoroughly, then assembles information and source materials before making the artwork. Abeles' produces her works in discrete thematic series that became a structure for the exhibition and the publication that is based on a vintage 1962 *World Book Encyclopedia* with its colorful graphics, hand drawings, charts and maps.

Some of the series in the exhibition included her *Kimonos* and *Shrines*, both inspired from time she lived in Japan; *Biographical Portraits* that reference historical figures tackling subjects from *St. Bernadette*, the young visionary of Lourdes to the execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Abeles *Smog Collectors*, objects with images etched by particulate matter that collects on the surface over time, included works such as her *Presidential Smog Plates*: the duration or exposure and density of smog reflects their environmental policies. The exhibition also included large-scale installations such as *Observation* a structure that maps celestial events and *Long Exposures*, a portrait of an aging artist within a darkroom.

After traveling to the Forum for Contemporary Art in St. Louis and the Fresno Museum of Art, the exhibition toured to Latin America to the National Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago, Chile, the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, Complot Cultural Recollect, Buenos Aires, and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago, Chile. *The Encyclopedia Persona* book was also published in both Spanish and Portuguese for these venues.

**Topographies** featured 18 emerging and established artists whose work ranged from more physical topographies related to geography or cartography, to mappings of cultural, social/psychological space. Including both gallery work and site specific projects, the artist engaged with both the aesthetics and temporalities of surfaces, spaces and sites. Their topographic representations derived from specific memories or senses of places, rural/natural or urban/built environments, real and fictional landscapes

The exhibition began with three works from 1969 by **John Baldessari's** iconic *CA Map* project where he made each letter of CALIFORNIA at their site on the map from Shasta to Salton Sea. (marking sites/performing maps) Allan Kaprow *Dial* captured changing light post shadows along Columbus St. (tracing urban experience) and Ed Ruscha's mash-up creates (imaginary cartographies or territories) These historical works prefigure the mapping, marking, and place-making strategies of the contemporary artists in the exhibition a few of which I will show you now.

**Ingrid Calame**, painting are tracings of stains on the sidewalk & her studio **Charles LaBelle**, *Abandoned Sofas (Silverlake)*, a 10-year psycho-geographic excavation of gentrification of Silverlake. (fewer couches, more hipsters) Imaginary, celestial landscapes by **Adam Ross** and solar-flared fly-overs by **Tam Van Tran**. A futuristic metropolis is carved in Styrofoam by **Shirley Tse** while **Sabina Ott** takes a single square of a map grid and makes telescopic progressions from the micro to macro in paintings and portable sculptures. **Lordy Rodriguez** drove to LA/SF on 3 different routes to make real time videos from his dashboard, documenting his journey and performing his map. Finally, **David Hinman's** sound topographies based on the action of breaking glass and the awkward moments of silence made directly from a recording of the first annual 9/11 memorial.