

# Art in America

NOVEMBER 2006

**FOCUS:  
LOS  
ANGELES**

**JEAN-ETIENNE  
LIOTARD**

**PAUL CHAN**

**"EVIDENCE"  
REVISITED**

**BETTY  
WOODMAN**

\$5.00 USA  
\$7.00 CAN £3.50 UK



# Art in America

November 2006

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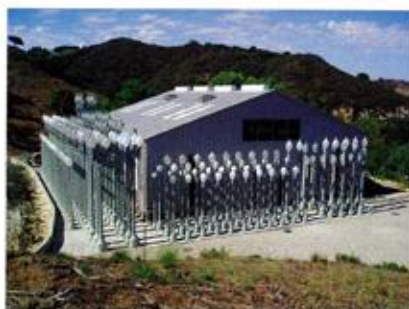
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Cover: Chris Burden, *Urban Light*, 2005, approx. 150 restored cast-iron streetlamps; at the artist's studio, Topanga, Calif. Photo Erich Koyama, courtesy Gagosian Gallery. This page, photo © Locus+ Archive. See article beginning on page 168.

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# Place Matters: Los Angeles Sculpture Today

*Recent years have produced a burgeoning sculpture scene in Los Angeles, where abundant studio space, high-profile art schools and do-it-yourself confidence provide a uniquely congenial mix. Here two Paris-based sculptors interview 19 of their Southern California counterparts.*

**BY ANNE ROCHETTE AND WADE SAUNDERS**

**A**rt-world tides answer to elusive gravities and are hard to anticipate. Last fall, we were reminded of this on seeing a group show of good work by younger sculptors in a Paris gallery. Four of them came from Los Angeles, two from London and none from New York. The geographic distribution seemed inverted—New York has ruled over contemporary art since the '40s, while L.A. has often been marginal. In the months afterwards, we kept coming across articles, catalogues and books documenting recent three-dimensional work from L.A.

As working sculptors, we wondered what circumstances had helped transform L.A. into a sculptors' town. There, younger sculptors make sculpture, while peers in New York and Europe often treat sculpture-making as part of a broader practice, which can involve photography, video, film and performance. While it's significant that L.A. offers warmer winters, more available space, lower rents and easier access to materials and fabrication than New York does, what other factors are at play?

Speaking with L.A. sculptors was the obvious way to get answers, and we asked artists, critics and curators for names.<sup>1</sup> Our list soon had more sculptors than we could meet during our planned visit, so we shortened it by excluding many (but not all) artists who have previously figured in these pages. We further limited our field by focusing on currently visible artists between the ages of 30 and 60; ultimately, we had to make subjective choices.<sup>2</sup>

We interviewed 25 sculptors in L.A. in February 2006. With every artist, we started by asking a series of questions, which often included: When and why had they come to L.A.? Where had they studied? Why had they stayed in L.A.? How had their career started? Does the city affect their work? What were the economics of making art in L.A.? Would they talk to us about recent work? Each conversation followed its own course. Their optimism was so catching that we wondered whether our children would miss us if we prolonged our stay indefinitely.<sup>3</sup>

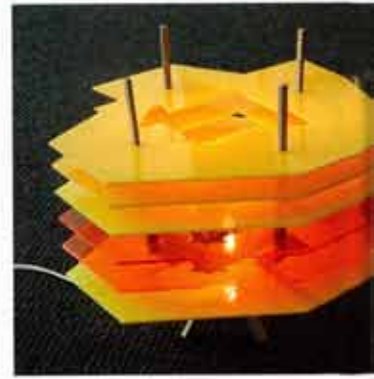
We told the artists that, to avoid repetition, we would take out our part of the conversations when transcribing the interviews, and that their texts would be cut in length and edited for readability and narrative flow. We emphasized that our larger subject was how Los Angeles had come to be so hospitable to sculptors, and said that we weren't focusing on individual studio practices. We promised all the artists the chance to check a final copy of their interview and warned many that they might not appear in the article. In the end, six were left out for reasons of space.

The artists were generally gracious and professional about checking their texts, and this article is better and more accurate for their care. Almost all understood the constraints and complexities inherent in our reproducing but one side of a conversation, accepted our somewhat sociological bent and respected the looming deadline.

Humor, wild energies and disrespect for esthetic codes run through much of the best L.A. art. Artists there have had few historical and critical super-egos to answer to. A number of art critics write from Southern California, but a succession of art magazines based in L.A. have decamped or folded. Local artists often have had the freedom of developing outside the East Coast's ken.

Five of the most influential American artists born after 1940 and involved with sculpture came of artistic age in greater L.A., and four are still based there. Bruce Nauman lived in Pasadena from 1969 to 1979; Paul McCarthy, Chris Burden, Charles Ray and Mike Kelley were all working, exhibiting and teaching in L.A. by the mid-'80s. They helped art in Los Angeles develop as it did, opening territories, giving permission and influencing younger artists in ways few New York sculptors their age have done. Ray and Burden, in particular, have shown sculpture to be both a necessary and sufficient medium.

A resounding difference between East and West Coast artists appears in their attitudes toward teaching. Few well-known New York artists, past or present, have held full-time faculty positions for long periods. Painters and sculptors from the Yale University School of Art helped shape late '60s and





early '70s New York art. But no other American graduate art program outside of Southern California has been steadily noteworthy, in part because none has kept an exceptional faculty for a sustained period.

In L.A., almost all the important artists under 70 years old have taught regularly, both for the income and to be part of a community. California Institute of the Arts in Valencia was the seminal '70s American school, though it fell on pedagogical hard times in the mid-'80s. Beginning in the late '80s, Art Center College of Design in Pasadena and the University of California, Los Angeles, developed strong programs. In the '90s, UCLA counted the best-known group of artists teaching in an American university. (Chris Burden, Paul McCarthy and Nancy Rubins lately have left, and Charles Ray now teaches half time.)

Still, for the last 15 years, UCLA's graduate department of art has been the bully of the neighborhood. One of the most selective programs in the country, it admits around 15 out of more than 600 applicants yearly. Professors have been generous with their contacts and students have benefited from a strong art-world network. Collectors frequent the MFA shows and annual studio open house, and some have helped promote the careers of young artists whose work they've bought. The school's choosiness and method have paid off: many graduates exhibit widely. We interviewed nine UCLA alumni, and easily could have included more.

In addition to UCLA, Art Center and Cal Arts, there are about 15 other graduate programs in the region, ranging from excellent to accredited. Graduate students often pay far less in tuition than they would on the East Coast, and L.A. has become a destination of choice for MFA candidates. Southern California's academic efflorescence has provided well-paying teaching jobs for emerging area sculptors and attracted several established New York artists. These positions certainly help the sculptors who have them. Whether their students will benefit equally is an open question, since exceptional art programs are often short-lived and arise as much through serendipity and alchemical teacher/student interactions as from faculty hires. While professors, facilities and financial aid matter, it's often the mix of collegiality and rivalry among graduate students that drives the best programs. Such fruitful give-and-take is hard to plan for and hard to maintain.

Curator Paul Schimmel's sharply chosen and aggressively titled exhibition "Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the '90s" (Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992) drew international attention and nurtured the confidence of local artists.

"Helter Skelter" both recounted and shaped L.A. art history, and has had a long half-life. The show highlighted a group of then under-50 artists, only some of whom exhibited widely at the time; a number are now internationally renowned. We interviewed four.

Schimmel's catalogue essay states that part of his aim was to remap the geography of American art: "Although Los Angeles has been grudgingly acknowledged as a flourishing art center, it has never fully been paid its due." He presciently went on to argue that "L.A. does have culture of its own, that its community is different from others, and that, in this case, 'regional' art need not bear the burden of provincialism." In putting together "Helter Skelter," Schimmel favored the moment and largely ignored past movements for which L.A. had been known, such as Light and Space. In conversation with us, he described his curatorial role as "picking the ponies," and he's proven a great handicapper.

L.A. museums actively support their regional scene, which is less the case in New York; and since far fewer artists work in L.A., those that do have more of a chance to show in museums than their peers back east. In L.A., curators and institutions compete for visibility and influence, and these rivalries benefit local artists. Both MOCA (the Focus series) and the UCLA Hammer Museum (Hammer Projects) offer emerging artists monographic shows. Last year, this boosterism was evident in "Thing: New Sculpture from Los Angeles" at the Hammer. The show featured 20 sculptors—five of whom we interviewed—and attracted much attention.

While L.A.'s galleries remain geographically dispersed, there are some important clusters, like Bergamot Station in Santa Monica and the storefront galleries in Chinatown. This propinquity energizes the scene and makes for a greater sense of community. Galleries and collectors in L.A. seem eager for sculpture when compared with their cohorts in many other places. Some L.A. sculptors we spoke with felt that artists, as a group, are better treated today than in the past: the ratio of demand to supply favors them, and they can move on if ill used. Many of the younger artists emphasized the role art-fair sales play in their economic survival.

A do-it-yourself attitude, common to sculptors' studio practices in the region, extends to the organizing of exhibition venues. Black Dragon Society, an informal gallery started in 1998 in Chinatown by UCLA professor Roger Herman and five friends, offered artists still in or just out of school the chance to show semi-professionally and opened doors for a number of



*Above, left to right:*  
Lara Schnitger, Jason Meadows and Jedediah Caesar in their studios, all 2006. Photos Anne Rochette.

*Opposite, left to right:*  
Jennifer Pastor: Clay study for cast-iron sculpture, 2006, 27 by 33 by 30 inches. Courtesy the artist.

*Eric Wesley: Thirty Three Point Three Three Three (Dimensions Vary), 2006, constructed floor, replica of column, mixed mediums; in the Focus series at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photo Brian Forrest.*

*Jorge Pardo: Untitled (Penelope Subscription Lamp), 2003, plywood, colored Plexiglas, electrical wiring, 11½ by 13 by 13 inches. Courtesy Pardo Studio.*

*Olga Koumoundouros: 0's vs. 1's (Parity), 2006, Kevlar, foam beads, 15 feet wide. Courtesy Adamski Gallery for Contemporary Art, Aachen.*



them; it's now a commercial gallery. Andrea Zittel's High Desert Test Sites, where a range of artists, many her friends, have installed pieces, is another regional example of exhibitory fluidity. In the L.A. area the tradition of artist-organized spaces runs back through Food House of the early '90s; Bliss House of the late '80s; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, started in 1978; the Woman's Building, founded in 1973; Edward Kienholz's and Walter Hopps's Ferus Gallery, which opened in 1957; and even to the Los Angeles Art Association, begun in the '20s.

We were surprised that few sculptors thought the film industry influenced their practice or was a significant resource for materials and fabrication. But several emphasized how essential the ferment of visual artists, performers, musicians and activists of all sorts had been to L.A. art of the '70s and '80s. A handful of local artists who came into their own in those years have made pieces that don't give an inch. Today, the work of many younger L.A. sculptors lacks the in-your-face bravado of their predecessors', and may have less staying power for minding its manners. The late Jason Rhoades's approach to art is the conspicuous exception to this tendency.

Many artists cited the importance of European dealers and curators to the start of their careers. Continentals tend to consider L.A. a city of the present, little marked by European history and the consensual restraint of tradition. L.A.'s anarchic horizontal expansion and the fast/slow of its often-overwhelmed freeway system give the city a unique spatial feel. Its architectural variety, dynamic ethnic neighborhoods, weather and singular ecology make L.A. seem a *terra nuova* compared with other art-world centers. The Centre Pompidou in Paris acknowledged the city's present importance by charting its recent past in the summer exhibition "Los Angeles 1955-1985: Birth of an

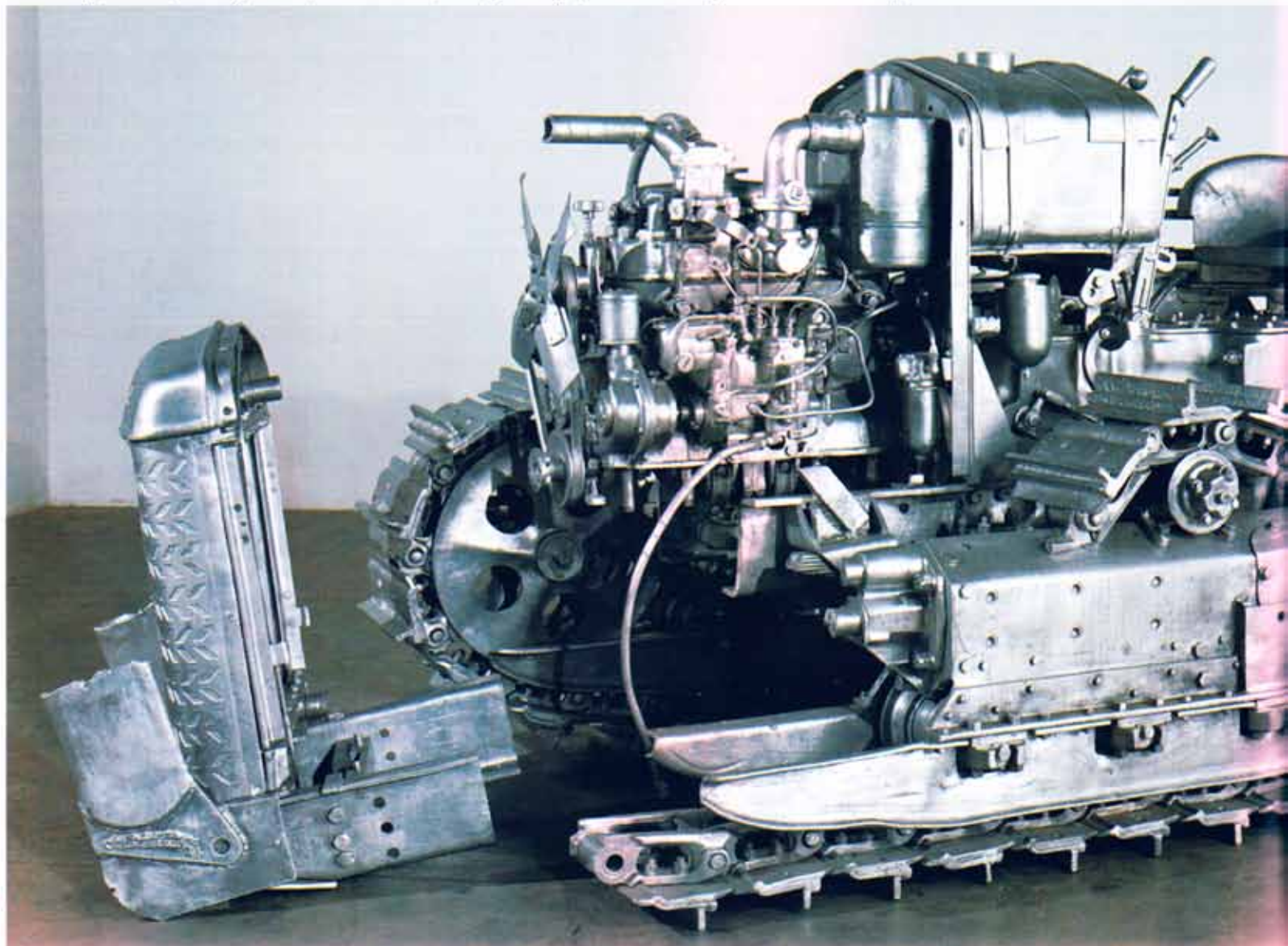
Art Capital" [see article, this issue], which included a number of older artists not well-known in Europe, as well as Chris Burden, Peter Shelton, Charles Ray and Mike Kelley, whom we interviewed.

Collectors are obviously aware of developments in L.A.: "Red Eye: Los Angeles Artists from the Rubell Family Collection" [Dec. 4, 2006-May 31, 2007] will open in Miami to coincide with Art Basel Miami Beach. Included are Ray, Kelley, Thomas Houseago, Nathan Mabry, Jason Meadows and Matthew Monahan, whose interviews follow.

1. We wish to thank L.A. critics and freelance curators Michael Duncan and Christopher Miles, who were generous with their local knowledge.
2. Had we but pages enough, and time, we would have hoped to include interviews with Lynn Aldrich, Larry Bell, Kate Costello, Meg Cranston, Sam Durant, Carlee Fernandez, Jud Fine & Barbara McCarren, Charles Gaines, David Grant, Hannah Greeley, Katie Grinnan, Jaci Den Hartog, Tim Hawkinson, George Herms, Anna Sew Hoy, Jim Isermann, Nancy Jackson, Richard Jackson, Matt Johnson, Alice Konitz, Rachel Lachowicz, Lisa Lapinski, Won Ju Lim, Charles Long, Liza Lou, Daniel Martinez, Paul McCarthy, John McCracken, Michael C. McMillen, Rodney McMillan, Carlos Mollura, Joel Morrison, Patrick Nickell, Michael O'Malley, Kaz Oshiro, Jared Pankin, Ann Preston, Ken Price, Jon Pylypchuk, Nancy Rubins, Alison Saar, Betye Saar, Pauline Stella Sanchez, Jim Shaw, Yutaka Sone, Robert Therrien, Michael Todd, Shirley Tse, Pae White and Andrea Zittel, among other L.A.-connected artists.
3. We are grateful to Dan Nussbaum for lodging us in L.A. and helping us edit this introduction.

Authors: Anne Rochette and Wade Saunders are sculptors who write on sculpture. They recently had solo shows at the Atelier Blanc in Villefranche-de-Rouergue, France.

Charles Ray: Untitled (Tractor), 2003-05, cast aluminum, 57 1/2 by 109 1/2 by 54 inches. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York.





# Speaking Volumes: 19 Interviews

## Charles Ray

I came here to teach in 1981. After getting my MFA at the Mason Gross School of Rutgers University, I worked for a year in the New York area on sculpture. Then I went to New Orleans and taught at the University of New Orleans. I applied to teach at UCLA because the job was open. I thought I would only be here for a year, but I stayed because my visiting job turned into a tenure-track position when a tenured professor drowned while diving.

It is difficult to know whether the place I live—the geography, the cultural landscape—affects my work. Los Angeles is very different from New York. I don't feel an affinity to Los Angeles *per se*, and the older I get the less affinity I feel.

I'm interested in active processes happening when you look at something. For me, the images in my work are obviously a sort of armature. They are important

for me in the beginning, and then there is some modification—not in the technical or making side, but in getting the piece to be present. To ask what feeds my work is to look for an external source that just isn't there. I look at things, and, I suppose, I think about them in a sculptural way. I think about where I am, what I'm doing, how I'm living, what I'm thinking about—not how I think about myself or about my relationship to culture, but just how I think.

*Untitled (Tractor)* [2003-05] began as a sculpture I had been working on for a few years that was originally a jungle gym. I was thinking about playgrounds, thinking about what happened to me in them when I was young. Playgrounds are kind of our first civic space; the jungle gym that we play on is our first kind of architecture. I remember playing when I was a kid, just jumping on this abandoned tractor. It developed into another project completely. I began sculpting that tractor from my memory, then a friend found an old tractor out in the Valley. It got dragged back to the studio and sat around for a long time and became a point of inspiration over a number of years; it sort of led me to another place.

The people who work with me are really important; a piece often passes through many different hands. Some people are here for several years; there will be many different people working on the modeled sculptures. Some people come to me by word of mouth, some I look for; some have never modeled before. Doing the stitching on a jean can be very different from modeling a hand holding flowers. In general, these are artists who are working as assistants.

The tractor was made by many different kinds of people. There were nerdishly precise detail modelers, other people who were much softer, and lazy people who were a bit too sloppy. I assigned different parts that I thought would work with each different person. We modeled almost every part, including many that wouldn't be seen when the work was reassembled. With the people who've worked with me, I try to just let them go their way. I try not to be involved after a certain point. What's interesting is the constructive myth of it, though finally that disappears.

Earlier, there was movement between my teaching and the studio, but there is less now. I've cut back my teaching. I've taught for 23 years, so it has obviously played a role. I'm less involved with it now. It shouldn't be a lifetime relationship between teacher and student, or between artist and assistant.

There really is age-appropriate work. I feel some of the really strong work I did was when I was 20. I had just myself and a plank, myself and a stack of bricks. You don't have to wait to be an artist. When you are young, your first home or your first girlfriend matter. You have some crappy apartment someplace, you have orange crates for bookcases and a stove that doesn't really work, but it's home sweet home, you yearn to go back there when you are away. You get older, you get a little bit better place. You get still older, and things get more complicated. Someone who's 60 may have a much more complicated real-estate situation. And you have

more access to people and funding and you start doing other kinds of projects.

You have ideas every day, but those aren't sculptures. So when I make a sculpture, take the decisions, it may take five years, allowing it to lead me along. It is really hard to put something in a room and make it work. It is about the kind of trials and time it takes to have it working.

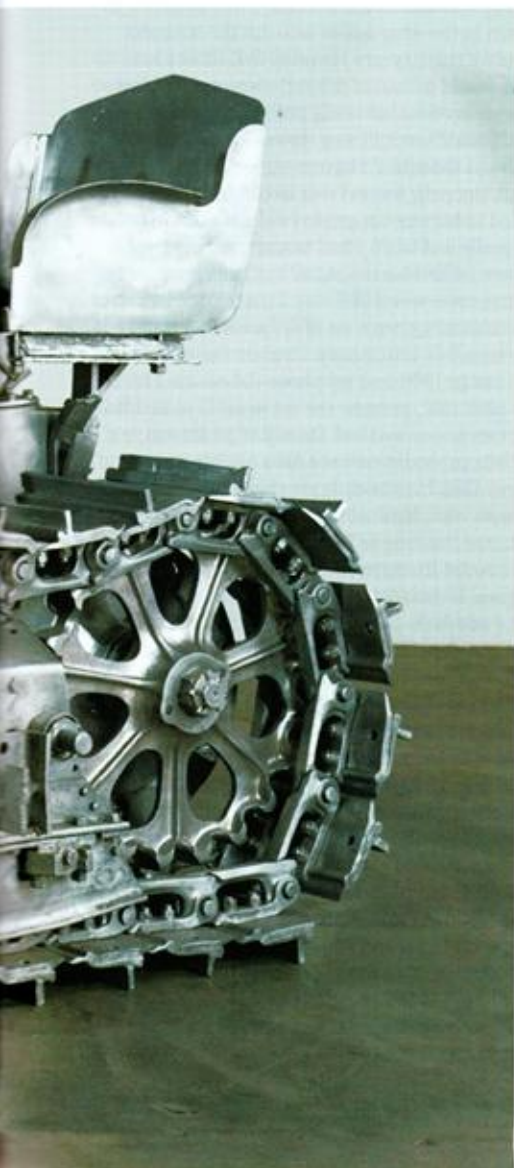
I was driving back and forth up to San Francisco for a while and I continued to pass this large, fallen, hollowed-out tree, which drew me into it. It made me think about its structure, about its internal forms, its external form in that particular field; what its armature might be, how I was experiencing it, how someone else might experience it. To me it was really interesting sculpturally. Eventually the over 30-foot-long trunk reached my studio here in pieces, where we molded it inside and out, and cast it in fiberglass. There was about a 6-inch curve or arch in the log's structure, which became apparent when the resin parts were reassembled. I wanted it to be in wood.

I was having a piece carved in Germany at that time, but I didn't think that the Germans would be good at doing the tree. I investigated for a long time. The Japanese have a tradition of copying—their idea of restoration is really to make something new. So I shipped the fiberglass casting to Japan to have it carved out of cypress planks laminated into barrel-like cylinders, so both inside and outside could be carved, and then the elements assembled together. I'm very interested in the trajectory of viewing the tree; you can look down the hole.

I was with a friend, and we were talking about how these different barrels should be put together. The structure couldn't sustain itself if only the two ends were touching the ground; eventually the positioning would cause too much stress and the piece would crack. My friend kept saying that it needed some sort of exterior support. I've always thought it's important how a sculpture sits on the floor. This comes from my Constructivist background, the influence of working with Caro students, for whom the floor isn't what the sculpture sits on but an element of the sculpture. So the ground has always been really important. It was an engineering problem. I asked the carver. He suggested that we go to the museum and look at some of the things they used to hold Buddhas up. I thought to myself, "This is going to be a disaster," and then I realized that there was already enough of me and enough Western ideas in this thing, so I'm going to allow the fabricators to deal with it in their way.

Both the tree and the tractor ended up as artifacts as much as sculptures. Some of the concerns in both those pieces are spatial, their embeddedness, how you deal with each piece's space. The artistry of the work is in the geometry of the viewing of the piece. While image is important, I'm more interested in how we define where we find our bodies in relationship to a piece.

So the tractor and the tree both embodied a kind of desire, which is why the internal structure of the





**"I love the freedom to learn to do this or that and fold it into my practice. It's why I was drawn to art. It's all your fault and your glory." —Liz Larner**

tractor was really important to me. Obviously it's closed off. I didn't want to be kitschy and have little portholes so you could see in there, but I wanted a big metal piece to be made out of glass, so you have a sense of continuity right through all the gears and the transmission. I'm sure that there are parts that are missing, but it's all pretty much there. It's not like a Franklin Mint edition. It's put together sculpturally inside, so if a part looked awkward I threw it away.

I was at the dentist a few weeks ago, and it made me think about internal and external space. With the tractor and tree, there is no such thing as a literal space. There is internal structure, but there is no internal space. My works don't necessarily have a content issue, but more a sculptural structure.

## Chris Burden

Well, it's pretty simple. I went to a prep school in Cambridge, Mass., as a day student. It was a very hard school; my dad must have paid a lot of money to send me there. Between my junior and senior year, I got a National Science Foundation grant to go to La Jolla, to be like a junior scientist, and I took the Greyhound bus from Boston to L.A. That was an eye-opener. I was supposed to have some college interviews. I had one at Pomona College on my way back home because it was off Route 66.

I ended up going to Pomona in a pre-architectural program; the deal was you studied math, physics, art and art history. The math and physics were really hard, and I could not keep up. To tell you the truth,

I wasn't interested, and I started working in the art department. My first teacher was John Mason and we did bronze castings; I still have my first casting.

I went home one summer and I worked in an architecture firm in Cambridge and it was horrible. I hated working there. I was organizing magazines and such, but there were people who had gone to architecture grad school, and they were sitting there at these drafting tables drawing toilets on these huge blueprints and I went, "No, I am not going to do four years of grad school to become a draftsman." You had to be 55 years old before you got to make a decision!

So I came back to Pomona and I said, "I want to be a sculptor." My chairman, Nicolai Wasisksi, Jr., was buying art for collectors. We'd see works by Poons and all kinds of Minimalist painters and stuff before he would send them on to the collectors. It was good; I was lucky to go there at that time; schools have life cycles, and this was a good phase. So then I went to graduate school at U.C. Irvine. It was the first year they had the program. I had applied to East Coast schools, like Rutgers and Columbia, got all kinds of offers from there, but I did not want to go back East.

I liked California; I liked the openness of it; I already had started building big sculptures, and I remember deciding that I had to get a pickup truck. I liked doing things outdoors. So I went to Irvine, and after graduating I stayed one more year in Santa Ana because I already had a great studio there. I was the first tenant in this industrial unit: they were huge, 300-foot-long tilt ups, where the walls are poured

flat on the floor slab and then craned up into place in a day, with the bases of the walls cast into footings and their tops tied together by the roof beams. They chopped these things all up into little industrial units, and each had a garage door and a little door. You were not allowed to live there; you had to hide your car because that was the sign that someone was there all the time. They were \$100 a month, 20 feet wide by 20 feet high by 50 feet long, a little bathroom and a sink in the back corner, brand new.

I worked at the Newport Harbor Museum doing prep work; I got to know a lot of L.A. artists. Somehow Chuck Arnoldi knew that a bunch of us were looking for a space to show our work; we wanted to keep living in Orange County but we wanted to have a small gallery like the F Space, which was adjacent to my studio. [Burden did performances, including *Shoot*, there.] Chuck heard of a little hot-dog stand on Brooks Ave. in Venice. It was so nasty, it took us a year to fix it, and then at the end of fixing it, the other people kind of lost interest, so I said, "Well, I'll pay you back for all the materials, so I can live in this." And they said, "Sure." So I paid them \$350 for all the paint, and bingo, I had my studio. That was great.

The lady who owned the building lowered the rent from \$90 a month to \$80 because I was an artist, as opposed to the drug dealer who ran the business before! All the 10 years I lived in that little place, people would get out of jail and come and not just knock on my door but really pull on it, looking to buy drugs. I could see it flexing. It was kind of scary.

I always thought I'd have a career as an artist, at least since my second year in college, when I decided to become an artist. I did not want to teach. I felt really bad when I had to start teaching. I was 33 years old and borrowing money from my mother; my career was weird that way. I got a lot of L.A. press originally, then a lot of art press, but it did not really translate into money. I was on the cover of *Artforum* in 1976, and my phone did not ring for two years after that, because the art world is so fashion-conscious and so cyclical. Once you get known, it's like, "Whom should we have for a performance or a lecture? Well, everybody knows him. Let's bring in somebody else, because he's a known quantity."

I started teaching in '78 at UCLA and at the San Francisco Art Institute. Every other day I'd fly into San Francisco. It was a lot of work, but I needed it to get going. I was really penniless. I'd been at UCLA three or four years when Charley Ray was hired. I was full time, but we were lecturers, not tenure track. There were no new positions—it took years to get them.

Southern California has changed a lot since I've arrived, of course. It's become more frenetic, more stressful. L.A. has completely changed. You used to be able to drive around here; can't do that anymore. There's this ossification. The city used to be small because you could get everywhere fast; now it's huge, since driving has lost its fluidity.

I do feel in a community of artists: I see Mike Kelley sometimes and Paul McCarthy; I don't really know what Charley Ray's up to these days. I go out sometimes, not too often, traffic's changed so much. I don't leave Topanga Canyon, where I live now,



Chris Burden: *Beehive Bunker*, 2006, concrete, steel rebar, steel wire, cast-iron manhole cover, plastic hoses, 10 feet high. Photo Joel Searles.





Liz Larner: *Smile*, 1996-2005, cast porcelain, 21 by 36 by 19 inches.  
 Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

unless I can do five things at a time. What's happened in my neighborhood here is like what's happened all over L.A. I'm a preservationist, as opposed to my neighbors, who are developers. We bought extra land so that other people would not build on it. My theory is that if you don't own it, they will build on it. I wish I could have bought more land.

I built the skyscrapers here. My office manager Katie's husband, Cary Gepner, is a certified architect. When we were first building here, this is now 22 years ago, I asked, "What's the biggest structure that you could build without a permit?" His answer was, you can build something up to 400 square feet. At the time I had lots of books on architecture. There are these Baltimore row houses that are 10 feet square. Your rooms are stacked on top of each other. The height here for residential building was 35 feet max. I could build a little skyscraper, because that would be within the definition of the 400 square feet—four 10-foot-square floors, and it's four times 8 feet high per floor, making 32 feet plus the thickness of the roof and floors. And who's to say you can't stand on the roof and have that be your deck? So that was the idea.

I made a little sketch of it in 1991. Then these architects came to me; they wanted to do a project with houses designed by artists, and they asked me for a concept. I said, "I've already got mine designed, you guys do the arithmetic." So we started meeting for a couple of years. It was interesting—we got all these different materials, they brought all these samples. So I did end up getting to be an architect. Well, kind of.

We showed it in L.A. at LACE, lying on its side. They did a prototype. Then we built one in Basel in the summer of 2004 in the Messeplatz, and the more I built it, the less I wanted it to be a building, and the more I wanted it to be a sculpture. In Basel

it was vertical, it really looks good vertical; so now I have two, because it was cheaper to rebuild it in Basel than to ship it there. See, my dream is to use those two skyscrapers, make some stainless steel ones, and also have these wooden frame houses, and have all those kinds of models of real things, totally freak my neighbors!

I started collecting old municipal light poles, many from the '20s, a while ago. They get taken apart, stripped, restored, repainted and rewired. I've installed them three rows deep on three sides of my studio, about 150 total. They all work. I like the light poles here, so it's not a terrible loss if they don't get to go somewhere else. There's discussion of them going to Vienna, but I would never loan them for an exhibition. When they go from here, they go to a home and I get a check. It's the only way it's going to work for me.

I built a beehive bunker near the top of my property. It's made of 100-pound paper sacks of concrete mix, laid up like the blocks in an igloo. We drove rebar through the bags to link them together and then installed some drip irrigation lines so that the dry mix in the bags turned into concrete over a couple of weeks. The thing weighs more than 5 tons. Access is through a manhole set in the top, about ten feet from the ground. It's the right place for a bunker because it's just a tremendous view, and it's very bizarre when you're up near it, it's disjunctive. You're looking down on all these multi-million-dollar homes, so it's not in Beirut, or on the Golan Heights or something. It gives me information before I build it somewhere else. And I keep waiting for someone to call, and I'll just tell them that it's a sculpture! I wonder how many beehive bunkers it will take before somebody calls?

A lot of my work is performative. I would say the same of the bridges: they're about spanning from A to B. You could do it by writing an essay connecting

nuclear physics to Renaissance painting, or you could do it in a physical way. The bunker is performative by implication. With the *Medusa Head*, the whole thing [a suspended, dark, gnarled 14-foot-in-diameter lump] is covered with model railroad tracks. The trains can't move, but the implication is that this whole thing is like a snarling world of industry. I don't know if it's performative, but it seems to me it is. *Medusa Head* is about an ecological nightmare that did not come to be. It shows what an early British farmer thought in his heart of hearts when he saw the first fucking steam locomotive coming down the tracks. There are parts of England—or New Jersey, for that matter—that look like the *Medusa Head* for sure. But trains are also like, well, the Orient Express—they have their own mythology.

I am not sure that the radicality in my work is linked to California, linked to place, but maybe it has to do with how you feel history is so much newer here. I remember going back to my father's funeral in New Hampshire around ten years ago. There were some people in the room, so just to be a wise guy, I say to them, "And when did you get rid of your Indians?" The glare and the hatred was indescribable, and they looked at me like I was some sort of madman, you know. And they stuttered a little and said, well, I could probably go to the library and look it up.

## Liz Larner

I moved to L.A. in 1979 to go to school. At a certain point I decided to switch majors and applied to Cal Arts as an undergraduate. My degree emphasis was photography, but my education got me interested in wanting to work in three dimensions. It was a good time to be at Cal Arts, but also a rocky time. I was there when Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe left, then John Baldessari. Though I got a lot from all the teachers, I wasn't exactly anyone's student. For a brief time I was Jim Casebere's assistant, when he was teaching at Cal Arts. Working for him got me thinking about making things and space—2-D, 3-D and illusion.

After graduating in 1985, I felt if I went to New York I would be overwhelmed with too much information. Ideally, New York seemed like it would be a great place to be an artist, but at that point I wasn't really clear about my direction, and I didn't want to be where all the "best" art was being shown. I wanted to be someplace a little quieter, where I could find my way as an artist. I was leery of a fast-paced market, because I didn't want the pressure to sway decisions I was starting to make. I needed to have more space around me—mental, physical and artistic space. At that time, L.A. was a lot cheaper than New York. Though I would go to New York to see what was going on, I didn't think it was going to be possible to make a living and maintain the kind of sculpture practice I wanted there.

There weren't many galleries here, and the ones



that did exist weren't showing any younger artists. Since it was a small scene, it was very loose, in that everybody accepted what everyone else was doing, even though there were vastly different interests. There was a big punk scene in L.A. Many of my friends from Cal Arts went into music. Though I wasn't a musician I was really interested in that scene. I always thought art is quite performative; sculpture is a very performative medium. Before I started Cal Arts, I remember seeing the Kipper Kids open for PiL at the Olympic Auditorium, which at that time was mostly a Big Time Wrestling venue. I think that combination of artists and space/venue had an effect on my work later.

I don't mind being called a California artist; my work is indebted to my environment, in the sense that it is still really open. I find L.A. an interesting city because it is not at all European. I don't know if it is even American. It's very mixed and always changing.

I think the younger artists today have a whole other thing going on. I teach in the grad department at Art Center, and the majority of the people we graduate stay in L.A. In the last five years it's a totally new landscape of venues and places to show. But there doesn't seem to be as much cross-pollination as there used to be—or perhaps there is and I don't know about it.

My thinking process starts with form and material. The experience of sculpture is multi-sensual. What people sometimes think of as the formal issues of sculpture are important to me, as a way to talk about what we perceive and what we think of as reality, and how that reality is constructed. It's not how big or how small, but what's the right size for the idea.

My practice is based around learning what material I want to employ in a particular sculpture. I do a lot of different things when I need to learn a new technique. I often take classes at community colleges, or I get books and start reading. When I was learning bronze casting I just took a bunch of classes and learned how to do it.

I knew that the "Smiles" needed to be made of porcelain. Then I realized what an investment in time and money it would be. I knew that Ken Price was teaching at USC, and I took a class with him—the first ceramics class I had ever taken. Ken is a California artist whom I have always admired. Last year I bought a kiln to start this porcelain casting that we're finally doing in the studio.

I stuck my toe in the big-production-budget water, but it wasn't for me. The fabricators I've used mostly haven't been art fabricators, but small industrial shops. When I had polyurethane cast, the people I was working with had a hard time understanding why I wanted a consistency in the colors I was using. They couldn't believe that the hardness was critical. The difficulty of getting work done the way I want it means I'd rather do it myself.

Evan Holloway and Jason Meadows both worked for me right out of school, and I knew they weren't going to be around for too long. I have a lot of assistants like that—I know they are only passing through the studio. My current assistant, Tim Jackson, is a painter and a filmmaker. We get along great, and I depend on him a lot.

Your audience as a sculptor is much smaller than that of other artists, because not that many people can get to see your work, since they have to be in the presence of it. I realized, too late, that sculpture is quite a difficult practice in comparison with, say,

photography. Early on, I was showing in New York at a gallery where Gavin Brown once worked, and he was helping me put the show up. It was this crazy piece that had to hang off the ceiling, and it was really hard to put up. And I'd decided that I wanted it to rotate. So we'd been up for two nights in a row trying to finish this thing, and he turned to me with these big goggles on his head and a drill in his hand and he was yelling over the drill: "Liz, I have three words for you, 'oil on canvas!'" Maybe I should have taken his advice, but it's sort of too late now, and I don't regret it.

Now, as a teacher, I strongly support technical education. I've been teaching at Art Center for 14 years, and it took 10 years to even get a shop. I had to put my job on the line to get the students a table saw. We just got a welder a few years ago. Despite having been educated in post-studio, I really feel strongly that students should be offered both—post-studio and technique; I think they shouldn't be separated.

My most important mandate as a teacher is to help students realize what kind of art they want to make. I also ask them to think about why they want to make or do whatever it is. Teaching is something that I had to do for a long time; maybe I don't have to do it now, but I love my colleagues at Art Center, and I really get stimulated there. Sometimes I come home and I can't go to sleep; I'm thinking all night long, and I can't believe that it does that to me still. What's boggling is the exponential number of people that I know because I am a teacher. If I were to quit teaching, it would just be because I really want to learn more or want more anonymity.

I have a very lively intellectual exchange with my community at Art Center. I feel really connected with Pauline Stella Sanchez and Evan and Jason in terms of thinking about what sculpture is, why it's important, and why you would want to spend your life doing something like that. There's a sort of sculptors' camaraderie with Jennifer Pastor, and I've known Mike Kelley for a long time and enjoy teaching with him. Jill Spector and Aaron Curry are two young sculptors that recently graduated from our MFA program and are making interesting sculpture; neither one was originally from L.A., but both decided to stay. Patrick Hill is another young sculptor whose work I like. Meg Cranston and I went to Cal Arts at the same time, and I admire her messy and delightful practice.

A lot of young artists are romantics. Color plays a big role, and a kind of flickering, bourgeois subject matter; and there's a kind of forgetting of history—it's all about now. Though I don't love all the work that is



*Evan Holloway: Power, 2005, plaster, sisal, steel, batteries, 39½ by 34 by 18 inches. Courtesy The Approach, London, and Marc Foxx, Los Angeles.*

coming out, I think it's great that so much is happening. A lot of it shows how damned difficult it is to do sculpture well. I'm happy that people want to focus on materials again—that they are not interested only in images or a space beyond our living space.

I always say to people that the only thing you have to do to be an artist is to make art. It is a marathon, it is not a five-year thing. It's great if someone gets a big push out of graduate school, because they are going to need it for the next 50 years. I'm happy that the market is supporting artists at this time, because there really isn't any other support here. I guess I'm pretty selective about the work I love, but I'm supportive of artists; there may be a lot of pandering going on, but I think that is always the case. It just happens in different ways at different times. Perhaps the whole love of pop culture in recent decades wasn't such a good idea. Maybe that bred some kind of thinking that people just want to get by—that they are trying to hold things together, they're not trying to break them apart.

I love the freedom to learn to do this or that and fold it into my practice. It's a big freedom that I want to maintain—it's why I was drawn to art. It's all your fault and all your glory: you have to take responsibility on every level for your thinking and your making and what you produce. As an artist you can change your mind. What's important to me are the decisions artists make through a lifetime. That's the great beauty that I was struck by when I finally started to understand what art is, what the art world is and what artists are doing. A lifetime of decisions and the different places they take people to.



**"The lack of a magazine or specific critical discourse in L.A. means that I have more space to go my own way. That's very appealing." —Jason Meadows**

## Evan Holloway

I am originally from the Los Angeles area, from a suburban community about 20 miles east of here. I moved up north to attend UC Santa Cruz. Out of college I lived in the Bay Area, then went to Washington state for about four years. I was making artwork in my own studio in Tacoma. I was very isolated from other artists, working at a hardware store, making \$6.74 an hour. It had been seven years since I had been in an academic setting. I knew I could not get any kind of position in the arts without an MFA. I called a friend of a friend, who suggested I apply to UCLA. I did, and was really surprised that I got accepted, pleasantly surprised, and that changed a lot of things. I started UCLA in 1995, and have stayed here since.

I certainly did not anticipate having a career—not that UCLA is entirely responsible, but I don't think outside of that setting I would have been able to attract attention. Things happened because of the way the art world operates. When I was in Tacoma, I had a fantasy, sort of a romantic fiction, that if you go to a place and make good work eventually you'll be noticed and someone will take good care of you, like some kind of benefactor—a tooth fairy. The real facts are that dealers don't look far and wide to find artists and to market them, so I needed to be in a place where things were happening.

I didn't think that it was appropriate for somebody my age to be showing in a gallery—didn't feel I was a mature enough artist. I started looking for work in the galleries, like repairing walls, setting up shows. I had a show with some friends of mine, and then a small solo show in a projects space. That got some attention that I was not necessarily aware of at the time, and then Marc Foxx asked me to do a project with him; it was the final one before he moved his gallery to Wilshire. Foxx loves sculpture, he really takes it on, which is great, since it's not easy money.

So that's how I started. And I've stayed here. Nothing is more important than a local conversation with my friends, where I've seen their work through time, seen it physically develop over years, and they've done the same with my practice. It's mostly people around my age, and it's a function of when people graduated. We are very close and spend a lot of time talking about sculpture. I worked for Liz Larner for a while as an assistant, so she and I have an ongoing dialogue. I am interested in younger artists, too.

I am not sure if L.A. has a role in my work. I am from the West Coast and have lived here all my life, and that has informed the work in some way and may be very fundamental in my assumptions about being an artist and my approach to art. I never considered art as business. I saw it as a personal pursuit, certainly something about reckoning with my own world. There's been a lot of that sort of exploration on the West Coast—people coming to start communes as far back as the '20s and '30s. L.A. is the birthplace of Pentecostalism. I would not want to call myself any sort of visionary artist, but I would

claim a motivation like a poet might have, or someone like Wallace Berman. With me, there is certainly a kind of utopian dimension. It may run more on the West Coast in general than on L.A. specifically. I like the fact that there's a real discussion of work here. And that I can rent a pretty big studio like this for well under a dollar per square foot, which doesn't seem possible in many other cities. And L.A. is where I am able to sell work. I would rather make my living as an artist; I don't teach right now. I taught for three years as an adjunct at UC Irvine, and I really enjoyed that. What's important to me are the things that are immediately around me. One of my favorite artists is Ree Morton [1936-1977]. She incorporated the personal into the work, rather than making work that would be part of some trajectory of formal innovation.

As for my own work, I started thinking of the things I had. And I had these bags of old batteries, because you're not supposed to throw them away, for ecological reasons, and they don't really give you places to recycle here. I had piles and piles of batteries I did not know what to do with. They were not symbolic objects, they were literally little guilt parcels—though maybe, in a larger sense, they're symbolic of different forms of the guilt I have about my privileges. Anyhow, I thought I should use the batteries, so I got this idea of embedding them in plaster, because then they would leak into the plaster and end up polluting the sculpture over time. Now when I ride on my bike I see batteries on the ground and pick them up all the time. I find from two to seven batteries lying in the street every day. There's a whole social question: I feel so guilty I can't even throw mine in the garbage, but other people can just throw theirs out the window. It has a relationship to class and education and all those other things.

When I got my first big grant, from the Tiffany Foundation, I really racked my brains about how to engage a fabricator, and I still really don't know. This is something Jason Meadows and I talk a lot about, because we still make our work ourselves, and that's quite important to us. But it's also because you can't find reliable fabricators. When we go to England and talk with artists, they seem to be able to get their work fabricated.

I try to find local people who have shops. I am working on this thing that's like an electrical sign, but I could not get a sign-maker to return my calls. These guys can make more money from the movie industry, they don't have any enthusiasm for making something that's on an individual

scale. If they could figure out that they could get artists to pay double, then I guess they'd be happy to do the work, but if they don't even answer my calls I can't offer them double. That's why I end up making everything myself—its out of frustration trying to find someone to make it.

L.A. sometimes drives me crazy—it's a pretty primitive city in many ways. Restaurants close at 9 p.m., we don't have a public transportation system, so people spend their entire lives in their cars and eat at fast-food windows. Usually I ride a bike. L.A. is a perfect town for bicycles, it's mostly flat and entirely paved. When I do find myself in an automobile in traffic, I find it so stupid, so wasteful. A car that's 7 feet wide and 20 feet long to carry 175 pounds doesn't make any sense. I'm looking at this sea of cars and they're all sitting still and there is all this energy being expended to no end—it's idiotic. That kind of frustration goes into the work.

## Jason Meadows

I moved here from Chicago after graduating from the School of the Art Institute in '94. I was interested in the West Coast and the fantasy of manifest destiny, which was largely rooted in pop culture—surfing, skateboarding, So-Cal punk rock and things like that—and warm weather year round, rather than

*Jason Meadows: Runaways, 2005, mixed mediums, 71½ by 80 by 31 inches. Private collection.*





**“Humor is enlivening, even if you’re not sure you should be laughing—it raises an emotional bubble.” —Martin Kersels**

bitter winters. I was drawn to UCLA because of the faculty and some of the students that I had met, like Evan Holloway. I started there in '96.

I worked very briefly as an assistant for Charley Ray; after that I got a job with Liz Lerner; Evan passed the job on to me. It was really a sort of apprenticeship. I think the most important thing about being an assistant is that you learn through example. You learn by watching, and by seeing what those artists do, how work gets done, how they deal with galleries, curators or whatever. If you want a sustainable job, you have to show up every day. There are a lot of nasty, unpleasant parts. It's a filthy thing, working with materials; really getting into it you make a lot of mess, and it's hard labor. Working with Liz was fantastic because we were able to talk a lot about what kind of stuff we liked and why; she was very generous that way. I worked for her on and off around four years.

I teach at Art Center now as an adjunct in sculpture. I like teaching, though it is odd to be a part of education in that way; you feel responsible for what type of information you transmit to the students, and it's like a mirror—you learn a lot about yourself.

I started showing when I was at UCLA: a friend of mine from school opened up a small artist-run space, Room 307, and I had my first show there in 1997. There are fewer such spaces now, as the commercial world has really saturated the scene, and it's something I miss. There's been a lot of talk about doing it again—now artists will show their friends in

their studios, especially in Chinatown, which is the most street-centered community. Such shows create a sense of immediacy; things happen quickly.

There is a conflict between isolation and community here. One of the nice things about working in L.A. is that you can isolate yourself; but then you can feel yourself going a bit crazy sometimes, and you need to find a balance in more traditional urban environments like New York or London. There you can walk out of the studio, go to a bar and meet some friends. Here you have to plan to get together. I am fortunate to have access to New York and Europe. But it would be difficult in New York to achieve the sort of freedom that one can have in L.A. It seems harder to make sculpture in New York unless you are independently wealthy. I don't know if I would be making this work if I weren't in L.A. The space and time of the city has had a huge effect on me. If you are visiting friends in Silver Lake, and then planning to meet someone at the beach for dinner, then going to Pasadena for a party and then finishing downtown in a bar, things can feel very disconnected. I think the L.A. art market has been growing since 2000. It doesn't make any sense to talk about provincial markets: it's a global market now.

L.A. is not a town where critics are really important. There are several good critics here, but they have less of a voice here than critics do in, say, New York, because there is no real publication that comes out of L.A.; there's no forum for them. I don't regret the situation, because the critic's voice has never

been important to me. They do their job and I do mine. The lack of a magazine or specific critical discourse in L.A. means that I have more space to go my own way; that's one of the things that's very appealing.

In the last five years the process of my work has become more interesting. Rather than starting out and drawing or engineering something in my head, it's much more of a push-and-pull evolution, which is a little scary but more satisfying in the end. There are moments where you feel that your wheels have just broken loose and you are sliding on the pavement. But that's the thrill, that's the rush. The type of work that I make leaves itself open to many possible interpretations. My pieces become figurative in a very abstract sense. That's something I learned when I first started. “Well, look, this is a woman spreading her legs, can't you see that?” Other people didn't see the sculpture that way at all. I'm interested in the tension between the objective and the nonobjective, the literal, the illustrational and the abstract.

The scale of the work is changing as I have more opportunities, more resources. My work isn't expensive to make. Now I use an assistant, who does all the things that I don't want to do, like sweeping, sanding, painting. It's difficult because the type of work I make demands a certain engineering quality that takes time to learn, and there aren't a whole lot of people who have those skills who want to be an artist's assistant.

In the beginning I felt some anxiety about wanting to get recognized and be visible. That's shifted a little

*Liz Craft: Love Seat, 2006, bronze, 52 by 65 by 43 inches. Photo Joshua White. Courtesy Peres Projects, Los Angeles/Berlin, and Alison Jacques Gallery, London.*







View of Martin Kersels's installation "Charms in a Throne Room," 2006. Courtesy ACME, Los Angeles.

bit, and now I just want to be able to keep on doing what I do. I live off my work. Few of my collectors are in L.A. I try not to think about the future, not to feel the pressure of all the newly graduated art students, but the pressure is there.

It can feel like being on a very long rope ladder climbing up toward some helicopter that keeps moving, and you've got these fuckers coming up underneath you. Since I started showing when I was really young, I didn't feel that I came out fully formed. I still don't feel fully formed, but that's always been important to me: an artist should be allowed to grow in public. I've always liked Bruce Nauman's approach to being an artist—there's kind of an independent goofiness to it. The way Lerner leaves options open also appeals to me. You should allow yourself license to move around.

## Liz Craft

I'm from California; I went to art school in L.A. and I guess there was a buzz then about UCLA. I knew about the teachers indirectly through "Helter Skelter," which did a lot to introduce me to the art here. I went to the UCLA grad program in '95, when it had a lot of really good teachers. Charley Ray made a big impression on me. A couple of years back, there were things I wanted him to see and he was happy to come out and look at them.

I never even thought of moving somewhere else. Right out of school I got a studio and quickly started showing with Richard Telles. I sold a piece, and then the next piece, and the next, and it went like that. Things kept going from there. Nathalie Obadia started showing me in Paris in 2001.

I had some odd jobs, and worked for Charley Ray as an assistant for a while and for Liz Lerner for a little bit and taught kids and various things. You learn a lot being an assistant; you get sick of it real fast, but you learn about how to get things done. I tried teaching. It was really bad. I might get better at it; right now I don't care about doing that. If I need money real bad I might do it, but it was like torture.

I have been able to more or less live off my sculpture. I make more stuff out of bronze now. Here it's easy to have space and privacy to make art. It's not a big social scene. That's bad, but it's also good if you want to get work done. I always wonder if I moved somewhere else whether the work would change. I definitely get ideas from the landscape. Some of my sculpture has been really connected to the city, the way it's laid out, involved with fragments of what I see around, mixed with memories and sort of dreamy versions of things.

The city is getting more expensive, for sure, and it's getting more crowded. Not so much where I am, in Highland Park, but the west side and downtown are getting more populated. It's still vast here, and there is always something new to see. At the same time, everyone sort of knows everybody, the scene is still not that big.

I draw a little in sketchbooks. I get an idea of something I want to make and then figure out how to do it. The hairy figures sort of came from having made this piece called *Ballad of a Hippie*. That was a figure with a guitar, but then, in the next piece, it became more abstract—just the hair, with these arms that stick out of it. I'll get one idea and then wait, and it connects to other ideas. Some pieces do start with a drawing. It's different every time.

I think my work is more abstract than narrative,

but when I say that people don't believe me, so I don't know. Like now I am doing this sort of couch. That probably does come from this city—in some neighborhoods there are couches on every street corner—but the real idea is just out of my head. It's like a love seat with two cushions; the texture is a floral brocade, raised up. It will be cast in bronze. I bought the couch at a thrift store and sculpted the fabric in high relief, so it's almost like starfish and barnacles crusting over this love seat. I had the notion that the pattern would become like 3-D mapping. Then there are these 3-D birds sitting on the couch. I don't know yet if it will be polychrome, that's always the hardest part.

Maybe each place—L.A. and Europe—serves equally in my career. Showing in New York was the big deal. It helped me with the L.A. collectors. I used to make these mega-dense pieces. It was like I was trying to put everything I knew into one monster work. Finally, when I got older, I was able to separate ideas and make them into separate pieces. That may have made it easier for more people to buy my stuff.

My work is studio time, instead of just getting this idea and executing it. My work is pretty open and impulsive. I don't know if that's good or not. People don't really know what you're doing, but it may not matter, really.

## Martin Kersels

I've lived in L.A. all my life. I started my undergraduate studies at UCLA in '78, under the old regime. I applied to go to film school as a junior and did not get accepted, so I went into art history. But I am a horrible writer, so I decided that's not for me and took some art classes. I enjoyed them very much.



Chris Burden was there, Charley Ray had arrived in '81, but I did not take classes with him. I was taking new-genre classes; Mike Kelley was there for a semester or so; it may have been his first teaching job out of Cal Arts. I graduated in '84. I took eight years out of school and went back in '92 to UCLA graduate school. I had started working there in '89 for Paul McCarthy and Chris Burden as their lab assistant, as an employee of the state, which was kind of a great job: I liked the space and the facilities.

I knew a lot of the artists that were in "Helter Skelter." I had no idea that people would pay attention the way they did to that show, but a lot had to do with that choice of a title. Paul Schimmel, the show's curator, is a genius at generating excitement. What was important to me in the show was how hard the people I respected worked to do their art. When they're working, they're really single-minded about it. It's maybe a lunch-box work ethic, a blue collar ethic—"You gotta get this done." And the production of works was not necessarily just about that singular vision of the artist in the studio; rather it happened in a community way.

When I went back in '92 the faculty accepted me, but they said I couldn't do the performance work I had been doing with this group called the Shrimps, so that's when I started making objects. My performance work was movement-based, very few words, a high level of slapstick, comedy based on the fallibility of the body. I knew of the Kipper Kids; we shared an evening of performance once: where they went more scatological, we kept it more on the pathetic.

A lot of the people we were looking at in the '80s were in dance, like the Judson Church, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti and Rudy Perez, who's in L.A. I saw a lot of Mike Kelley's performances; they were amazing, more about poetry, not so much about activity. Our performances were like this mishmash of Manzoni—well, I never saw Manzoni—but it's this idea of Manzoni or Yves Klein mixed with Buster Keaton. We were working through this weird kind of filtration—of compiled, layered bits and pieces.

Doing the rounds in the schools here over the past decade and talking about my work in lectures, I talked a lot about performance and the performative object within my practice, but I had not done performance in a long time. So when I did a show at Galerie Vallois in Paris in 2005, "Orchestra for Idiots," on the opening night I conducted the orchestra, whose instruments were these objects I'd constructed, based on research about how sound effects for radio programs were made.

For my new show at Acme in L.A. [Mar. 18-Apr. 15, 2006], I began by building a throne, cannibalizing all this furniture and starting from a beat-up white chair, turning it into this really weird fucked-up throne, taller than the body. I was thinking about delusions, and ideas of power—how one tries to keep it, how one fantasizes about using it, how it has been enforced. So I am starting with this swag lamp, 2 feet wide, like a death star made of wire, then I'm making a Little Boy swag lamp, like the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima. I am working with these five or six icons: the atomic bomb is historical, and the death star is fantasy, but all that research about Reagan's Star Wars program is still going on. The throne will sit in the room with these delu-

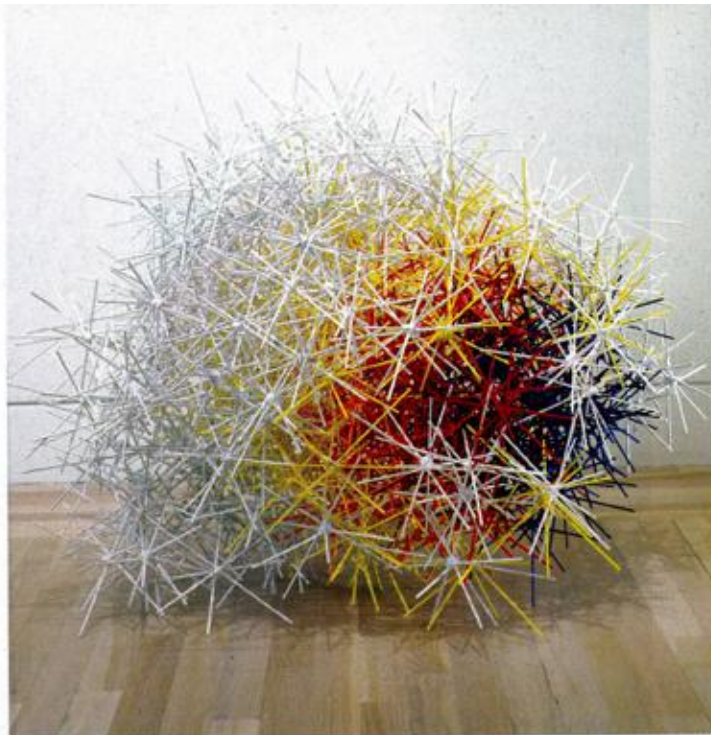
sions floating above it. The methodology is part tramp art, part delusion, part home fixture. I have no idea how it's going to go.

It seems that sculpture out here is more free-wheeling than back east. There is not just one single school of thought. But there are art schools. That's the difference: your affiliation in New York would be with your gallery and the circle that goes with it; here it has to do with the school you went to or teach at. Teaching is important to me for two reasons: I like to have a structure in my life, to have a certain anchor and place and commitment, but not for more than two or three days a week. And I really enjoy the energy the students have, and seeing some of their harebrained schemes come to fruition.

I don't know if this sums up L.A. sculpture, but the attitude is like, "I am just going to go ahead and do this, even though I know it won't get me anything but joy for myself and maybe some people thinking it's cool." People just go for it—they try these things, and the schools have workshops and tools, and you learn some tricks. And you can go to Paramount studios, the one that produced *The Godfather*, you can hire their props department, they'll fabricate things for you. You can go right to the heart of the fantasy factory to get something made, and that's kind of freaky, isn't it? There's a thin line between entertainment and art. The artist might have different motives, but his work is made in the same places as the work of people who may have more greedy, corporate motives.

Like any metropolis, L.A. offers its sculptors this wealth of resources. Artists who move here from other places don't understand L.A. for a year or so; they don't understand the car flow, but when they get the hang of that, it turns out to be a good place. Studios are fairly cheap. You can be in Eagle Rock, or Silver Lake or in the Valley, and once you say, "Well the car is now my new home and I can go and meet those people," I think it works.

L.A. sculpture may come from the performance and time-based activities of the '70s and '80s. Paul Schimmel's show "Out of Actions" [1998] captured a lot of what's shaping L.A. sculpture now. It's about rethinking the gallery space, which in the '70s was like a mausoleum. How you could bring it back to life was with those actions, remnants of actions, potentials for action, as in Charley Ray's pieces where he inserts himself into the sculptures. He photographed the pieces, but he also created these rooms with two doors, one for the audience and one for him. He had a guide that would bring you in and you'd see Charley with his arm hanging out of something, and you'd go out and wait in front of the next room and he'd go out of the back door and go



**Mindy Shapero:** Almost the exact feeling one has when staring at the blinded by the light for too long just after everything begins to happen, similar to the images that you see when you open your eyes after closing your eyes and pressing into your eyeballs (whiteness). 2004, wood and acrylic, approx. 36 by 40 by 38 inches. Courtesy Anna Helwing Gallery, Los Angeles.

into the next room and have the thing on his head. It happened in a warehouse on the west side that Charley rented in '82 or '83; it was his own thing.

Performance is definitely still part of my work, and in fact this last December, we reunited and revived the Shrimps; we did a concert for three nights. We built furniture that we'd wear, have holes cut out for our bodies. It's very physical work. We're all in our 40s at least; we don't bounce back as much as before.

I want people to laugh at what I do, but then to also cry. I want it all. Comedy is a hook in order to put viewers slightly off kilter, so then they can maybe question other aspects of the piece, or of the world, for that matter. The work also may be cruel-funny. Humor is enlivening, even if you're not sure you should be laughing—it raises an emotional bubble. I had this kind of emblematic success with a series of photos called "Tossing Friends." People really liked these photos. I thought, "Well, would I like to keep it up and make more of these, tossing this and tossing that?" Because of my size, I could just toss the world! It may not have been a smart decision business-wise, but I said, "Hell no. I did this once, but I want to do something else now."

## Mindy Shapero

I came here from New York City in 1999. I had just finished undergraduate school at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and I was trying to find a studio. I came out to L.A. just to visit a friend, and the energy seemed real. I just saw an apartment and took it.

I found a huge studio, and I paid next to nothing for it. For the first two-and-a-half years I lived here, it was hard to meet people. You'd go to openings and everyone knew everybody from school; they'd



**“Working on my fabric turkey piece, I thought: this is ridiculous. Then I said, ‘Hey, wait! I’m in fucking L.A.! I can do a turkey piece!’” —Lara Schnitger**

all have these intense relationships and dialogues with each other. I worked at Patrick Painter Gallery. I hated working there, but that’s where I met Jim Shaw and Mike Kelley. I quit and ended up working with those artists, on and off, before and while I went to grad school.

Those jobs were more than money jobs: I was learning how to be an artist. Also the way these artists make art is really good. For instance, Jim does not actually think about making a specific piece; it’s more like this slew of ideas, sort of larger-than-life stories and narratives coming into play to form his art. It’s really interesting to see how they end up coming out as drawing or painting or sculpture.

I went to grad school at USC because it was free. I studied with Jud Fine, David Bunn, Sharon Lockhart, Gary Simmons and a lot of visiting artists who were really great. It was good to have a quiet place to make work and not think about showing it. I graduated in 2003, had my thesis show, and then I was in a group show at Anna Helwing. Six or seven months later I had my first solo show there, consisting of the first body of work I made after school. Starting off so quickly was nerve-wracking and exciting at the same time, but it felt natural—not rushed or uncomfortable. My relationship with Anna just felt easy. I sensed that she got my work and that we could talk about it on an intellectual as well as esthetic level.

I am not teaching, since I can live from my work. It’s mostly the art fairs that are supporting me, which is sort of unfortunate, because I hate doing

work for art fairs. Your work is seen differently in that context. I make work, and it goes—which is sort of great, but I feel like it has to slow down. I think this year will be a lot slower.

Being in “Thing” changed my situation. It was a museum show, and people think that’s important. There were some decisions made about the show that I was not convinced of—inclusions and the overall installation—and I was not excited about the title of the show. I did not ask enough questions; if I had asked more, I might have turned it down. My work is not about thingness, it is not object-oriented; it’s narrative-based, and the works flow from piece to piece, including from drawing to sculpture. It’s fluid.

I’ve been working on this narrative for a couple of years now, and the pieces that were included in the “Thing” show were part of that narrative. It’s a series of works called “The Furry Eye Sack That Rolls Around Collecting Eyes.” It began with a drawing that I made a few years ago, before graduate school. I wrote about it, and then I started making drawings for a sculpture to be called *Blinded by the Light*—a protector, like a talisman to protect people from the furry eye sack. The viewer has access to the narrative through the titles. There’ll be one piece that’s called *Almost the exact feeling one has when one has been staring at blinded by the light for too long just before anything is about to happen, similar to the images that you see when closing your eyes and pressing into your eyeballs*.

What makes me work is internal, it does not have to

do with the art world beyond my own studio. It’s all my own challenges, like making a drawing and then thinking about the possibilities—how to make a sculpture from it. The narrative is the drive, too. I write. I have a zine that I made and continue to work on.

There is a lot of really interesting work, by people both over 30 and under, that is being made and not being shown. Whenever I have an opportunity, I push for these artists. It’s just what we do for each other in such a small community. A lot of people are going straight into grad school, and when they finish they go and get a job to make a living like we all have to do and then it’s over. They stop making art. I took three years off in between undergrad and grad schools, so I knew that art was what I wanted to do. For now, I would not think of moving east. I don’t want to be an exclusively L.A. artist—that’s a little provincial—but at the moment it’s working for me, and if I wasn’t here, I don’t know where my career would be!

## Thomas Houseago

I was born in Leeds, in the north of England, in an extreme kind of British northern culture; to be an artist I felt I had to get out of the north, which was extremely suspicious of art, yet very passionate and proud. It makes for a weird mix. When I was 19, I went to London and was very lucky to get into the St. Martin’s sculpture program. In terms of the art world, London in the early ‘90s was like the Reformation:

painting was dead, sculpture was dead. It was difficult to keep your spirit, but coming from where I had come from, it was not like they were physically killing me.

A lot depends on chance, and I heard about a program in Amsterdam, De Ateliers, that paid you to go there, which was an enormous draw for me. So I went in ‘94, not really knowing the caliber of people there. It was an unbelievable place. I met my wife, who’s American, there. But once you’ve left home, you keep searching for a new one. We were in New York for a while, then in Brussels, which was extremely cheap and drew a lot of people in the late ‘90s; it was both difficult and thrilling, but also an incredibly bizarre place. It was a fabulous period.

Then Matthew Monahan, who I knew well from De Ateliers, moved back to California, where he had been raised. It seemed as if he had fallen off the face of the earth by leaving the European center. I came out to visit Matt and his wife Lara Schnitger, and I fell in love with L.A. as I got off the plane. I can’t explain it. I was completely astonished by the city in 2002. I always think of John Lennon’s quote about feeling that he should have been born in New York’s Greenwich Village. I felt and still feel that way about L.A. Matt urged us to come, and he and Lara helped a great deal with the practicalities of getting us out here. We had tried in Europe

*Two views of Thomas Houseago's Untitled Pour, 2005, plaster, hemp, iron rebar, plastic bucket, 62 by 56 by 30 inches. Photo Joshua White, courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles.*





**“Because of the movie industry, new kinds of materials are constantly being invented here, and artists have access to them.” —Thomas Houseago**

but were beaten down and pushed around a lot. After struggling for many years and reaching my mid-30s, I was hoping to have the chance to breathe a bit. It seemed very open, and things felt possible here.

I noticed that there were a lot of other young artists struggling and trying to figure out how to do things. There was no dogmatic approach to anything, perhaps because Conceptual art and a lot of heavy art theory had been the heart of several of the region's MFA programs, so younger artists had worked their way through all that. In London the system felt so much tougher and the money-making machine so much more present than here. I'd watched Europe retreating into itself, and it was becoming very difficult to be young there.

There is a kind of frontier thinking in L.A., which means that you help people when they come in. The city needs manpower, it needs people, you get pulled into the city very quickly. The funny thing was that I had been teaching in Europe, showing in galleries and museums, and then there was a period when I found myself moving boxes 10 hours a day in Playa del Rey. But it was fun in a way, as there was no class thing going on. Coming from the north of England, that was something I really appreciated.

At the same time, I was searching for a studio. I didn't know the city at all and would drive around in East L.A. and South Central for days. I had gotten in scary situations, looking for space in certain neighborhoods. I saw the building we're sitting in, and could see this incredible ballroom inside and called the number posted. I told the lady that it was bullshit to have all this empty space. She said she'd talk to the landlord, and he'd call me back. Which I seriously doubted he would. Ten minutes later I got a call from Lonnie Blanchard. We met right then and there, became friends, and by that evening I was renting the most incredible workspace I had ever had. Ever since, he has created this kind of umbrella over me and other artists here in L.A. This seems to me a typically L.A. story. I don't think his motivation could possibly have been financial gain. More likely he enjoys the craziness of artists and their processes.

First I found the studio and the strong community. Then I connected with my dealer. Meeting David Kaminsky was an intense experience; compared to European dealers he seemed shockingly young to me, extremely hungry without the haute bourgeoisie laissez-faire attitude I'd been used to. He was incredibly excited about art, unafraid of the difficulties in my work, and he became like a partner in a weird way. Which is something that I had never experienced before.

Artists as a group seem powerful here; there is a tremendous sense of solidarity among them. Here I meet more people who understand that I would be looking at Gaudier Brzeska, coming at things in strange ways, working with the figure. I haven't yet met the local art critics here. I'm too new, too just off the boat. And I've only been in one group show with two pieces, but I've had good conversations with curators here. At the last museum show I did in Europe, at the SMAK [Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent] in 2003, I felt that people thought I should not be doing the work I was doing. I sensed a tremendous resistance to the idea that the debate in art was changing.

There are new kinds of materials being invented here. Some of the plasters I use now are the fastest and strongest I've ever employed; that is extremely liberating. People build things cheaply, quickly and strongly for the movie industry, and the materials are designed for them, not for artists. Here my pieces never break, and I've developed a way of pouring on the floor where the elements come up as a whole.

I'm a studio-based sculptor. I believe you are a political being in your studio; I want to make work that has a visceral impact. I think you can affect the culture. This seems particularly possible in L.A., where everything is already in constant flux. You go to the supermarket and find that your favorite thing has disappeared. A shop you go to closes and another one appears. It's ironic to be making these solid, self-contained sculptures in a city that is so temporal. I find something fantastic in that.

L.A. is a city of immigrants. People escape to L.A. to rebuild, to start fresh. It's funny that among the people I've met here, very few were actually born in L.A. One who will be is my daughter Bea.

## Peter Shelton

I came to L.A. in the fall of 1969 to go to Pomona College. After graduating I went back to Troy, Ohio, where I was born, and went to trade school. I was an industrial welder for about a year and a half before I came back to L.A. It seemed like a place I could survive in, and I had the illusion that there was a certain amount of support for the largely hybrid environmental works that I had admired in school—Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Ed Kienholz and such.

I worked as a welder enough to know that it wasn't something I wanted to turn 30 doing: it was just tough, intense and very dangerous work. So to survive I did a lot of pickup carpentry and I welded for other artists and worked in a furniture shop. I had a little studio in Santa Monica. One of the reasons to go to trade school was that I was determined not to go to art school; I was going to do this David Smith thing and work in trade. I had it up to my ears with what I thought was already academic art, this footnoted, deconstructed kind of approach to making work, being an artist and critic at the same time. I just had a problem with that: I was more into a direct experience.

I made a deal to take an adjunct class at UCLA as an extension student to be able to use the sculpture studio. But I was using the studio so much, much more than the full-time students there, that the faculty said, “Either you're going to be a student here or you're going to teach here. But you're not going to teach, of course, so why don't you enroll as a graduate student? We'll give you a scholarship.” I started in 1977 and did the two-year program. I had some friends at the school but there was very little collegiality, or the kind of gang mentality and clannishness, that I get from people who've gone to the schools recently. At the time, I thought of the schools as providing working sculptors with resources: I was seeking space, oxyacetylene gas and whatever else I

was using to make my work. I was a little older than the others, because I had been out for four years, so I was pretty determined to do things my way.

Once I had graduated, L.A. was a place I had figured out how to live in and it was easy to get industrial services and supplies. It's sort of stayed that way today, but the industrial part of the city has shifted to warehousing. L.A. has gotten to be expensive, so the heavy industries, like iron foundries and manufacturing, have moved out. Now it's becoming a warehouse-based economy—shipping, receiving and storing. But I can still get things done that I need to get done.

I started teaching in 1980. I always assumed that I'd be teaching, since in a place like L.A. it was mostly impossible to make a living as an artist. At that time, there seemed to be a tiny handful of people supporting themselves with their work, like Billy Al Bengston or Ed Ruscha. Also, I wasn't making the kind of work that anybody was likely to buy because I was mostly making installations involving these huge structures I would build.

I never looked for a tenure-track job. I really struggled not to be in an academic art context. I had a tough time with the idea that teaching was what an artist had to do. But I liked teaching, the interaction with students. I was actually a decent teacher: I wanted to give the students some depth and really look into what they were doing, so that 10 years later, when there might be no interest in their work and they might not know what to do and have a crisis, they'd be able to rebuild themselves. As soon as I had a couple of shows where things sold, I took a sabbatical and just never went back.

Having gone to trade school made me oddly competitive to make things that most other artists could not make. I started right off doing ambitious projects because I could make them myself. In the late '80s I had a lot of assistants, and in recent years it's varied from project to project; there are things assistants can do, some repetitive processes, like layering fiberglass, and other things they cannot do, which involve judgments I must make about the forms and how they get finished.

One thing that was important to me was the idea of establishing a territory. When you're a young artist you stake out a general territory, and you run out to the edges of that territory, even though you take the risk of working superficially. Otherwise, as you get older, you can get stuck with a certain success, with a certain way of working and then not be able to figure out what to do next. I really admired Bruce Nauman: his territory early on was very broad, so that he had a maximum of expressive possibilities. So I thought the way to go was to sort of keep your enterprise really broad and not get captured by some stereotypical rule. But the flipside of that is that you end up with a lot of people saying, “Wait a minute, where does that come from?”

The sheer number of artists who are coming to and operating in L.A. now is radically larger. Somebody was giving me a statistic about 10,000 MFAs graduating from art school every year in the States; articles are even coming out about graduate students at UCLA—I guess you have the same busi-





*Peter Shelton: cloudsandelunkers, 2004-06, mixed mediums, cast iron and steel; at the Seattle Tacoma International Airport. Collection Port of Seattle. Photo Peter Shelton, courtesy LA Louver, Venice, Calif.*

ness going on about Yale and Columbia. When I was at UCLA it was a sleepy place, and I always felt like L.A. was kind of a wasteland socially. I'd hear those stories about people holding court, like Anthony Caro and Clement Greenberg at Saint Martin's in London. I can't really fathom what that would have been like, the intensity of these guys and the sort of pecking order and hierarchy. Clem and Tony sitting at the head of the table and the apostles all around. The curtain is drawn, and on the stage is some Constructivist modern sculpture that everybody would spend a couple of hours discussing. "Why did you leave the end of that tube open?" I was a little envious because if you belong to a club where everybody's collecting beetles, then if you get a really good beetle you'd know by what standards or what virtue it is good. In L.A. the art world is so diffuse, it's such a hybrid that people have put together, that it's really hard to compare works. It's like apples and oranges. My standards had to be very internal and conditioned locally.

Somebody asked why Nauman was so often using himself as a subject of his work. I remember him saying that he was readily available so he became the subject. Like William Wegman had his dog. You deal with your resources. In my case, I had been a

premed student, and had spent time in theater and anthropology at school, so I think it was natural for me to kind of verify the work with the body. Also, coming after this incredible—at least in New York—critical dialogue about the nature and the phenomenology of objects in Minimalism and how self-referential and self-contained that work was, it seemed impossible to proceed without rebuilding some sort of narrative.

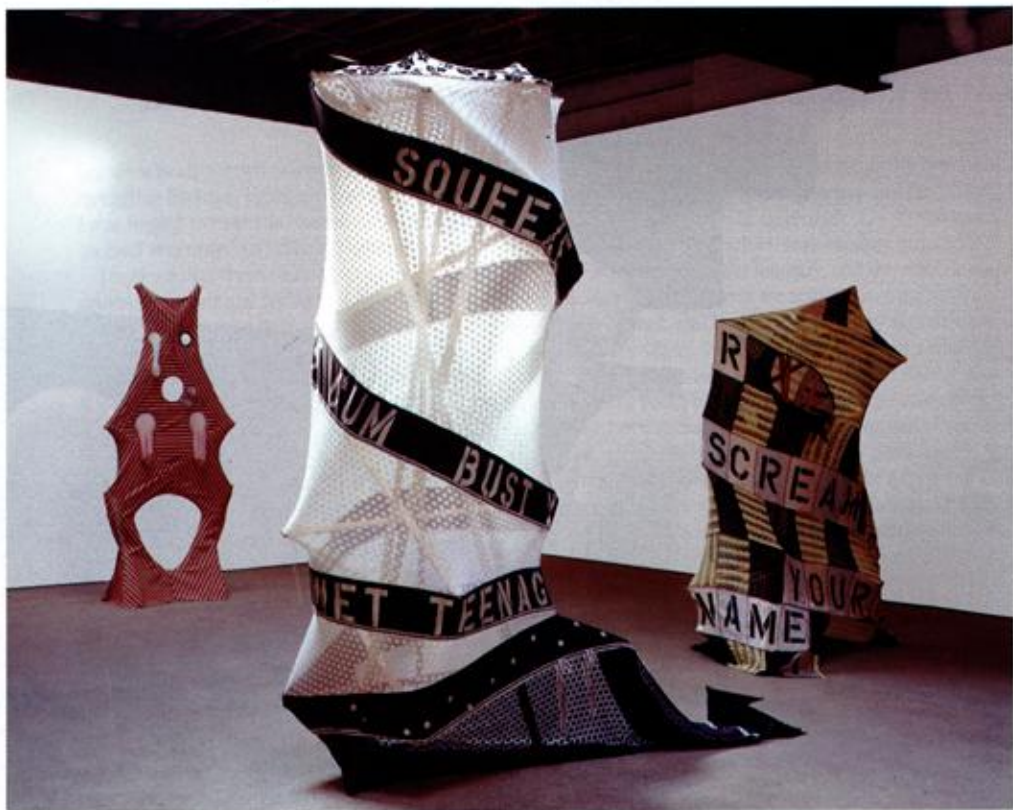
I've approached representation, or nonrepresentation, from the idea of narrative in literature. From very simple kinds of concrete stories you move to the novel and then to parable or myth, and then you get to a point where it becomes non-objective. I think art should have that full range of possibilities. One of the things I always liked about Nauman's work is that it did not seem to be mainly about form. Although it has a kind of stylistic bent, he uses anything, any mode, sometimes relatively figurative and sometimes very nonfigurative. My approach to the figure was always transactional—more of a verb than a noun. I felt that sculpture was between you and something else, either experience or space or something. Making straight figurative work has never made much sense to me. I am not that interested in the figure in a traditional sense; I am inter-

ested in these transactional objects that say something about your gesture, some meditation on your body, something that's objective but also interior.

I'm interested in architecture: early works I did were about going through layers of space, and fronts and backs of things that squeeze you in one place and open you up in another, one part being public and the other private. That's part of my interest in Asian art: I believe that consciousness resides in all parts of the body, so hanging things at your knees or your feet or your belly or your head is a way of focusing that part of your psychic and physical person. In a funny way I think it's typical of sculptors; you have this inert matter that you're trying to animate, so you try to disembodiment or displace the weight of it, or give it a kind of gesture so it will not be just inert material.

The public commission I recently did in Seattle has a kinesthetic side to it. You can walk onto the stepped platform. I am interested in the kind of somatic response people have to these floating, balloonlike cloud forms in fiberglass overhead, and the weight of the same forms in iron below knee-level. I would like there to be this kind of buzz between your corporeality working against that part of you which is not physical.





Left to right, Lara Schnitger's *Fun Bags*, *Kinky Neighbor* and *Dix-huit+*, all 2005, fabric, wood, mixed mediums; at Anton Kern Gallery, New York.

## Olga Koumoundouros

I came to L.A. in '97 and went to Cal State, Long Beach, because it was affordable. I was able to take undergrad classes for cheap, got a studio and worked as a waitress. I had talked to UCLA students, and they told me that it was hard to get access to and attention from the profs; I heard you got a lot of attention at Cal Arts and I was excited by the history of the school. So I went there in '99.

I worked with Michael Asher, Charles Gaines, Sam Durant and Millie Wilson. With Martin Kersels, my conversation was more about performance. I really used the idea of criticality and the conceptual history that Cal Arts offered me. I was excited by that. I remain in close touch with Charles Gaines.

I did a residency with Charles Ray and Jennifer Pastor when I was in graduate school. The pedagogical perspective that I got from them was almost the opposite of the one at Cal Arts, and I'm immensely grateful for that tension, although it made me a little crazy at the time. I learned about how to be an artist from Ray and Pastor, being able to watch how they nurture their source material, their immersion. It's one thing to read Smithson's descriptions in *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic*, and it is another to go on a walk with Charley and get into looking at a tree, a perceptual freshness which we often start to lose in our schooling.

There are a few studios—Ray, Kelley, McCarthy, Durant—that employ a lot of artists coming out of school; it's almost like a rite of passage. You pick up these gigs with the artists, or you pick up installer jobs. I worked full-time for Ray four years ago, when I first

got out of graduate school. He brought in a professional to teach us about mold-making and plaster work, and I learned a lot of my skills from that guy. And it's been really good for my teaching. We were making molds and casting Charley's tree. But teaching has served my practice better than being an assistant.

I have a problem with long-term assistantships. It can be highly exploitative and demoralizing to be doing full-time quasi-factory work when you have your own voice. Repetitive labor with your hands is alienating. So much of the energy that you need to bring to your own sculpture is physical: using it up on someone else's work is not healthy. I have seen people end up being kind of paralyzed, having swallowed up and internalized too much that isn't their own. They think that they'll get access to the art world through proximity to well-known artists, that success will rub off on them, and so they shut down their own sense of agency.

The shifting history of L.A. is exciting for artists. My work is largely architectonic. Part of it is this collision between structure and the somatic. There are crazy juxtapositions in this town, with this constant destruction and rebuilding. It encourages a looseness in how you relate to history, so you have to be careful with facts, but at the same time there is a lot of forgiveness. Your environment here is full of slippage—in language, histories and media—and casual fabrication methods are acceptable.

Once I graduated, it took me a little while to show again; I had peers who had credible support from art critics, but I didn't. After 9/11 I didn't feel like there were many places to show; alternative spaces were officially labeled passé, part of an older nostalgic vision. People were coming out of school paralyzed with huge debt and ask-

ing, "Where can I go to make stuff? Where can I show?" So I rented a space with my friend Rodney McMillian in a Hollywood strip mall, and we put up a show for ourselves titled "#9." That was a great thing—it really did a lot for each of us. People were curious enough to come. It was as much for our psyches as anything else. The depression coming out of graduate school is notorious. Doing the show made me feel like I had control over my practice, I wasn't waiting for external approval.

My work has been too large in size for dealers in Los Angeles; I sold the largest piece I had made here through my German dealer, Stephan Adamski. People in Europe are very interested in L.A., and somehow they don't buy into the New York/L.A. rivalry so much. That's served me well. I've always thought that Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy and Sam Durant had support in Europe before they were really accepted here.

Since I've arrived here, L.A. is less something that's percolating and more something that's becoming established. The competition for finding space and teaching jobs feels a little more intense. Because of the number of students coming out of art schools, the rents have gotten crazy. The real estate people are using this art-loft language in a jargon way, and artists can't even afford these places anymore. L.A. is becoming more dog-eat-dog, but still less so than New York.

Rodney and I are working on a performance for *The Suburban*, a project space in Chicago run by the artist Michelle Grabner. We are trying to embrace the same spirit that we had earlier, but trying to not have our production dictated by our previous successes. We want to throw off self-imposed restraint and take risks again. We can refine the performance in Chicago, and then probably show it here, at Lauri Firstenberg's project space, LAX Art, in spring 2007. We have such a good dialogue we wanted to use it to get out of our own narrow trajectories. I trust shaking things up with Rodney and I feel very fortunate to have that connection with another artist. Both of us want to hold onto that and not let the pressures of expectation swamp us.

## Lara Schnitger

I moved to L.A. in 2001, on my birthday. My husband Matt Monahan and I had been living in the Netherlands, where I'm from. Before that we lived for a year in Japan. We had a great experience there, and it opened up a whole new vision of the planet. So coming back from Japan and living in Amsterdam, we felt like we were missing a major part of the world. The Netherlands seemed kind of small.

A great many cultures are here in L.A. My studio's close to little Tokyo, and you've also got Thaitown, Koreatown, Chinatown—that's really attractive—combined with the feeling that you have tons of space. We both got to love nature in Japan, and the nature here is beautiful. Also, the art scene was booming here at the time we arrived. The gallery China Art Objects was really jamming, and the whole Chinatown art scene was starting, so there was a real community feeling.

In Holland, the social system is strong; it gives you grants, it takes care of you. Here there's no safety net, so you really need your friends. We had an artist friend here, Jeff Ono, whom Matt knew from Cooper



**“The L.A. environment is full of slippage—in language, histories and media—and casual fabrication methods are acceptable.” —Olga Koumoundouros**

Union. So we got together with the friends of Matt's friend, and it got to be like a total gang—painters, performers, musicians, dancers. In the beginning, not coming out of one of the schools here was definitely a disadvantage, socially. We would go to openings, and fortunately we'd have our friends. They'd tell us about the openings, introduce us to the people they know. It's a very small, very friendly world here; you'd quickly meet the artists and the gallery owners. But without that contact we would have been really lonely. I was showing already before we got here. I've been with Anton Kern since 1996; we met in the Netherlands. When I had just moved here, the Santa Monica Museum had a project room, and they invited me to do a project. It all happened fast: I was here, I met the curator, she had this new job, it was part of that whole getting together.

Moving to L.A. changed my work somewhat. I had started by doing pieces made from stockings or garbage bags that stretched in space; since they did not have an armature inside, they needed the walls to exist. I was doing these huge extravaganza pieces, taking over whole spaces. In L.A. I made freestanding works using

yards and yards of fabrics. I had made my first freestanding pieces in Japan. People there are much more introverted, and that's when I started making more introverted pieces, where the tension would come from the structure inside, instead of from the walls.

Sculpture was always something very exciting for me. I wanted to get it off the pedestal; let it walk, talk, move around; play with the space. I always like to see things get made in new ways. I feel myself more a sculptor than an object-maker: I definitely deal with gravity and space and materials.

This downtown neighborhood is a very interesting area. You have little Tokyo, which is Japanese, clean, very organized and structured. Right next to it you've got skid row, which is pretty much all the homeless people from L.A. hanging out around the missions. The homeless scene is fascinating to me. They team up with each other, they build their tents at night with boxes and fabrics and second-hand clothes. The next block is the fabric area, and that's astonishing: you see all these people from all over the world, and rows and rows of materials. It's like part of my studio is over there. Having access to that has really influenced my work. Part of

what fascinates me is L.A.'s second-hand culture. It's a kind of desert place. Maybe that's why sculptors come here: it's so flat you feel you could fill it up.

So I started to use a lot of second-hand clothes in my work, and I also started doing theatrical works, working on costumes, which I'd never done before. I worked a bit with My Barbarian, a group of our friends who do great performance.

Sewing is something I've always done. I used to make my own clothes before I went to art school with a concentration in textiles. What I love with fabrics is that they're so plastic—the flatness of the material with no shape of its own, and its transformation when you put it on. So you can transform your body or you can make sculptures.

I work mostly by myself. When I actually hired someone, it was for the big bumper-sticker piece; that was a production piece. I had people printing texts, and I had a woman helping me sew. But I don't have assistants in the studio, I do it all myself; now because I am pregnant I am thinking about having somebody help with the shipping. [Tingri Elly Monahan was born on July 15.]

Important people outside of my gang would be Paul



*Olga Koumoundouros: Monument to a Town Meeting, After Acconci, 2003, wood recycled from high-rise buildings, ladders, laminated benches, 6 by 23 by 8 feet. Courtesy Adamski Gallery for Contemporary Art.*



**"The last thing I want to do is make art that looks like art. I'm interested in the experimental or progressive component of it." —Jorge Pardo**

McCarthy and Mike Kelley. I don't know them, but the other day I was thinking of them. I am working on this turkey piece now, using fabric, and I thought, this is really ridiculous. Then I said, "Wait a minute, I'm in fucking L.A.! Paul McCarthy just did a whole show of pirates, and I can do a turkey piece!"

## Nathan Mabry

I came to L.A. right after graduating from the Kansas City Art Institute. I began as a potter and then started making more conceptual ceramic work. I applied to the major MFA programs, including UCLA, and got into all but one. Then it was a question of who had the best offer, which program would most benefit me professionally, and where there was a wide range of teachers. At UCLA you could almost design your own program, so I went there.

I had the opportunity to work for Adrian Saxe, which was quite a rare chance, because he doesn't hire studio assistants, being very hands-on himself. I think it was his way of taking me in and teaching me in a different way. At the same time I helped Jason Rhoades for two summers putting together his *Meccatuna* installation, which was grunt work. We would just unpack the neons and then mount them on the Plexiglas panels.

I made strong work in school and people saw that and wanted to know more about it. The "Thing" show definitely catapulted it. But also UCLA has a spring review every February, when they open up the graduate studio building. Important dealers and collectors show up. It's an accelerated art world right now, with art fairs and everything. People are just gobbling it up. It's also the way the information society of the world is working now. Everyone wants something new and quick and easy.

It's really exciting being a young artist in L.A. I sold a lot of work for minuscule prices out of my studio at UCLA. I may get close this year to living off my work. I teach part time at Cal State, L.A. An L.A. collector bought a piece of mine out of the "Thing" show; he has consistently been supportive of young L.A. artists and tries to talk to galleries in New York and other places to see if they can show the work.

There are critics who write a lot about UCLA artists; most of the local schools seem to offer a network, including galleries, which favor students from particular programs. My expectations for the moment are just to hopefully have another show. It's like rock 'n' roll, you can have a great hit album and they'll love you, but if you can't keep making that music sound good or appealing you're going to lose your record label.

I have a group of friends; we all went to school together. We don't sit around and talk about art, necessarily. We like to golf, or play poker or just do guy things. There are a few people I constantly bounce ideas off of, my wife being one of them. I trust her opinion, she knows my instincts best. I already knew some people in the "Thing" show, and most of the work I liked was done by them.

I have a very traditional, very slow practice. My show [at Cherry and Martin, Feb. 18-May 25, 2006] will include a series called "A Touching Moment"

that I have been working on. I have been taking an ancient, archaic art form—Pre-Columbian pottery—and combining it with Minimalism or American modern. Everything is open to interpretation. I take liberties with altering the elements: from reinterpreting part of the formal vocabulary of a Minimalist such as Sol LeWitt to putting a silver "grill" encrusted with diamonds on a pottery-inspired llama head. L.A. is important for the way that it has sort of heightened the irreverence, the irony in my work.

The "Touching Moment" idea is also about time, the history of objects through culture. I think these sculptures of mine are very awkward, strange things and the acceptance of them is really overwhelming to me. They have a classical esthetic presence and at the same time I think they are quite challenging. My work has also connected with the Finish Fetish tradition here; a lot of my earlier work was funkier, and now it's cleaner and more presentable. I'll stay with the figure for the immediate resonance that it has with the human condition. The way you can immediately get a response from it.

The idea of mimicking and making simulations is definitely connected with being in L.A. Most of the figures in "Touching Moment" come from a 2001 book called *Sex and Sexual Magic in Ancient Peru*, by Federico Kauffmann-Doig. My work sort of speaks of this timeless idea that we are animalistic; it also deals with the ideas of grave-robbing and colonization. The work also

questions whether contemporary society is as advanced as we think. I will keep experimenting with the ceramic medium; clay is an important material. It has a direct connection to how each culture has progressed.

## Jorge Pardo

I was born in Cuba and grew up in Chicago. My parents were both factory workers in the Midwest. I got interested in art at the University of Illinois. In 1984, one of my art instructors said, "You should go to California. The schools are better out there." I didn't have that much sense of the schools. I was just happy to leave Chicago.

It was very cheap here and very easy. I was 21 and had a shitty job and a studio for \$150 a month. I ended up at Art Center. When I started it was a horrible program. Then something happened at Cal Arts, and several of its faculty shifted to Art Center, which, almost overnight, went from being a bad place to being an interesting one. Getting a group of more theoretical teachers changed the school for a number of us. We were considered a post-studio program. You could meet with everybody; it wasn't structured. If sculptors started to come out of Art Center it was the consequence of an open system. I always had a lot of technical skills. I had done con-

*Nathan Mabry: A Very Touching Moment (Holy Jugs, Holy Judd), 2005, terra-cotta, wood, mixed mediums, 43 by 40 by 28 inches. Photo Robert Wedemeyer, courtesy Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles.*







*View of a 2006 installation by Jorge Pardo at Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York. Courtesy Petzel Gallery.*

struction and built house additions, doing plumbing, electricity and the rest. That's all you need to make sculpture. The professors coming from Cal Arts had a long tradition of marshalling their students east, and New York galleries started looking at some of us.

It was the beginning of people starting to consume art education, the same way lawyers and doctors go to school. L.A. has become the city of the visual one-liner. That's a consequence of recent pedagogy. You have to dumb things down to put through 300 art majors every year, as the schools started to do in the '90s. Things may have been more interesting in the '70s and '80s because there were fewer artists.

L.A. has always been a provincial city. We got our education through media, since there wasn't that much art in town. We tended to know the pictures of things rather than things themselves. There was a kind of self-sufficiency in local practice: you felt you could make art from the comics in your room. In the late '80s in L.A., you were working from a set of cultural deficiencies. There is a local culture, but the art schools were never connected to that. L.A. was the city that had the most examples of interesting

contemporary architecture, both due to its climate and its tradition as a trash-and-burn developer's city. Things seem to get knocked down every ten years. L.A. always existed as a transient population with first-generation immigrants who would move through transitional neighborhoods before settling in the suburbs. That sort of mobility no longer exists. The density is increasing as people become stuck where they are, and then you still have people coming in at a rate we've never seen before.

I've always been someone who operated with a lot of doubt. I didn't draw as a kid; I didn't know you could be an artist until I got to college. If you are a working-class kid, going to college is a better option than going to work at the factory where your dad works. I never understood esthetic fetishization. The last thing I want to do is make art that looks like art. I'm interested in the kind of experimental or progressive component of it, the openness of it. I've always been opposed to the militarized pedagogical culture I sense with Michael Asher or Benjamin Buchloh. If art is going to be interesting it has to be engaged in contemporary living trends.

My Art Center roommate's father had dabbled in real estate and bought him a house in Pasadena, so however his career went he would at least have a roof. We thought, "Why don't we just start a gallery in the garage?" From the architectural plans we knew the house had been built for a Dr. Bliss, so we named the gallery Bliss House. The first show was called something like "The Neighborhood Show," and we asked our friends in school for work and asked the neighbors for things that were important to them. We were trying to reflect the area. My interest at the time, as it still is today, was: what are the limits of art? How do you make works of art that don't need a conservative belief system to sustain them?

I had my first solo gallery show in a commercial gallery at Tommy Solomon's Garage in 1990, where I exhibited a series of modified objects. The show sold out. I was making 13K working full time in Art Center's library, because I needed to pay my rent and have health insurance. I made 9K from that show, which made me feel I was living well! I then did a show in New York where nothing happened.

My career took off from Europe, though my practice is very much about responding to a life here in America. By the time I started showing in Europe I had been out of school six or seven years. I've remained friends with a number of the European artists I met at that time. Things have balanced out since, but it is two different careers. Americans want things; Europeans are more interested in ideas and projects. Here in L.A., there may be four or five people that I can talk to about my work. One of the things that I really enjoyed in Europe was that you could describe the problems of working in L.A. in a non-judgmental way, without the overbearing provincial dogma. You didn't feel like you were in the middle of some sort of political minefield driven by the artificial support systems put in place by schools.

My first show in Berlin was in 1994, with Neugerriemschneider, a gallery run by Tim Neuger, a young German I had met in L.A. when he worked for a gallery here. For the Berlin show we remodeled the gallery from my design and showed it as the work. I handled the signage, furniture, detailing. Everything was for sale: you could buy the table, you could buy the facade of the gallery. We did it all ourselves, with the help of a couple of drunk German carpenters who came and built the cabinets.

These days in the studio we are transitioning more to prototyping and a little less building, since building is kind of a pain in the ass. To manufacture, you have to have people on hand all the time, and I don't want to get involved in that so much anymore. I like to make the first one, and I like to see it get past a sort of paper demonstration.

I've found it easier to convince European firms to take on the fabrication of an artist's project than American ones. Here, when I've shown up as an artist, I've felt a sort of general apathy. In Europe there is a kind of curiosity, a slightly romantic acceptance of the artist. Here there can be a deep sense of skepticism if you aren't painting or making something with your hands.

If you want to get certain things made by the furniture industry there are rules. I'm a bit of a bull in a china shop—I'm indifferent to rules. If industry work happens in an interesting way, it's great, but I'm certainly not interested in entering that world and wasting my time. I'd rather be in the studio.



**"I like to be in a place where there is nothing. You can get off the grid more easily here, find ignored spaces." —Jennifer Pastor**

I think we are an atelier in the most traditional sense. The people around me are assistants. We work together. People come here organically—they come and go. The studio has its own life, as do the things that come out of here. I try not to employ artists. One of my assistants is a machinist, another is involved with environmental design. I've had 11 or 12 people working, but some left to start their own businesses. There are only a few positions where you could really stay long term. And those positions require a certain detachment from the idea of the art world. We do real prototyping here—there are two CNC [computer numerical control] machines and a laser cutter. This is a totally digital studio. Most artists will take a sketch to a fabricator. We don't do that. We make the things that we show. It's very important for me to stay connected to that process. I'm not totally proficient with CAD [computer-assisted design], but I'm more proficient than most artists. The technical learning is important, but it's about trying to learn it without obsessing over it. We do multiples and have an interesting one now, which is the lamp subscription. We've been working on it for the last two years. You subscribe, and we send you a lamp every couple of months. It's designed as r & d; every couple of months we can try something slightly different.

I'm 42 and have been doing this for close to 20 years. It's a question of how do you transition into middle age as an artist? So much art these days is about the young and the old, the unknown and the very established. That's always an issue—how do you stay interested? I'm a sculptor, I'm trained, that's what I do, that's the space I can function in. But I'm less and less comfortable with the space the art world is becoming. The more I reach out into the larger world, the more interesting it is to me. I think my problem will be to continue reaching out beyond the art world in the next five or ten years. People who are my age, who've done what I've done, don't need to do another gallery group show.

I've always thought that art was a profession, in the sense of engagement. You develop a sense about how you work and what you do. If you work for 15 or 20 years and have done 50 or 100 shows, the way you make decisions gets rapid. I think that can only happen within a professional sphere. That's hard to explain to younger artists. Starting out, I wasn't comfortable showing as an artist while in school, because I wasn't sure whether I was going to be an artist or not. Now I'm sure, because I've become one. It's different.

## Jedediah Caesar

I'm from Northern California. I came to L.A. in 2000 to go to grad school. I had gone to the Museum School in Boston for undergraduate, to get out of California. I picked UCLA for its faculty and its reputation for being interested in materials and in object-making.

What's kept me in L.A. probably keeps a lot of people here: economics. You can have your studio and your apartment and you don't have to work that

much. I pay \$300 and I also have an outdoor studio I built, because I do a lot of work with resin. You can work for years in L.A. without having to worry about commercial success, so in some ways the pressure is off. There are two aspects of living in this area that I think are really interesting. One is the vastness of the landscape—not the city, but the deserts and hills and ocean that kind of lock together and overwhelm everything. The other thing is all the industrial fabrication that goes on here. It seems like you can find nearly any material and have almost anything made here.

I worked for three years as a studio assistant for Charles Ray. I learned a lot, especially technically. When I started, I was just thrown in; someone taught me rudimentary mold-making, and I went to work. I worked on his whole tree project from not quite the beginning to pretty much the end, including a lot of resin casting. I ended up taking the resin, the mold-making and those processes into my own work, but using them for really different qualities.

I was trying to figure out issues of sculptural space, specifically the density of objects, their internal space. I was making some sculptures out of wooden dowels and others out of paper. I got to the point where I was completely tired of the process: I was going to Home Depot, buying more material, getting another tool, and then eventually I'd end up with this object. Was it a good object or a bad object?

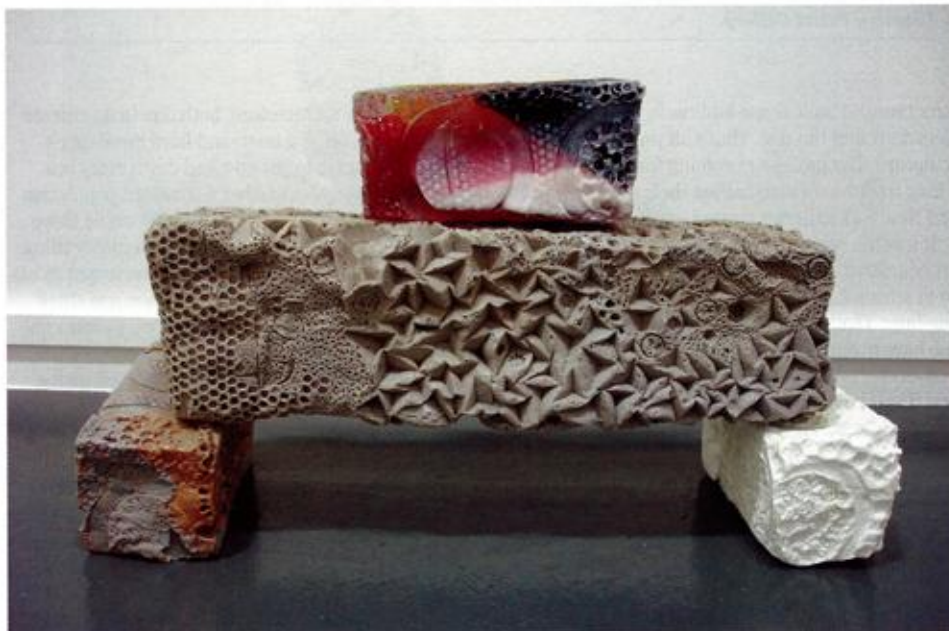
The rationale for making a better, or worse, object was that there was going to be this new form. It was going to justify all this work that I'd put into it. I wasn't quite sure where to go with that, and I found that I was more interested in histories and the resources that formed the materials. So I took all this leftover material and I started putting it into

buckets and cups. Resin was the binder that filled in the spaces, and I ended up with this kind of mass that was less a new form than a new material. I decided to cut it in half, to show its properties. And that was the first of those cut geodelike pieces. I guess I moved the process around, making the densest object possible and then turning it inside out.

In my sculpture I think about what gets put into the work and what goes into the dumpster. I think of the work as an ecosystem, where everything is connected, so I try to incorporate as much as possible. What brought me to recycling was the fact that I was born into the '70s environmental movement in the Bay Area. My father went to school for architecture and environmental design and did solar energy. There are philosophies that carry over from those disciplines and that time, but they're mediated by the industrial and economic systems involved in producing the work, and the esthetic problems of making art. The meeting of all these constraints informs the content.

Color is becoming increasingly important in my work. I did these cut-resin sculptures where each layer was colored individually when they were poured. I did a piece for my Paris gallery, Nathalie Obadia, where the resin was clear and the color came from the objects inside. In another sculpture I made the resin totally opaque white, so color was sort of chance color—whatever came through. I don't have a great eye for color, so the trick is to figure out a process that gets me to the end, with everything adding up.

I work without assistants, which creates, or forces, a lot of time to think about the mutations that occur in the work. More and more, the work finances itself. I'm in a funny place a lot of people get to, where I'm working on a number of shows at a time, and the



*Jedediah Caesar: The Hive, 2005, mixed mediums, 22 by 35½ by 13½ inches. Courtesy Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris.*



logistics of making, moving and presenting the work are making their way into the content. In 2004, I had a solo show at Black Dragon Society and was invited to show at Exit Art, so half of a big piece was here and half in New York. The simultaneous factor was really interesting to me, and fed into where I went from there. The two-part, wall-like piece I'm making for the 2006 Armory Show partly comes from that continental split. I find myself working for art fairs.

The "Thing" show at the Hammer was a really big change. People from a huge number of places saw that show. I made this really big piece for "Thing." It was heavy and cumbersome, qualities that, if you are going to make sculpture, are generally not going to help your career explode. But it sold to a collector who had bought some work in the past. I have almost no profit; I spend about as much money as you give me.

I'm not exactly sure what it means to be an L.A. artist, since I show more elsewhere than in L.A. Ideally I would like to move around more, but I'm a studio-bound artist. At this point my studio happens to be in L.A. I hope the city will keep a little bit of its autonomy and openness. It's changing—there are more galleries to show and support people, but at the same time I don't know how much longer people will move here specifically to do art. Prices for studio space have gone way up. I don't have any rent protection but I have an incredibly generous landlord, who is curious about what I do, and right now that saves me.

## Jennifer Pastor

I moved here in 1989 after having lived in New York for four or five years. I came for graduate school, without knowing much about the West Coast; I think I just wanted a radical change in scenery. After having graduated from the School of Visual Arts, I was working at the Bronx Zoo. I decided to go back to graduate school and I wanted to go to a university, not an art school. This was pre-Internet so I went to MOMA's library and started researching various faculty. I had known Chris Burden's work, but in the library I came across Nancy Rubins's and Paul McCarthy's and Charles Ray's work—all were teaching at UCLA—and I thought, "Wow!" I had intended this to be a diversion from New York.

The faculty were mostly in their 30s and 40s, so we students had a very open relationship with them. We had lots of space, time and freedom. I had always made big sculpture but in California my work got expansively large and labor-intensive. I stayed because it was very conducive to making work. I was startled by how quickly I was able to start showing. The second year I was at UCLA people were making studio visits. Mostly associates of the faculty—dealers or artist friends. At one point, Hudson, who was



Jennifer Pastor: *The Perfect Ride*, 2003, three parts (left to right): dam: steel, aluminum, plastic; line drawing animation; ear: polyurethane, steel. Courtesy Regen Projects.

Charles Ray's New York dealer at the time, came out, and I was his driver and we started talking about my work. He came by the studio and then put me in a group show [at Feature Gallery]. My classmates were the first wave to start exhibiting right out of school; they included Jason Rhoades, Rachel and Toba Khedoori, Martin Kersels and Monica Majoli.

Leaving New York, I had put everything I needed into a compact car and driven cross-country; for years my life could fit into the car, while my sculpture never could. It was like a bargain that lasted for a long time: if I could keep my life that small then I could make my sculpture. L.A. was very friendly to that notion, the winters aren't cold.

I had my obligatory car wreck and bought a truck, which meant that I wasn't moving back to New York. But it was a stick shift, which I didn't know how to drive, so I went to the desolate neighborhoods south of the airport to practice and discovered this sort of industrial ghost town, which is where I decided to establish my studio. I moved there in '92 and stayed almost a dozen years. The little machine shop I rented for \$400 a month was 900 square feet, and I built a room in the back because the fire inspectors used to check every year, so you had to hide your living situation. I bought a stainless slop sink from a restaurant supply store and I'd take baths in it. If you kept your life and the time you had to work for money small, then the work could really pop.

I like to be in a place where there is nothing. You can get off the grid more readily here, find ignored spaces. In L.A., you take the wrong freeway exit and feel like you've left what you know. But depression is also part of the culture here, the sort of isolation when you are driving; there is this inability to produce intimacy in a city like this. It is very difficult if you are actively looking for intimacy as a way to break down an isolating mood.

I've come to see L.A. as a neutral base to work from. It has become another place that I like to escape from, but now that I teach at UCSD I move between two places. Structurally, L.A. still seems

like one of the few contemporary North American cities. The United States is just getting scarier; L.A. still seems like a relatively hopeful city. I'm not the person to ask about changes here, since I'm so self-involved in my relationship to it. I don't go out much.

Relative to my peers, even in my undergraduate years, my projects always took longer. Each work is quite different; sometimes they involve expeditions, a lot of strange hunting-and-gathering trips. This is true of my present work and was very true of *The Perfect Ride* (2003), which took six years to complete. It involves the Hoover Dam and bull-riding. Before I decided on the dam I was looking at bridges and all sorts of structural engineering. Built wonders, and sort of odd ones. I wanted to see most of Le Corbusier's buildings, for instance, so that took a while. Once I knew what I was doing, I had to start filming rodeos. Then I started going to bull-riding events. At the research stage of the projects, there is no one other than myself who can think it through.

I believe that projects have specific economies. There is nothing inherent in each project that says it has to be a six-year saga. While there are things I do quickly, I don't think that everything I touch is either interesting or exhibitable. I believe in actualizing an idea, and each idea potentially has a life of its own. I'm just not interested in the flotsam of pretty things that emerge from studio practice, so I don't show that kind of thing. Also, I'm really good with my hands, so I'm suspicious of that kind of stuff.

When I was installing *The Perfect Ride* at the Whitney Museum in 2004, it was the year of pointy-toed women's shoes. I needed a pair of shoes because all I had was my work boots and there was the opening; I went to Macy's, and getting off the elevator I saw an extraordinary vista: thousands of pairs of shoes, extending through an entire enormously chaotic floor, but not a single one I could wear, because of this pointy exaggeration. I was just giving up when I saw this small boy; he was stopped in his tracks, completely riveted by the endless vista of undulating shoes and bizarre



shapes at his eye level. I thought, "If I'm so jerked out of my normal perspective, what the hell is going on in his head?" I wished I could do a drawing of what was developing in his imagination. Over time I went to other department stores, and did a lot of drawings.

I finally went back to Macy's. The shoes had gone out of fashion. I ended up getting over 50 pairs of extraordinary pointy shoes and boots from a variety of sources and made a still life of them in the studio. I've done drawings from this construction, trying to develop a sort of "embattled" terrain, and ordered two thousand pounds of oil-based clay so that I could model the sculpture to be cast in iron. I use fabricators whenever I can, since otherwise the tasks would be endless. A fabricator can construct the armature and assistants can put the rough clay on the armature. But I have to do all the refined carving and modeling myself.

At the same time that I got caught up in the department stores, I started reading, for another piece, about combat artists, not only from World War II, but also from the Renaissance, especially in northern Europe. In the 1500s, there were a few artists who were actually foot soldiers; they were able to circumvent the norms of image-making because what they did was really first-person observation. I was interested in these images of intense direct experiences. There are some great images where landscape was not a backdrop anymore, but became contextual. I was really impressed with how radically these soldiers were able to shake up accepted imagery.

My frustration with contemporary current events certainly also led me in this direction. I was thinking about politics and blood sports and about how people have dealt with this in different times. Being interested in battle scenes, I wondered where I could draw them from life. I tried to get into Camp Pendleton to draw, but I could not. Then I found out about ultimate fighting. In the beginning, the early '90s it, was unregulated, more like street fighting, combining weight classes, and mixing together boxing, kickboxing, wrestling and various martial arts; it was so brutal that few people stayed in the sport more than a year. In the videos from the time, it looked as low as you could go. Possibly I'll turn the drawings of the fights into line-based sculptures in stainless-steel wire. I'm not so interested in thinking about the figure in my sculpture. But even in a lot of extremely abstract sculpture you can see that someone has been in a balancing act with the figure.

With the "Thing" show I was surprised and excited by how many younger artists were making sculpture. There was a genuine lustiness about materials, which I really liked also, though I think that the original playfulness and lustiness for materials sort of petered out into contentment with stuff. You can see the influence of sculptors from previous generations, but what is sometimes missing is the toughest part of that influence.

And it made me think about why I struggle with sculpture. I'm talking about the potential for sculpture to act as something that transports you, possibly tries to change your perceptual relation to the world. A really good sculpture is not static, but can act like a vortex, snapping you out of your concentration and making you look at other things in the physical world in a different way. Material and perception can be in an active intercourse.



Center, Matthew Monahan's *Seeing brightly (attended by the dim)*, 2006, floral foam, wood, pigment, gold leaf, glass, drywall, approx. 75 by 18 by 18 inches. Courtesy Anton Kern Gallery, New York.

## Matthew Monahan

I'm from California. At 17 I moved to New York to study at Cooper Union. When I finished Cooper I didn't want to come back to California yet. There was this program in Amsterdam, De Ateliers, that actually paid you to go there and gave you a big space to work. I ended up staying in Europe for six or seven years; toward the end my wife [Lara Schnitger] and I went to live in Japan for a year, because she got some grants from the Dutch. I felt that Japan made me ready for the non-European culture of L.A.

When I had finished Cooper and gone to Europe, I had read a lot and I could talk a lot, but I didn't really know how to make anything. It seemed like the most average piece by an old master was phenomenal, and I thought, "I'm just going to try and draw now." I've always been in search of this older history—in New York, then in Europe and in Japan. I became almost filled to the brim with history. Still, after Japan we actually went on to the east coast of China and spent four months in a residency there.

I came back here five years ago. At first it was very difficult. I felt I was leaving behind everything I had built up and what meager reputation I had in Europe. I had absolutely no connection with the schools here, or what-

ever the L.A. sculpture thing was. My career didn't go anywhere, and I didn't really try to keep it going. I hid.

L.A. is a place that I could keep traveling in. Here there is so much space that the various ghettos—including the art community—can expand and completely create their own worlds. On the negative side, they are very isolated from each other, but that also allows them to stay very native and focused. The first couple of years here I was digesting what I had experienced in Asia. I was working on these huge charcoal landscapes, influenced by China. That was already a departure from the figurative work I had done in Europe, so I felt that I was doubly lost. I was lost in my work, and I was lost in my city; I just tried to enjoy that and flow with it.

Flying back from Japan, I was able to fit a whole year of work there into the little overhead compartment in the plane. That rootless existence had had an effect on my art, which had to be very thin and light and portable, mostly paper things. It took me a long time to feel that I could actually make things that would take up space, and be a pain in the neck to travel with. That happened by kind of admitting that I lived here. After that, I could give in more to my sculptural urges.

I kept thinking of my work in these blocks—my China work, my Japan work: place-specific series—



**"I probably gave too much time to Europe. Now I'm like, 'Forget caution! Let's just make beautiful things or extremely ugly things.'" —Matthew Monahan**

right up until a bit more than a year ago. I had a real failure at an art fair in Miami, and then an old professor of mine came from Europe. In a kind of mystical German way, he said, "You haven't done anything good for the past ten years." He said that what I was doing would be pretty good for a scarf. I don't know anyone here who would say that I was making scarves. I don't think there is any professor at any L.A. art school who would be so bold. That isn't even what they call criticality. The art schools here are very intellectual, and they dissect you on a mental level. But I don't know of anyone, except Europeans, who have that incredibly non-intellectual, judgmental sort of power.

And my ex-professor's comment was actually very useful. He was saying, "Come on, you need to find your power." That's not the language that's used at Cal Arts. That was my great lesson from Europe: the weight and power of images. They have a sort of wordless gravity. Which doesn't seem to be the way people here see things at all. There is a consistency to the language that comes out of the California art schools that seemed utterly foreign to me, this sort of do-it-yourself, going-to-Home-Depot-and-building-things ethic. There is still this masculine style of "I'll just put this thing together."

Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley have opened a lot of space for artists out here. Kelley was able to take

all these conceptual and critical languages and sort of meld them with things outside of art. I feel like he made this huge scaffolding out of footnotes and theories, and this somehow allowed you to think about aliens and home shops and weird high-school traumas. Important artists are often artists that seem to give other artists permission to do new things. Bruce Nauman was a great enabler.

I had one gallery in New York [Anton Kern] and one in Amsterdam [Galerie Fons Welters]; they are still my primary galleries. My career has really picked up in the last year. It's a nice feeling, because it happened after I flatlined. I just said to myself, I really don't give a fuck anymore, I'm not even going to hold onto any threads. Then I shut the door for a year. Trying for the impossible gives you a kind of a nihilistic freedom. All these things came together, and I started revisiting my past discoveries, things I had done ten years ago.

The response to my work came from New York, although the first people interested in it were Los Angeles collectors who came through my New York gallery. I supported myself by borrowing a lot of money from my wife. I sold some pieces, but I had huge debts. Lara gave me the freedom to just keep going.

I work all the time; I work in a quick, impulsive, chaotic way. I don't ever want to call my work "fabrication." It is another one of those words, like "practice," that I have an aversion to. I don't want to become a small factory; these are all words that I believe come from a quasi-Marxist background but have actually been turned against a lot of the ideas that Marx was talking about. For an artist to separate theory and practice, or thought and fabrication, is a form of alienation.

I think at its best my work is very dense and has a lot of self-negating masochism. It involves decay and fragility, a lot of things that by their nature are anti-commodity. It's quite perverse to try to turn this into a successful business model. Objects get a kind of stature, then I sort of trash them or humiliate them. Somehow that annihilation is like a spiritual need for me.

All my work really comes from having my back against the wall, and now they're giving me museum rooms. I think there is always a way to feel that your back is against the wall. I just open a book on Raphael and feel completely wrecked. That feeling creates the internal drive that's way beyond the art fair schedule. I think it's very important to maintain that sense of scale.

Here there is a great void to fill. In the film industry you get stucco versions of history in no uniform style. Those things are starting to really show up in my work. Kitsch offers a kind of freedom—this play with history and surfaces and special effects. I probably gave too much time to the whole

Europe thing. Now I'm like, "Forget caution, let's just make beautiful things or extremely ugly things." Come on, if you are out on the edge of the world like this, you might as well just go right over the edge. You might as well just fall off the deep end, really giving up what we were taught to be responsible towards—content, the dos and don'ts of historical progress.

So in a way, I feel my situation now is just the opposite from when I was in Europe and Asia—my spoken language hasn't really caught up with what I'm doing in my work. My language just hasn't become as embarrassing as my work has. If I did really get into the language, I'd be muttering some Baudelaire poem, or growling at you.

## Eric Wesley

I was born and raised in L.A.; I really love it here, though I could imagine going to New York to check it out. I went to UCLA from '92 to '96. Richard Jackson was important to me; he's really into teaching, really into sharing stuff. There is something here that's hard to put into words. Being productive, getting feedback from other artists, from teachers—it's not about money, it's not about the game. People engage in a different way.

I wouldn't really call myself a sculptor. Sculpture is a really arbitrary term. And though I do a lot of painting and drawing too, I wouldn't ever be considered a painter. But I also do other stuff like writing books. The first was based on a month-long driving trip I took to Alaska to see the summer solstice. It was an adventure-style book. Right now I'm working on a romance-novel-style book.

I don't think place is that important to me. I try to consider it an element in the work, but it's not where the work comes from. There was something quite local about the *Inch-a-lotta* [2002], or, as I've heard it called, the burrito-making machine, which, importantly, made one "endless" thing, not a quantity of single things. Originally it was going to make one long cigarette. So you have the physical concept of infinity, and to turn that into sculpture you have to find a way to be funny or engaging. The work has to have some sort of physical incitement. The burrito-making piece was designed for Germany, and I like to fuck around with coding things. I found that there is a real similarity between Bavarian culture and Mexican culture.

I think about the question of humor all the time. There is a feeling I get when I show something to a friend or fellow artist. I try not to talk too much or guide someone who's looking at a work, but when someone sees it and goes, like, "Huuuh!" as an instant animal-like response, it's a real quick fleeting thing. I like that. It's really instinctual, like being caught off balance. That's kind of Paul McCarthy's thing too.

I'm attracted to comedy. I'm also into Minimalism. I think the comedy and the formal aspects of my work go together. A piece has to be thought of and made by the artist, perceived by the viewer and

*Eric Wesley: Untitled, 2002, wood, stainless steel, burner, gas cylinder, various foods, acrylic paint, plaster. Courtesy China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles.*





**“Movie people can never be in the art world. They don’t want to share the money, and artists don’t want to share the brain cells.” —Eric Wesley**

then—not even understood, but “gotten” in some sort of way that precedes intellectual comprehension. There is a comedy in there somehow. I guess it’s funny that a dumb Tony Smith metal cube has such importance.

I’ve been showing here for about seven years, and the whole art-world game is shit and everyone knows it. The career hunger has become overriding for a lot of people. Ignorance protected me when I was a student. Art students are too smart now. They are the latest installment of yuppie culture. The art-world excitement I saw here in the ’90s seemed to sit up and then die down as other elements took over. The commercial interests seem to have totally changed. But of course I also changed in those years. When I was starting to show, there were a lot of false starts to the career thing. I had a friend who opened a gallery, which was China Art Objects, and then things just kind of happened.

I do feel somewhat successful. I live off my work, and I feel totally blessed about that. I find the game of success and money and fame weird. Often it’s entertaining. At times I feel used, culturally used. I try to adapt; I’m not talking about being a black artist—which can be a different thing, or may play a part in what I’m talking about. I could possibly milk that angle and make a lot of money. Artists in general maybe have a little of the clown factor. And artists sometimes get paid to shut up. While I don’t get paranoid, I remain apprehensive.

The idea of the L.A. Mountain School has been brewing for a while. I had linked up with another artist, Piero Golia, in Naples, Italy. He just moved here to L.A., and we started this school [in January 2006]. We had talked about it for a year or two. We just kind of shotgunned it and started the thing, relying on the love of people we know, or people who are interested in what we are doing. The goal is for it to be a real school, not an art project. Our objective is to break this vicious cycle of how artists are looked at in the greater world. And also how artists themselves break into or interact with the discipline itself. So we have science classes taught by these two guys from Caltech who are the real deal; one is a space engineer and the other a classical physics sort of guy. There’s a basic law class, taught by two attorneys; one is currently a federal defender. Then there is art, with classes led by various artists. Those are the three staples of the program. We deal with commercial things too—dealers, collectors, why a collector buys a certain work and how. An important local gallery director did a lecture. It’s all pro bono. It’s brand new, starting as a three-month trial deal. The goal is for people who are students now to remain involved and keep it going in the future. Both Piero and I thought that there was a hole to be filled.

There are important connections between art and the movie industry here. The fabrication end is totally entwined—for example, Universal Studios makes works for artists. Artists often build sets and props and stuff. I made an igloo and a cabin for a history channel documentary. The interrelations are all under the surface. I used to work for the production company that produced “The Highlander” TV

show. But there will never be an artist on TV. Movie people can never be in the art world, and artists can never be in the movie world, as hard as each may wish and try. Movie people probably don’t want to share the money, and artists don’t want to share the brain cells.

## Mike Kelley

I moved here to Los Angeles in ’76 to attend graduate school at Cal Arts. I’m from Detroit; I had a second-city complex about New York, so I only applied to two schools: the Art Institute of Chicago and Cal Arts. I did not really expect to get into Cal Arts because they were so conceptually oriented; I applied with a portfolio of paintings on paper, though I was also making installations and noise music at the time.

I did not apply to Cal Arts for the fine-arts faculty, most of whom I was unfamiliar with, but I was very impressed by the music, film and graphic design faculty. The school’s catalogue presented the institution as akin to the Bauhaus, where one could study in various departments, but this turned out not to be the case. I went to Cal Arts primarily because I wanted to study with electronic music composer Morton Subotnick, but I was never able to. Allan Kaprow was supposed to be on the faculty, but he wasn’t. I was very unhappy at first, but eventually I discovered artists there that I liked, and I believe Cal Arts was, actually, the best place I could have ended up. It was an amazing faculty; I studied with Laurie Anderson, David Askevold, Jonathan Borofsky, Judy Pfaff, Susan Rothenberg, Robert Cumming, Richard Artschwager and John Baldessari, among others. And Douglas Huebler was my mentor. It was a stellar group of people. Most of them were not yet famous; some of them were dirt poor, living in their studios and completely accessible.

The school wasn’t oriented toward Los Angeles at all, but toward New York City. Many of the students who attended Cal Arts never left the desert town of Valencia to go into the city. They just weren’t interested. I had no particular allegiance to Cal Arts. I made friends there, including John Miller and Tony Oursler, but most of them moved to New York soon after graduating.

I lived in the slums of the Northern Valley in a little house with Jim Shaw, whom I knew previously from undergraduate school. We immediately checked out L.A. and discovered the burgeoning punk scene. It was very lively, rivaling the New York and London scenes. I particularly liked the band The Screemers and the musicians linked to the LAFMS [Los Angeles Free Music Society], like Boyd Rice and John Duncan. I met local artists Chris Burden, Alexis Smith, Jeffrey Vallance, and Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, all of whose work impressed me. I became involved with the alternative space LACE and discovered people like the ASCO group of Latino artists, and the artists associated with *High Performance* magazine, including Paul McCarthy. I decided to stay in Los Angeles; there was really no

reason to go anywhere else. As soon as I graduated from school, I started working the performance-art circuit, performing in places like the Kitchen in New York.

I could have made my work anywhere, but I liked the Los Angeles art scene. Also, at Cal Arts I had been schooled by Conceptual artists, and Conceptualism was inherently an uncentered and international movement; the artists associated with it moved from city to city. The idea that art was linked to a particular place struck me as out-of-date. We were living in a mobile world.

When I got out of school I supported myself with a variety of non-art-related jobs for several years. I did light construction, some film and graphics work, until I got a job teaching performance and installation at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design for a year. The L.A.-based abstract painter James Hayward, who had been in residency there, convinced them that they should hire me. That was my first professional job. When I came back to L.A., I taught at UCLA, then at Cal Arts and the Otis Art Institute, then finally at Art Center. Teaching is important in L.A., unlike New York, because it’s where one finds a sense of community in an uncentered city.

The cultural position of the artist in America is ultra-low on the totem pole. Artists are culturally unimportant, so art departments in universities are not taken very seriously. I am not famous in Los Angeles; in the school where I teach I’m less important than an auto-or product-designer. As a teacher, I’m simply there to help other people become artists—to do what they want to do. I am not interested in producing artists who make anything related to what I do.

I generally work in series, but these are unfixed—they branch into variations. In the last ten years, much of my work has addressed the recycling of earlier projects and materials. I did a large installation a few years ago called *Categorical Imperative and Morgue* (1999). It was made from 25 years of studio leftovers, things which did not lend themselves to being made into art. So I simply displayed them as piles, organized by type. That work is now in the collection of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven.

I like to keep my hands in the work, but I also have assistants. If touch is important, I do the work myself. I paint my paintings myself because I haven’t found anybody whose color-mixing skills match my own. I don’t really enjoy the labor, though; I prefer thinking things up to making them. The only manual activity I’ve enjoyed is drawing, but I pretty much gave that up by the late ’70s, when I started making the black-and-white image/text paintings. These were painted by hand but made very mechanically, using projections, so they were not very much fun to make. Sometimes, however, I don’t want my personal touch, or anyone else’s, in the work, so I have multiple people work on a single piece. I did this, for example, with the “Memory Ware” works. I wanted them to be generically folksy.

At this point I prefer playing with physical things to drawing. I like materials that already have fetishistic overtones, such as old clothes. In the ’80s, when





*View of Mike Kelley's exhibition "Day Is Done," 2005. Photo F. Nilsen, courtesy Gagosian Gallery, New York.*

I first worked with craft materials like stuffed animals, I sewed them together myself. Now I don't have time for that, so I'll lay out the materials, and someone else pieces them together. I work back and forth with the assistant until I'm pleased with the result. I am somewhat of a tinkerer; I don't work things out completely ahead of time. I leave room for things to change.

Because I teach, some of my assistants have been former students, but this is not generally the case. A number of people who have worked for me are now quite well-known artists: Dave Muller, Kelly Mason, Sam Durant, Catherine Sullivan and Lisa Lipinski, among others. I do not take any responsibility for their success; they were good artists when they came to work for me. Increasingly, though, I hire people who are not artists. Young artists become professionals so quickly now that I cannot keep them in my employ.

When I was a teenager, I wanted to be a poet or a novelist, but I was not very good. But through the visual arts, by working with real materials, I think I have become a better writer. By the mid-'80s I was writing long stream-of-consciousness texts that were presented in the performance-art context. But I began to resent the fact that I had to be in front of people; I did not enjoy it, it was a strain on me. The works I made using craft materials did not engage language in the same way; the materials themselves were extremely loaded. My recent show in New York, "Day Is Done," was a large video/sculpture installation. This work was very much a by-product of my desire to bring writing back into my practice in an overt way.

I have cut together the individual video tapes presented in "Day Is Done" into a single-channel version roughly the length of a feature film. A rough version of it was screened at the New York Underground Film Festival. I have watched a tremendous

number of films recently—mostly B films. I used to be far more interested in literature and music; now I rarely read except for research purposes. In "Day Is Done" I worked with professional actors and technicians. Los Angeles is very much geared toward the film industry, so these services are accessible.

The Gagosian exhibition was the most complex and expensive body of work I have ever produced. I was already working on it, paying for it myself, before I decided that it was important to me to present the work in New York. Almost all of my larger sculptural installations have been shown in Europe, and I knew that I could not rely on an American museum to support this major work of mine. That's how it ended up being presented in a private art gallery. The fact that this work was shown at the Gagosian Gallery very much affected the reception of my work in New York. Collectors  
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## L.A. Sculptors

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who had never bought my work before became interested in it.

The exhibition at Gagosian was an immense assembly of architecturally scaled sculptures. To be shipped, everything had to be designed to break down. I was only able to work on two or three pieces at a time in my studio, so I had to rent another building in the area. The show was produced in a piecemeal manner, and I never saw the entire group of works until they were installed in New York. This way of working is not unusual for me. All through the '80s I lived in a small apartment in Hollywood. I produced whole bodies of work, including large-scale installations, in the front room of the apartment. I never saw them in their totality until they were put together later on site. One doesn't need a large studio to create large-scale artworks.

"Helter Skelter" was an important exhibition for my generation of West Coast artists, because it introduced our work to a more international audience. The show was definitely problematic because it simply inverted the previous clichéd notions of West Coast art: the "sunshine esthetic" of Light and Space and Finish Fetish was replaced with noir esthetics. That was a real disservice to the artists in the show. But it was a historically significant exhibition, the first real attempt to define post-'60s California art. The show was nevertheless

very much a by-product of the '80s art boom. The artists of the '70s were, for the most part, passed over. Work from this period has pretty much been written out of contemporary art history because much of it was made outside the gallery context. The Los Angeles art scene of the '70s was extremely interesting, especially performance-related and feminist works.

My work in the '80s grew out of this milieu and the Conceptualist orientation of Cal Arts. I had to deal with the "dematerialist" tendencies that I inherited from this generation of artists. I had to think through, myself, basic problems related to the tensions between signification and the physical reality of materials, as well as the commodity status of the art object. "Dematerialization" was a strategy very much against my nature, however it was a big issue at the time, and it took me a while to get it out of my head. Questions of material reality are of the utmost concern to me as an artist.

Narration is an integral part of how one understands objects. As a visual artist, I am a storyteller of sorts. I've always been interested in artists who were willing to openly embrace narrative concerns. As a student, I was particularly drawn to the work of my teachers John Baldessari, Laurie Anderson, David Askevold and Douglas Huebler. They were all doing something very interesting and complicated with narrative in their work. This does not mean that their work "makes sense" in any traditional narrative way. My own work embraces both confusion and dark humor. □



**Mike Kelley:** *Memory Ware Flat #21, 2001, paper pulp, tile grout, acrylic, miscellaneous beads, buttons, jewelry on wood panel. 70 1/4 by 46 1/2 by 1/2 inches. Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York.*

**Chris Burden** was born in 1946 in Boston, Mass. Recent shows include "The Flying Steamroller" [earlier this fall] and "14 Magnolia Double Lamps" [to Nov. 5] at South London Gallery.

**Jedediah Caesar** was born in 1973 in Oakland, Calif. His work is on view in "Trace" at the Whitney Museum's Altria branch, in New York [to Nov. 12].

**Liz Craft** was born in L.A. in 1970. She had two shows last summer: "Fantasy Architecture" at the Halle für Kunst, Lüneberg, Germany, and bronze sculptures at Alison Jacques in London.

**Evan Holloway** was born in 1967 in La Mirada, Calif. His work appears in "The Uncertainty of Objects and Ideas: Recent Sculpture" at the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. [to Jan. 7, 2007], and in a solo show at Harris Lieberman, New York [to Nov. 18].

**Thomas Houseago** was born in 1972 in Leeds, England. His work is in "Transformers" at the Beam Gallery, University of Nevada, Las Vegas [Nov. 3-Dec. 15] and in "Making and Finding" at the Foundation To-Life, Mt. Kisco, N.Y., this month. He will show at David Kordansky, L.A., in 2007.

**Mike Kelley** was born in 1954 in Detroit. "Day Is Done" appeared last year at Gagosian, New York. He had a solo show at the Louvre in Paris in summer '06, and was recently included in "Selections from the Pinault Collection" at Palazzo Grassi, Venice.

**Martin Kersels** was born in L.A. in 1960. A solo show, "Heavyweight Champion," will be at the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. [Feb. 3-June 3, 2007], and is scheduled to travel. Kersels will also show at Guido Costa Projects in Turin, Italy, in 2007.

**Olga Koumoundouros** was born in 1967 in New York. She recently showed at Stephan Adamski, Aachen, Germany, and was included in Adamski's group show this fall at Rental Gallery, L.A. "Philosophy of Time Travel," a collaborative project with four other artists, will be on view at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York [Apr. 4-July 1, 2007].

**Liz Larner** was born in 1960 in Sacramento. She had a show (with Maria Lassnig) at Kunsthau Graz, Austria, last season, and was included in this year's Whitney Biennial in New York.

**Nathan Mabry** was born in 1978 in Durango, Colorado. His most recent show was last spring at Cherry and Martin in L.A.

**Jason Meadows** was born in Indianapolis in 1972. His solo show "Life on Mars" was on view last spring at Marc Foxx. This summer, a three-part sculpture was installed outside the South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, Calif. Meadows's work is included in "Untitled (For H.C. Westermann)" at the Contemporary Museum, Honolulu [to Nov. 19].

**Matthew Monahan** was born in 1972 in Eureka, Calif. His work was in the recent Whitney and Berlin biennials, and is now on view at Modern Art Inc., London [to Nov. 12], and in "USA Today" at the Royal Academy of Arts, London [to Nov. 4]. He will have a solo exhibition at Douglas Hyde Gallery, Trinity College, Dublin [Feb. 2-Mar. 17, 2007] and a "Focus" show at L.A. MOCA [July 26-Nov. 5, 2007].

**Jorge Pardo** was born in 1963 in Havana, Cuba. He had spring and summer shows at Giò Marconi, Milan, and Friedrich Petzel, New York, respectively. Another exhibition at Petzel is tentatively scheduled for March 2007.

**Jennifer Pastor** was born in 1966 in Hartford, Conn. Her installation *The Perfect Ride* was at the 2003 Venice Biennale, Regen Projects, L.A., and the Whitney Biennial, New York. This summer, her work was included in "Too Much Love" at Angles Gallery, Santa Monica.

**Charles Ray** was born in Chicago in 1953. This fall, his work was included in "Small Sculpture" at Matthew Marks, New York, and "Selections from the Pinault Collection" at Palazzo Grassi, Venice. "Charles Ray: Black & White" is currently on view at the Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst in Oslo, Norway [to Dec. 17].

**Lara Schnitger** was born in Haarlem, the Netherlands, in 1969. Her work was in "Implosion" at Anton Kern, New York, during the summer, and is currently on view in "USA Today" at the Royal Academy of Arts, London [to Nov. 4].

**Mindy Shapero** was born in 1974 in Louisville, Ky. She recently showed (with Jockum Nordstrom) at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio. Shapero's work is currently on view at CRG in New York [to Dec. 9], and she is included in "The Uncertainty of Objects and Ideas: Recent Sculpture" at the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. [to Jan. 7, 2007].

**Peter Shelton** was born in 1951 in Troy, Ohio. He had two recent shows at LA Louver: "Godspipes," a solo last winter, and "Seven Rooms Seven Artists" this past summer.

**Eric Wesley** was born in 1973 in L.A. He had three solo shows last summer: at Galleria Fonti in Naples, Bortolami Dayan in New York and MOCA in L.A.