



T H E

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Photo Month Los Angeles: MOPLA Thinks Big



Kiichi Asano, *Watching the National High School Baseball Championship Games, August*, silver gelatin print, 4" x 6 1/4", 1957. Courtesy Stephen Cohen Gallery.

by Scarlet Cheng

For those who attended photoLA at its newly expanded digs at Barker Hangar this January, the crowds streaming through the aisles for four days was testament to the continuing, even exploding interest in photography as a fine art form and a subject for serious collecting. Though sales may not have been as brisk as dealers had hoped for — we are, after all, in a recession — photography is clearly here to stay on our art calendars.

Two who saw an opportunity to tap into and expand upon what's been happening in Los Angeles were Hossein Farmani and Cat Jimenez — he's the founder and she's the executive director of the Lucie Foundation, a foundation set up to honor photographers and to promote the practice and pursuit of photography. Last year they began to discuss establishing a month to showcase photography in Los Angeles — an idea partly inspired by the eminent *Paris Photo*, which occurs every November in Paris, France.

"It came about because both Hossein and myself are based in L.A., and we saw that L.A. has so much to offer in terms of photography, but it's not necessarily organized," says Jimenez. While the foundation gives out the Lucie Awards every fall at the Lincoln Center in New York, they wanted to do something on their home turf. "We want to champion photography as much on West Coast as East Coast," Jimenez says, pointing out that the

Los Angeles area constitutes "the second largest photo community in the nation," after New York. Thus was born The Month of Photography (or MOPLA), which is taking place throughout April and, if all goes well, will be the first of many to come.

"Anything that promotes photo-based art is good news for the entire community," says Stephen Cohen, who runs his own gallery as well as artfairs, inc., which produces photoLA. "This event has the potential of becoming a major art event in years to come and will be a great compliment to photoLA. I have always wanted events during the year, and Hossein has come up with an idea that is all good."

MOPLA will promote and produce a cornucopia of photo-related exhibitions and programming all over the city throughout the month. Some of it has been created specifically for and/or in conjunction with MOPLA, such as talks, workshops, and the *Fresh Fair* for emerging and established artists. Much involves events already scheduled by organizations or institutions, such as the *Palm Springs Photo Festival* (March 29 to April 3), two major photography exhibitions at the Getty Center, and the opening of the new Annenberg Space for Photography in Century City.



Daido Moriyama, *Shinjuku, Dolls in Window*, silver gelatin prints, 58" x 40", 2002. Courtesy Stephen Cohen Gallery.

EXHIBITIONS

The Getty weighs in with two exhibitions, *Paul Outerbridge: Command Performance* and *Jo Ann Callis: Woman Twirling* (both March 31 to August 9), which were long planned before MOPLA but fortunately fall during its timeframe. Curator Paul Martineau says that since the last major Outerbridge show was twenty years ago, “we thought it was time to present a fresh perspective on this gifted, but sometimes overlooked, master of the medium.”

Born and raised in New York, Outerbridge started in commercial photography, contributing to the top fashion and lifestyle magazines of his day — *Vogue*, *Harper’s Magazine*, and *Vanity Fair*. In the mid-1920s he moved to Paris where he worked a number of years before returning to New York, continuing to work with major magazines and clients. He is well known for his pioneering work in color photography and for artistic nudes. What is not so well known are his “sexual fantasy and fetishistic” work, which was hidden during his lifetime, but which the Getty will include. His final years were spent in Laguna Beach, where he ran a portrait studio, but he would travel when called upon to take on photo essays — a format popularized by *LIFE* magazine in which a series of photographs tell a story.

Callis is still working, and her highly staged, deeply symbolic work forms a powerful counterpart to Outerbridge’s more classical vision. When she studied at UCLA, professor Robert Heinecken taught that photographs were to be “made, not found”. Callis took that to heart and has been creating setups for both black-and-white and color photographs. While a number of her shots focus on interior or domestic scenes, there is often something slightly sinister about them. “Callis’s work has a Hitchcock-like bent,” curator Judith Keller has said. Most of the photographs will be of her widely seen and influential fabricated tableaux from the 1980s and ’90s.

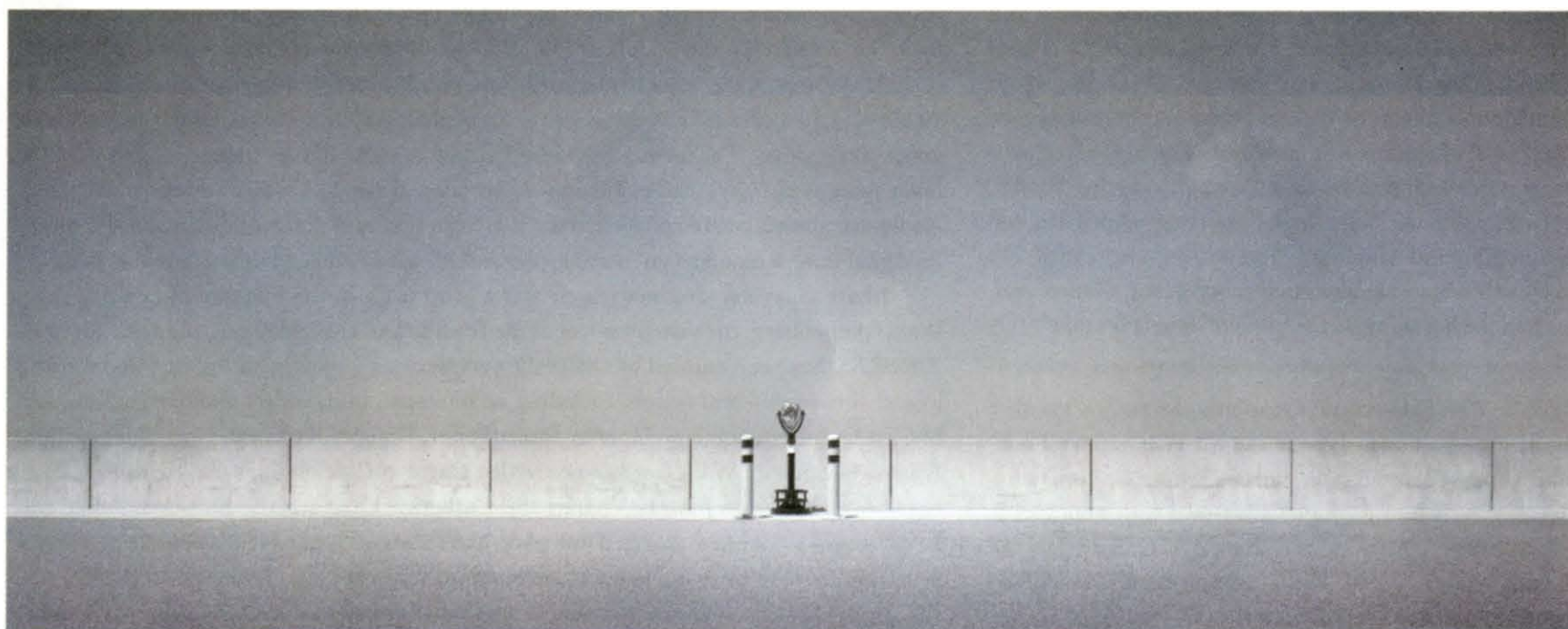
MORE INFORMATION
IS AVAILABLE AT
WWW.MOPLA.ORG

MOPLA will mount its own exhibition of large blown-up photographs of celebrities at the Pacific Design Center, both in lobby areas and in showrooms. Galleries around town will be having openings, too. This includes David Fokos at Kopeikin Gallery, Kenneth Tanaka at Billy Shire Fine Arts, and French/Swiss photographer Erwan Frotin with his first solo in the United States at the M+B Gallery. At DNJ Gallery, the current Carlos and Jason Sanchez show will be followed by Jane O’Neal’s studies of fruits, vegetables, and flowers in *Environmental Memory: Part 1 Home Grown*. Stephen Cohen will introduce several Japanese photographers from the 1920s to the 1990s — some have never been exhibited in Los Angeles.

from left: **Paul Outerbridge**, *Images de Deauville*, Carbro print, image 15 3/4" x 12 1/4", 1936. Paul Outerbridge, Jr. © 2008 G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, Beverly Hills. Digital Image courtesy The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York.

Jo Ann Callis, *Woman with Wet Hair*, dye transfer print, framed 26" x 32", 1978. © Jo Ann Callis. Courtesy Jo Ann Callis and Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica.

Paul Outerbridge, (*Cheese and Crackers*), Palladium print, image 4 9/16" x 3 5/8", 1922. Paul Outerbridge, Jr. © 2008 G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, Beverly Hills. Photo Courtesy J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



David Fokos, *Scenic View, Kiptopeke, Virginia*, large-scale, toned silver gelatin prints, 2009. Courtesy Paul Kopeikin Gallery.

FAIRS AND WORKSHOPS

The *Fresh Fair* (April 24 to 26) features a juried event put together by MOPLA. “This gives photographers a chance to sell their work directly to collectors, and for visitors to see work that’s not in a gallery,” says Jimenez. “This could include younger photographers, this could also include commercial photographers who have another side. There’s huge talent not being showcased in fine arts world.”

Additionally, on the first two days of the fair there will also be a Fresh Look program where photographers/artists can sign up, for a fee, to have reviews of their portfolios conducted by various industry insiders, including Robert Berman of Robert Berman Gallery, Kathy Pyon of the *Los Angeles Times*, Rose Shoshana of the Rose Gallery, Kristine Wilson of Ogilvy & Mather, and various other gallerists, art directors and photo editors.

Part of MOPLA’s goal is to raise public awareness and education. The Pacific Design Center will be the venue for three days of educational programs (April 7 to 9), some for free, some requiring registration and fees, such as three-day workshops by Mark Edward Harris on “The Fine Art of Travel Photography” and Jim McHugh on “Interpretive Architecture — The Other Portraiture.”

Marjorie Ornston, a photography collector and member of the Getty Photo Council, has stepped in to help organize two special programs for MOPLA. She’s been well aware of the explosion of interest in photography, and, as a collector, she understands the knowledge that intelligent collecting requires. “We have to address collectors, so we built this series called the Collectors Series — four different panel discussions,” she says. These are free and open to all, and will be held in the evening at the Helms Building in Culver City. Ornston has recruited curators, gallerists, appraisers, and other collectors to participate. The first panel will be “Photo Collecting and Donating to Museums” (April 16), which will address some of the nuts and bolts of collecting photographs and of donating to museums. The next three programs occur on successive days “Young Collecting Young” (April 22), “Photography Book Collecting” (April 21), and “Cataloging and Managing Your Collection” (April 23), which will review an important process that, Ornston says, “is often the last thing on the mind of most collectors.”

Not to be West Side-centric, Ornston is also putting together something downtown she’s calling the “Chinatown Photo Hop” (April 18, 2pm). She leads all who want to participate on a lively tour through Chinatown with stopovers at four galleries — Solway Jones, Sam Lee Gallery, Jancar/McCorkle Gallery, and The Company. Sam Lee, a noted photography enthusiast himself, has invited artist Carrie Yury to present her own work.



Greg Gorman, *Bette Davis*, 1988. © Greg Gorman. Courtesy Annenberg Space for Photography.

ANNENBERG SPACE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

An exciting addition to the cultural life of this city is the highly anticipated Annenberg Space for Photography, which opens March 27 in a sleek contemporary building in the plaza of 2000 Avenue of the Stars in Century City. Funded by the Annenberg Foundation, the 10,000-square-foot space will showcase the art of photography and hold regular presentations about photography. The interior has been designed to evoke the aperture of a camera, so the main space is circular, with exhibitions to be hung along the outside and the inside walls. Additional material will be projected onto two large screens in the central area and also shown on digital screens mounted on movable pods, which will be situated throughout the space.

“I have a passion for photography and a great pride in the fine city of Los Angeles,” Wallis Annenberg, the vice president of the Foundation, has said. Thus, the first show, *L8S ANG3LES*, has been curated to reflect the complexity and energy of the city, and features iconic work in different genres, including architecture, portraiture, photojournalism, and fine art by Julius Shulman, Timothy Street-Porter, Douglas Kirkland, Greg Gorman, and Lauren Greenfield. Work by photojournalist Carolyn Cole and art photography/photo-based work by artists John Baldassari and Catherine Opie are also included. A side gallery features work of *Los Angeles Times* photojournalists, as well as vintage views of the city from the *Times* archives going back one hundred years. ■

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT WWW.MOPLA.ORG