



Billy Al Bengston
Peter Alexander
Charles Arnoldi
Natalie Arnoldi
Jay Battle
Larry Bell
Tony Berlant
Wallace Berman
Susanne Melanie Berry
Ashley Bickerton
Sandow Birk
Wolfgang Bloch
Esteban Bojorquez
Olaf Breuning
Casper Brindle

Ben Brough
Thomas Campbell
Vija Celmins
Bruce Conner
Ron Cooper
Peter Dayton
Gregory de la Haba
Laddie John Dill
Phillip Dvorak
Roe Ethridge
Jim Evans
Ned Evans
Jeremy Everett
Herbie Fletcher
Lyn Foulkes

Sally Gall
Jim Ganzer
Chris Gentile
Joe Goode
Micheal Halsband
Mary Heilmann
George Herms
Gary Hill
Dennis Hopper
Jay Mark Johnson
Craig Kauffman
Ed Kienholz
Kristin Jai Klosterman
Bill Komoski
Jeff Lewis

David Lloyd
Robert Longo
Cameron Martin
Sister Mary Corita
John McCracken
Andy Moses
Ed Moses
Steve Olson
Catherine Opie
Claudia Parnucci
Helen Pashgian
Raymond Pettibon
Ken Price
Blake Rayne
Rob Reynolds

Thaddeus Strode
Robert Dean Stockwell
Spencer Sweeney
Fred Tomaselli
DeWain Valentine
John Van Hamersveld
Alex Weinstein
Chris Wilder
Timothy Williams
Brian Wills
Norton Wisdom
Ed Ruscha
Dirk Skreber
Craig Stecyk
David Bungay

Fletcher • Nathan Fletcher • Brian Anderson • Joel Tudor • Donald Takayama • Matt Kivlin • Terry Martin • Al Merrick • H-Y Designs (Myke Hynson) • Billy Al Bengston (Herbie Fletcher) • Chuck Arnoldi • Peter Alexander • Jim Ganzer • Raymond Pettibon (on Hobie board) • Barry Mcgee (on Joel Tudor board) • Ben Brough • Gregory de La Haba

swell

PRESS RELEASE

WEST: I guess I certainly represent the West Coast, almost a poster boy for the period that the show covers. You are more transplanted East coast, right? Since you were raised on the Pacific. You seem to have an East Coast sensibility.

EAST: East Coast brain; Pacific heart body and soul.

WEST: For this show, you are trying to combine a lot of people into a cohesive overview, although really only cohesive, if you consider William Burroughs channeling J.G. Ballard cohesive... More like wrapping poetic and unrestrained metaphors around different styles of art to more accurately describe them. Surfing seems to have escaped the analysis that hot rod and motorcycle culture received. The art inspired by surfing has

OPENING JULY 1ST | 6 – 8 PM

Curated by Tim Nye and Jacqueline Miro. This survey of art inspired by surf and beach culture will open to the public on July 1st at the three locations in Chelsea and will include work by most members of the group of Venice Beach artists known as Light and Space and Finish Fetish.

The show historically contextualizes beach culture and its poetic and freeing nature on the Beat Generation, Assemblage, Light and Space, Finish

garnered even less intelligent analysis. It sounds like you are interested in showing how all these outside forces conspired to create the culture that created the art.

EAST: That, but I really want get down to Surf and the magnetic forces that shape the Myth: Art, Community, Light, Space, Fetish, the Joy, the Sensuality and the awe of the Ocean. I want to talk about how as a society we are affected by the absence of Idols, and role models and how in Surf we create our own Myths. Stories: oral, painted and written. Stories about the ambivalence, the dread, the fear and the thrill. The Eros of it all.

WEST: No one has ever written about the eroticism of surfing with much depth. One needs to figure out where ground zero is, the source of the surf cult explosion since everything beyond that point is just a cooling universe, the debris from the explosion. Was it Mickey Dora crucifying himself with the temptations of Hollywood while the Ferus boys played custom car commandos up on La Cienaga with their LA Cool Ideology? Southern California at the time was dominated by the aerospace industry which created missiles as well as the glass and foam for the plastic fantastic fetish objects called surfboards... with the surfboards destined to provide the ride for the erotic wet-dreams of a global youth culture trying to free itself from the emotionally dead cold war of the 50's.

EAST: I've been reading Tom Wolfe's The Pump House Gang. Of course, all about teenage angst, misfits and sexuality. But clearly, the violence...

WEST: Certainly almost everyone that was part of the formative generation of surfing in So Cal was touched by the three wars and the Watts Riots. My father was a Marine at Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima and Tarawa—and then served in Korea. I was in the navy during Vietnam. So the epicenter of surfing grew out of a military culture, and all those marines in the South Pacific brought it back with them. In fact, I think the first Hollywood film to have surfing was The Sands of Iwo Jima with John Wayne; the opening shot of the film is a guy surfing in Waikiki. Pump House is good; I write my best stuff when I am kind of miserable. Then I'll look at books to try and find a rhythm, almost anything can set me off.

EAST: It's certainly been too exciting here to write. Trying to depress myself by reading Kierkegaard...

WEST: Kierkegaard should definitely slow you down a bit. Strange you should choose him, because I think he would have been a philosopher surfer. His basic premise was that truth is not just a matter of discovering objective facts. His thoughts about individuality, alienation and anxiety all lend themselves to the philosophy of surfing. Also, what you were saying about dread and fear fits his existential framework quite well. You could easily build a surf cult essay around him, but that would be far too intellectual. We probably need to go back to Zen and the art of ding repair.

EAST: ...strange I should choose him? You are the one in charge of Eastern thought.

WEST: Here's something inspired by Leary, Einstein and Taoist poetry, with a nod to Derrida: the Surfer is dealing with the most basic elements of all. It's the individual dealing with the power of the ocean, lunar pulls, tidal ebbs and flows; surfers are mystics, inward looking, engaged in a neurological excursion into bliss, sliding over the water and leaving no trace of their presence. Timing, purity, and DNA, are linked internally and externally, in an evolutionary arc that builds a species whose sole (soul) goal is to be in the right place at the right time. It happens that whatever you do, you can't create a wave, you just know it, there's a time to move, and a time to lay back.

EAST: Since we are talking about mysticism, religion and cults: can you enlighten me on Born Again Christianity and surfing? That is more western tradition, but I am curious.

WEST: Born again Christianity hit surfing about 1970, and for a while it replaced the drugs and debauchery of the 60's. Rick Griffin was a notable convert, and he spent a lot of effort trying to convert my Buddhist self, to no avail. Christianity still has a strong hold on surfing—at least of the fundamentalist variety... maybe it is the baptism in water.

EAST: Last but not least, another taboo subject that I'd like to bring up: Larry Clark and Teenage Lust. And, are you really a Buddhist?

WEST: Now you have hit on my favorite subject, the homoerotic subtext of surfing, as embodied in the teenage lust of wild youth obsessives like Larry Clark. Of course the homoeroticism of surf culture is pretty obvious, and is not just confined to teenage lust. In the early sixties, Hollywood turned its attention from gladiator films to beach party bingo. Tab Hunter and Fabian were visual beefcakes with surfboards. Gidget didn't even get laid in her own film, in fact, it was hardly about her, it was about male-bonding and the spiritual quest for masculinity through surfing and dropping out of consensus society. The sexual politics of surfing certainly gets overlooked.

Fetish, and early Pop Art. From this group of California artists, works by Wallace Berman, George Herms, Bruce Conner, Llyn Foulkes, Ed Kienholz, Billy Al Bengston, Tony Berlant, Ed Ruscha, Laddie John Dill, Dewain Valentine, Peter Alexander, John McCracken, Larry Bell, Craig Kauffman, and Helen Pashgian will be on view.

One of the main axes of the show is the obvious yet sensual relationship between Shapers and the Finish Fetish movement of the 60's. As the show focuses on two cities, L.A. and New York, it attempts to place the Ocean and its proximity to both cities as an antidote to a cacophony of quantities, speed and competing images. It also addresses how later generations of artists have looked back at assemblage, ephemera and graffiti as a way to either incorporate or reject the piercing presence of branding, advertisement, and information technology.

SWELL is a state of mind, but it is also our way of understanding distant forces, the beyond.

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Andy Warhol tried to make his little surf film in La Jolla and Kenneth Anger tried to do homage to Bunker Spreckels. Larry Clark should make a surfing film, better yet: Harmony Korine should make a surf film. Maybe they can collaborate, Julien Donkey-Boy and Ken Park go surfing!

Yes, a Buddhist... over and out.



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