



HOLLYWOOD

THE LOS ANGELES ART SCENE AND THE 1960s

**REBELS IN
PARADISE**

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP

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To David, again

“People cut themselves off from their ties to the old life when they come to Los Angeles. They are looking for a palace where they can be free, where they can do things they couldn’t do anywhere else.”

—TOM BRADLEY, the grandson of slaves, whose 1973 election as Los Angeles’s first black mayor resulted in an unprecedented twenty-year tenure and the establishment of the city’s Museum of Contemporary Art

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Timeline: 1955–1969

1955

Walter Hopps organizes Action I, exhibition in the Merry-Go-Round building on the Santa Monica Pier. Announcement is designed by his childhood friend, artist Craig Kauffman.

Ed Kienholz shows his work at Von's Café Galleria, Laurel Canyon. Meets his future wife Marjorie Lynch.

Later opens his first gallery in the lobby of the Coronet Theatre Cinema.

Wallace Berman publishes first issue of his magazine of poetry and pictures, *Semina*.

Peter Voukos teaches ceramics at the Los Angeles County Art Institute (future Otis College of Art and Design). Students include Billy Al Bengston, Ken Price, and John Mason.

The film *Rebel Without a Cause*, directed by Nicholas Ray, stars Dennis Hopper, James Dean, and Natalie Wood.

Dean, 24, dies in a car accident.

1956

Lorser Feitelson begins his TV show, *Feitelson on Art*, which runs until 1963.

Kienholz opens his Now Gallery.

John Altoon returns to Los Angeles from New York and Europe and teaches at Chouinard Art Institute.

Ed Ruscha and Mason Williams arrive in Los Angeles. Ruscha enrolls in Chouinard. Williams discovers folk music clubs in L.A. Joins the Navy.

Walter Hopps and Ed Kienholz organize the "4th Annual All-City Outdoor Art Festival" in Barnsdart Park.

Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* published.

First polyurethane surfboards go on the market.

1957

Llyn Foulkes, Judy Gerowitz (later Chicago), and Irving Blum move to Los Angeles.

Wallace Berman and Robert Alexander open Stone Brothers boutique and printing press.

George Herms presents *Secret Exhibition*, his assemblage sculpture on a vacant lot in Hermosa Beach.

Robert Irwin has first solo show at Felix Landau Gallery.

Walter Hopps and Ed Kienholz open Ferus Gallery. Wallace Berman exhibition is closed and artist is arrested for obscenity. John Altoon is given solo show.

1958

The TV police series *77 Sunset Strip* debuts.

Everett Ellin opens first gallery and Chez La Vie café, which closes after a year.

Ruscha shares a house with fellow Chouinard students and Oklahomans Jerry McMillan, Peter Blackwell, and Don Moore. Joe Goode joins them in early 1959 and enrolls at Chouinard.

Larry Bell enrolls at Chouinard.

Billy Al Bengston, Craig Kauffman, and Ed Moses have first solo shows at Ferus.

Robert Alexander and James Newman open Dilexi Gallery in San Francisco and show many Ferus artists including Moses, who starts using the name Ed Moses Y Branco.

Irving Blum buys out Kienholz and becomes co-director of Ferus at new location on La Cienega Boulevard.

Publication of *The Holy Barbarians*, with John Altoon on the cover, an account of the Beat scene in Venice by Lawrence Lipton.

Peter Voulkos ceramics, sculpture, and paintings shown at the Pasadena Art Museum.

Democrat Edmund ("Pat") Brown elected Governor of California.

Lenny Bruce performs monologues inspired by improvisational jazz and left-wing politics.

Richard Neutra builds the Singleton house in Bel Air.

1959

Craig and Vivian Kauffman travel to Europe from 1959 to 1961.

Ken Price returns to L.A. from graduate school in Alfred, New York.

Virginia Dwan opens her gallery in Westwood.

Four Abstract Classicists, a show of geometric abstract painting by John McLaughlin, Loris Feitelson, Fred Hammersley, and Karl Benjamin at the L.A. County Museum of History, Science, and Art.

A show by abstract artist Lee Mullican is held at the UCLA art galleries, organized by curator Frederick S. Wight.

1960

The contraceptive pill comes on the market.

John Lautner designs the "Chemosphere," or Malin residence.

Opening of the LAX theme building designed by Charles Luckman, William Pereira, Welton Beckwith, and Paul Williams.

Julius Shulman photographs *Case Study House No. 22* designed by Pierre Koenig. The nighttime view of fashionably dressed young women seated in a glass-walled living room cantilevered over

hillside with a grid of lights in the distance defines the exotic, modern Southern California lifestyle.

Everett Ellin opens his second gallery on North La Cienega Boulevard.

Billy Al Bengston paints his Dracula series with a small orchid shape in center of canvas.

Larry Bell begins paintings of nested hexagons.

Ferus shows Jasper Johns with Kurt Schwitters; Ken Price's first solo show.

The Pasadena Art Museum presents the clay sculpture of John Mason in May, followed by Robert Irwin in July, and Richard Diebenkorn in September.

1961

Beach Boys *Surfin' Safari* album is released, launching a surf music trend. About 30,000 young people are surfing California beaches each weekend.

Willem de Kooning at the Kantor Gallery and Helen Frankenthaler at Primus-Stuart Gallery. Ferus artists are packaged as something entirely different: Ken Price's exhibition announcement depicts the artist surfing; Bengston's shows the artist driving his motorcycle.

A forest fire destroys more than 500 houses in Bel Air, Brentwood, and Malibu, including that of Dennis and Brooke Hopper.

Dwan Gallery's Yves Klein: *Le Monochrome* opens on May 29.

Ed Kienholz is given a show at the Pasadena Art Museum in May and included in the Museum of Modern Art's *The Art of Assemblage* organized by William Seitz the following fall.

In May, Huysman Gallery, founded by art historian Henry Hopkins, puts on *War Babies*.

1962

Kienholz shows his first life-size installation of a bordello, *Roxy's*, at Ferus. It is followed in March by the geometric abstract paintings of Larry Bell. In May, Robert Irwin presents line paintings. In July, Andy Warhol's first show features the *Campbell's Soup Cans* paintings.

In September, Hopps presents *New Painting of Common Objects* at the Pasadena Art Museum. The show includes Jim Dine, Robert Dowd, Joe Goode, Philip Hefferton, Roy Lichtenstein, Ed Ruscha, Wayne Thiebaud, and Andy Warhol. Ruscha has the announcement printed at a workshop that he usually makes boxing posters.

Dwan Gallery shows Robert Rauschenberg in March, the same time that Everett Ellin Gallery shows Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely.

Ed Moses shows at the Alan Gallery in March and Billy Al Bengston shows at Martha Jackson Gallery in May, both in New York City.

Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is published. Peter, Paul and Mary make popular the Bob Dylan song *Blowin' in the Wind*.

Death of Marilyn Monroe in Los Angeles.

Ken Price moves to Japan, then to Ventura, 1963–1965.

Pasadena Art Museum gives solo shows to John Altoon and Lynn Foulkes.

Beginning of Monday night art walks on North La Cienega Boulevard.

Walter Hopps appointed curator of the Pasadena Art Museum. Oversees Kurt Schwitters retrospective

June 20–July 17.

Joe Goode's first solo show is with Dilexi Gallery.

The first issue of *Artforum* published by John Irwin in San Francisco.

1963

Dwan Gallery shows Martial Raysse, Franz Kline, who had died in 1962, Larry Rivers, Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle, and Ed Kienholz. Claes Oldenburg shows soft sculpture at Dwan in October and stages *Autobodies*, a Happening involving dozens of cars and a parking lot.

At Ferus: Irving Blum shows New Yorkers Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, and Roy Lichtenstein, as well as L.A.'s John Mason, Ed Moses, Larry Bell, and Ed Ruscha. Ruscha creates his first artist's book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*.

More galleries open on North La Cienega Boulevard: Rolf Nelson, director of Dilexi, leaves to open his own gallery and present a Fluxus event *Blink*. He shows Joe Goode, Llyn Foulkes, and George Herms. Ceeje Gallery shows Charles Garabedian and Edmund Teske. David Stuart Gallery shows Tony Berlant and Dennis Hopper.

Everett Ellin closes gallery and moves to New York to be director of Marlborough Gallery.

Edward G. Robinson's highly regarded collection of Impressionist art is rejected by the trustees of the L.A. County Museum, fearful of his left-leaning politics. It is shown in his Beverly Hills home as a charity event before being auctioned after his divorce.

The L.A. County Museum exhibits *Six Painters and the Object*, organized by Lawrence Alloway—who coined the term "Pop Art"—for the Guggenheim Museum. It features Dine, Johns, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg, Warhol, and James Rosenquist. The L.A.'s version includes *Six More*: Bengtson, Goode, Hefferton, Ruscha, as well as Thiebaud and Mel Ramos from San Francisco.

Marcel Duchamp retrospective is held at the Pasadena Art Museum organized by Hopps. Hopps named director in August. Hires James Demetrian as curator and Harold (Hal) Glicksman as assistant and preparator.

Pasadena Art Museum shows paintings of John McLaughlin.

The Cinerama Dome Theater, designed by Welton Becket, features a wraparound screen inside a geodesic dome on Sunset Boulevard.

Tom Wolfe publishes his essay "Kustom Kar Kulture in Southern California: The Kandy-Kolors and Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby."

Lenny Bruce arrested for obscenity at the Unicorn.

Death of Aldous Huxley in Los Angeles.

Ed Moses travels to Europe, 1963–64.

George Herms directs *Moonstone*, with Dean Stockwell.

Wallace Berman makes first Verifax collages.

Andy Warhol films scenes for *Tarzan and Jane Regained ... Sort Of*.

1964

Kienholz joins the Dwan Gallery. Dwan also shows James Rosenquist and Lucas Samaras.

Ferus shows *Studs*, with Moses, Irwin, Price, and Bengtson, a show that underscores the macho

reputations of these artists.

An exhibition of Post-Painterly Abstraction with a catalog written by critic Clement Greenberg opens at the L.A. County Museum of Art in April. Irwin refuses to participate.

David Hockney visits Los Angeles. Paints first swimming pool paintings using acrylics. Meets Christopher Isherwood, Don Bachardy, and Nicholas Wilder.

Founding of Watts Towers Art Center by Noah Purifoy and Sue Welsh.

Douglas Wheeler makes first light paintings.

Frank Gehry builds the Danziger house and studio in Hollywood.

The Beatles' first concert at the Hollywood Bowl.

Roger McGuinn forms the Byrds.

Opening of the Whisky a Go Go on the Sunset Strip.

Death of Rico Lebrun in Los Angeles.

Dorothy Chandler uses her social and political clout as wife of *L.A. Times* publisher to develop downtown performing arts complex the Music Center.

L.A. is second most populous city in the nation. Rapid Transit District is established with little result.

1965

The L.A. County Museum of Art opens in April in a modern building designed by William Pereira on Wilshire Boulevard. One of its first shows is New York School: The First Generation—Paintings of the 1940s and 1950s, organized by LACMA's curator of modern art, Maurice Tuchman.

Nicholas Wilder Gallery opens on North La Cienega Boulevard, giving Bruce Nauman his first solo show. Shows Joe Goode's staircases leading to blank walls. Hockney lives with Wilder as roommate and paints his portrait in the swimming pool.

The Pasadena Art Museum shows Jasper Johns retrospective.

The Dwan Gallery shows Rauschenberg and Mark di Suvero. Dwan has become such a force in the city that UCLA shows the Virginia Dwan Collection in September.

Dwan opens gallery in New York, where Ed Kienholz presents *The Beanery*.

Ferus shows Richard Pettibone's miniature copies of paintings and sculptures as seen in the homes of L.A. collectors L. M. Asher, Donald Factor, Dennis Hopper, Ed Janss, Robert Rowan, and Frederick Weisman.

Artforum magazine relocates from San Francisco into offices above Ferus Gallery.

Hopps is curator of the American Pavilion of the 8th São Paulo Biennale, September 4 to November 28, and features Bell, Bengston, Irwin, Donald Judd, Barnett Newman, Frank Stella, and Larry Poons. Ruscha is included in the Guggenheim's exhibition *Word/Image*.

Rolf Nelson Gallery gives first solo show to Judy Gerowitz (Chicago).

Sam Yorty is reelected L.A. mayor; race riots in Watts result in 35 dead, 4,000 arrested, and \$4 million in property damage.

Irving Petlin organizes Artist Protest Committee.

Mark di Suvero designs the Artists Peace Tower built by volunteers on the corner of La Cienega and Sunset Boulevards. Vija Celmins's paintings of fighter jet planes shown at David Stuart Gallery.

Larry Bell moves to New York for a year, where the Pace Gallery shows his glass cubes.

1966

A retrospective of Ed Kienholz opens to great controversy at the L.A. County Museum of Art, with the board of supervisors calling the show “revolting and pornographic,” urging its removal. Robert Irwin and Ken Price are given shows at LACMA with a catalog by Lucy Lippard and Phil Leider. The museum mounts a retrospective of Surrealist Man Ray. The influential movement of Abstract Expressionist ceramics, including Bengston, Mason, Price, and Voulkos, is surveyed at the UC Irvine art gallery in October, while John Mason is given a solo show at LACMA in November. Warhol’s *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, with the Velvet Underground, play to unenthusiastic audiences in L.A.

The Doors are banned from the Whisky a Go Go for using the word “fuck” on stage.

Neil Young moves to Los Angeles and helps form Buffalo Springfield.

Ken Kesey and Ken Babbs organize the Watts Acid Test for 600 participants.

LSD declared illegal substance.

John Chamberlain, visiting Malibu, is inspired by squeezing a sponge in the bathtub to produce sculptures of foam rubber bound with a cord that are shown at Dwan Gallery.

Ferus Gallery closes with Warhol’s *Silver Clouds* and *Cow Wallpaper*.

Hopps is asked to resign from Pasadena Art Museum and moves to Washington, D.C. James Demetrian becomes director of PAM. Hopps returns briefly in 1967 to oversee installation of his Joseph Cornell retrospective.

Shirley Hopps divorces Walter and marries Irving Blum.

Rolf Nelson shows the sculpture of Judy Gerowitz and starts calling her Judy Chicago, the name of her native city. She adopts the new name.

In New York, the Primary Structures show of minimalist sculpture at the Jewish Museum includes Bell and Chicago. In London, Robert Fraser Gallery shows Bell, Berman, Kauffman, Rusch, Conner, and Hopper.

1967

Ferus/Pace Gallery shows Craig Kauffman with Roy Lichtenstein, and Donald Judd.

LACMA shows *American Sculpture of the '60s* with 165 works by 80 artists organized by Maurice Tuchman.

An ephemeral environment called *Dry Ice* is created in Century City by Judy Chicago, Lloyd Hamroff, and Eric Orr.

The Pasadena Art Museum, with John Coplans curating, shows Mason Williams’s *Bus*, Allan Kaprow’s *Happening* of stacked ice blocks, *Fluids*, and James Turrell’s installation of projected light.

The newly formed print workshop Gemini G.E.L. invites Robert Rauschenberg to produce *Booster*, the largest print made up to that time.

1968

Pasadena Art Museum shows light installations by Robert Irwin and Doug Wheeler.

LACMA shows Wallace Berman retrospective.

Molly Barnes Gallery gives John Baldessari his first solo show in L.A.

Blum, who severed business relations with Pace, reopens as the Irving Blum Gallery and shows Ruscha's painting the *Los Angeles County Museum on Fire*.

LACMA organizes Late Fifties at Ferus. LACMA also mounts first retrospective of Billy Al Bengston. Dwan closes L.A. gallery and moves to New York. Douglas Christmas opens Ace in her former gallery space.

The L.A. artists are seen in many group shows, including The West Coast Now, with 62 artists at the Portland Art Museum; Los Angeles 6 at the Vancouver Art Gallery; and Documenta 4 in Kassel, Germany, including Bell, Davis, Hockney, Irwin, Kienholz, and Nauman.

Andy Warhol shot by Valerie Solanas.

Robert F. Kennedy assassinated at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles after winning the California Democratic Primary. Jordanian Sirhan Sirhan arrested and later convicted of the crime. Riots and police brutality mark the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where Hubert Humphrey wins nomination. Richard Nixon, promising to end the Vietnam War, elected 37th president by narrowest margin since 1912.

Death of Marcel Duchamp in New York.

1969

Perceptual and Conceptual art addressed in The Appearing/Disappearing Object with John Baldessari, Michael Asher, Allen Ruppersberg, Barry LeVa, and Ron Cooper at the Newport Harbor Art Museum.

Judy Chicago is featured at the Pasadena Art Museum. Lloyd Hamrol shown at Pomona College Art Gallery.

West Coast 1945–1969 organized by John Coplans for the Pasadena Art Museum.

Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* released.

John Altoon dies of a heart attack.

Sharon Tate and others murdered by gang led by Charles Manson.

Introduction

Lorser Feitelson moved to Los Angeles in 1927, after living in Paris and New York. “Here I found I couldn’t sell my work,” he told *Artforum* in 1962. “I had no audience, therefore I painted for my own satisfaction and what a wonderful thing that was!” By that time, the painter of geometric abstraction was an elder statesman whose art lectures were broadcast on television in Los Angeles. Many young artists had come to the same conclusion: When you’ve got nothing, you’ve got nothing to lose.

In 1960, Los Angeles had no modern art museum and few galleries, which was exactly what renegade artists liked about it: Ed Ruscha, David Hockney, Robert Irwin, Ed Kienholz, Larry Bell, John Goode, Bruce Nauman, Craig Kauffman, Judy Chicago, Vija Celmins, and John Baldessari among them. Freedom from an established way of seeing, making, and marketing art fueled their creativity, which, in turn, changed the city. Today, Los Angeles has four museums dedicated to contemporary art, hundreds of galleries, and thousands of artists. This book tells the saga of how the scene came into being—how a prevailing permissiveness in Los Angeles in the 1960s brought about countless innovations: Andy Warhol’s first show, Marcel Duchamp’s first retrospective, Frank Gehry’s unique architecture, Rudi Gernreich’s topless bathing suit, Dennis Hopper’s *Easy Rider*, the Beach Boys, the Byrds, and the Doors. In the 1960s, Los Angeles was the epicenter of cool.

This decade was so dense with activity, much of it overlapping if not actually connected, that a strict chronology proved impossible. The book is organized according to groups of people who knew one another as well as key events. I’ve included a timeline for clarification.

Since this book is not encyclopedic, I apologize in advance to all of those who feel they should have been included or whose work deserved more attention. I agree with you. So many artists, so little time! Despite that possible failing, please accept this as a love letter to Los Angeles, still a place of perpetual possibility and infinite invention.

CHAPTER ONE

1963: Andy and Marcel

The seven-foot Elvis in the Ferus Gallery window was startling, even by Los Angeles standards. In the gallery's back room, paintings of Elizabeth Taylor, with her outsized red lips and slashes of bright blue eye shadow, greeted visitors. Andy Warhol was fixated on celebrities and it wouldn't be long before he would become one himself.

A feeling of excitement charged the balmy evening air outside, and North La Cienega Boulevard traffic slowed as drivers gawked at the scene. Inside, stylishly coifed women in sleeveless dresses mingled with Los Angeles artists, awkward young men outfitted in thrift-store splendor. Warhol entered the filled-to-capacity gallery wearing a carnation in the lapel of his Brooks Brothers blazer.

In 1963 Los Angeles became a mecca for those who rejected the old and embraced the new in art, film, fashion, and music. For many artists, the city's tenuous attachment to history and tradition translated as openness to fresh ideas. Warhol's show contributed to the dawning realization that Los Angeles itself could be the next big thing.

Warhol was nervous as his exhibition opened on the evening of September 30. He had had just two previous exhibitions, the first held the previous summer at Ferus. Though Warhol today is considered the quintessential New York artist, he received his first break in Los Angeles when the suave—some would say fawning—Irving Blum and the perspicacious but flighty Walter Hopps took a chance on the young artist. Warhol's paintings of Campbell's soup cans, thirty-two to be exact, each painstakingly lettered with the appropriate flavor, were arranged on a shelf that girdled the walls, turning the gallery into a grocery store of sorts. Hopps's wife, Shirley, recalled, "It was one of those times when we knew we were onto something."¹

Not everyone agreed. The show was ridiculed in a *Los Angeles Times* cartoon of two barefoot beatniks in the "Farout Art Gallery" looking at the paintings of soup cans and musing, "Frankly, the cream of asparagus does nothing for me, but the terrifying intensity of the chicken noodle gives me a real Zen feeling." Nearby, David Stuart mocked Ferus by arranging a pyramid of Campbell's soup cans in the window of his gallery with a sign: "Get the real thing for only 29 cents a can."²

Blum convinced some collectors to purchase Warhol's soup-can paintings for \$100 apiece. After a chat with art critic John Coplans, one of the first to recognize the importance of serial imagery, Blum agreed that Warhol's everyday Pop art signaled the end of the individual masterpiece; he was

determined that the pictures remain together as a set. He persuaded collectors to return the half-dozen soup-can paintings that he had managed to sell. Then he asked Warhol if he could buy all of them on a layaway plan: \$1,000 for the entire set to be paid over the next year.³

Warhol didn't need the money. For years, he had been one of the most successful illustrators in New York City, known for his shoe drawings for I. Miller, easily making around \$50,000 a year. But this was different. This was art. Warhol was sufficiently pleased to agree to the deal and sign up for another show with Ferus. He also silk-screened four portraits of the energetic entrepreneurial owner.

What a difference a year could make in the 1960s, a decade of seismic shifts. In August 1966 Warhol, working with studio assistant Gerard Malanga, abandoned the paintbrush for the silk screen. His first silk-screened canvas was turquoise and covered by rows of Troy Donahue head shots, each face of the Hollywood heartthrob framed in a yearbook-style oval. Four months later, due to an unexpected gap in her schedule, Eleanor Ward gave Warhol his first New York show at the Stable Gallery, where Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly had had their first shows. It sold out.

Pop was gaining momentum as a movement of sorts by the time Warhol, to save on shipping, sent a roll of silvered canvas to Ferus with instructions to cut out as many images of Elvis as needed. Shirley Hopps remembered that Warhol sent no directions so she, Blum, and the gallery artists spent an evening cutting them into twos or threes in a rather haphazard manner, not unlike the assembly line technique at Warhol's East Forty-seventh Street studio, the Factory, in New York.

To get to the opening, Warhol and Malanga, along with Taylor Mead and Wynn Chamberlain, drove across country for three days in a station wagon with a mattress in the back and the radio blaring songs by Leslie Gore, the Ronettes, and Bobby Vinton. Everything along the highway looked like Pop art to them. "We were seeing the future and we knew it for sure," Warhol observed.⁴

They never suspected that Los Angeles could be booked. Because of the World Series, most hotels were full so Warhol called actors Dennis Hopper and his wife Brooke Hayward. She, in turn, called her father in New York, producer Leland Hayward, and convinced him to give them his suite at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Los Angeles started to look promising.

Warhol had met Hopper in New York through Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Henry Geldzahler. Warhol once said, "Henry gave me all of my ideas" and made a film consisting only of Geldzahler smoking a cigar for ninety minutes. Impressed by this duo, Hopper immediately bought one of Warhol's double silk screens of the *Mona Lisa* and invited him to come with Geldzahler to the soundstage to watch his guest-star performance on the TV show *The Defenders*. Not long after, Hopper flew to New York and went with Hopps and Blum to the studio of Roy Lichtenstein, where he immediately bought the artist's comic book-style sunset painting for \$750. "Everybody was talking about the return to reality," Hopper recalled. "This is our reality—the comic books and soup can man."⁵

Lean and edgy in appearance, Hopper was drawn to advanced art from the day he saw his first Jackson Pollock painting at the home of actor Vincent Price, who had used his profits from scary movies to amass an impressive collection. "When I saw that, I got it immediately," Hopper said.⁶ His instincts would prove impeccable. A former poor boy from Dodge City, Kansas, Hopper was the only collector to wind up with one of Warhol's soup-can paintings because, in an effort to save \$25, he managed to buy one for \$75 from the Westwood gallery owned by Virginia Dwan.

The daughter of Margaret Sullavan, Brooke Hayward was a classic beauty. As Hollywood royalty, she should have been out of Hopper's league. Hayward had grown up in Greenwich, Connecticut, with Henry Fonda's children and had even been kicked out of Girl Scouts with her friend Jane. But Dennis Hopper was more than just another actor. He was wildly creative, and his charisma was undeniable in movies such as *Giant*. Together, the Hoppers were considered glittering examples of the new Hollywood, perfect hosts for a party for Warhol and friends. The very night of the artist's arrival, they invited the Ferus contingent and other young actors to their West Hollywood home at 1712 North Crescent Heights, where they had moved after losing their mansion in the 1961 fires that destroyed their Bel Air neighborhood. Their Mediterranean-style home was bohemian and furnished with circular posters, a Mexican clown sculpture, and Hopper's own collages. The *Mona Lisa* silk screen hung next to the Lichtenstein sunset. Warhol met Hopper's colleagues Robert Dean Stockwell, Russ Tamblyn, and Sal Mineo, who was Hopper's costar in *Rebel Without a Cause*, as well as actors Suzanne Pleshette, Peter Fonda, who looked like a "preppy mathematician," and Troy Donahue. Joints were passed and people danced. Artist Craig Kauffman was a little shocked by the Warhol crowd. "They were all giggling and pouring sugar on the backs of each other's hands. I thought this was a little far out."⁷ Whether or not this was really sugar, Kauffman never discovered.

"This party was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to me," Warhol said.⁸ He only regretted that he had left his Bolex movie camera in his hotel room. Warhol embraced everything about Los Angeles that tended to irritate the intellectual, the cultured, or the well-bred. "Vacant, vacuous Hollywood was everything I ever wanted to mold my life into. Plastic. White-on-white. I wanted to live my life at the level of the script of *The Carpetbaggers*."⁹

The opening on September 30, 1963, was less star-studded than his party, but Warhol was philosophical. "Anyway, movies were pure fun, art was work."¹⁰ Still, he was amazed by the impact of all the Elvises in the front room and the Liz Taylors in the back, as he'd never seen them all together. He made a four-minute movie of his installation. Los Angeles rising art stars attended the opening, some of whom were involved in their own versions of Pop: Ed Ruscha, Joe Goode, and Billy Al Bengston, as well as those developing their own versions of what, in a few years, would be termed "Minimalism": Larry Bell, Craig Kauffman, and Robert Irwin.

The short, slight Warhol had a congenital skin condition that he covered with pale makeup. He wore an outlandish silvery white toupee atop his own mousy brown hair, which he had been losing since 1953. His pasty face and skinny frame contrasted dramatically with the virile physiques of the L.A. artists in their twenties, all of them golden and muscular from surfing, swimming, or simply driving around in convertibles. He was slightly awed by their backslapping, cajoling, and sarcastic humor and though he was quite obviously gay, he felt completely at ease in their macho company, an artist among artists. They embraced his art as though it were both welcome and inevitable. Ruscha immediately felt "a great kinship.... It was like a logical departure from the kind of painting that was happening at that time."¹¹ Warhol, in turn, supported their totally synthetic aesthetic. "The artificial fascinates me, the bright and shiny."¹²

Sales were brisk. In just one year, the general populace on both coasts seemed to have embraced Pop art. A columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* called for "Pop decorating" by suspending colorful Life Savers on strings in doorways or using painted egg cartons as wall reliefs. On the other hand, *L*

Angeles Times art critic Henry Seldis called it “non-art” and declared that “questions of aesthetic quality have been declared irrelevant by pop art impresarios.” Warhol found this irritating. Citing the year’s blockbuster film *Cleopatra*, he retorted, “I always have to laugh, though, when I think of how Hollywood called Pop art a put-on! *Hollywood* ?? I mean, when you look at the kind of movies they were making then—those were supposed to be *real* ???”¹³

Warhol longed for acceptance by anyone associated with the film industry, and Hollywood inspired him to make movies of his own. He had previously filmed friends in the act of kissing, but during his time in Los Angeles, he and his entourage started filming their first movie with a plot, of sorts, in the bathroom of their suite at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Taylor Mead played Tarzan, and Naomí Levine, a friend visiting from New York, played Jane. Warhol continued to film at the home of Beat assemblage artist Wallace Berman, who acted in it along with his young son Tosh, artists Claes and Patty Oldenburg, and Hopper. Like some sort of avant-garde progressive dinner, the filmmaking continued at Watts Towers and then at the home of actor-producer John Houseman with actor-writer Jack Larson, who had played Jimmy Olsen on television’s *Adventures of Superman*. Levine stripped off her clothes and jumped into their pool while Mead tried to climb a tree. The movie, with its opening shot of the freeway exit ramp for the suburb of Tarzana, was released the following year as *Tarzan and Jane, Regained ... Sort Of*. “The Hollywood we were driving to that fall of ’63 was in limbo,” recalled Warhol. “The Old Hollywood was finished and the new Hollywood hadn’t started yet.”¹⁴

* * *

As if movie stars and warm weather were not balm enough, Warhol also met Marcel Duchamp, the Dada artist whose work provided the art historical validation for Pop. On October 7, 1963, the gala opening for a retrospective of Duchamp was held at the Pasadena Art Museum (PAM), a Chinese-style mansion with an ornate arched doorway and dragons poised on its green tile roof. The absurdity of the venue appealed to Duchamp, the man who was famous for painting a mustache on a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* and giving it a French title, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, phonetically translated as “She has a hot ass.”

Duchamp is the most influential of the artists associated with the Dada movement, which arose throughout Europe as an acerbic response to World War I political chicanery. He claimed that anything could be art if an artist said so. After a decade of shocking the bourgeoisie with such claims, in 1921 he withdrew from the art world to devote himself to the game of chess. This contrary action only accelerated widespread interest in his art and ideas in the 1960s as young artists everywhere began questioning the dominance of Abstract Expressionist painting in galleries and art magazines.

It was not simple perversity that led Duchamp to agree to his first-ever retrospective in the conservative province of Pasadena, a prosperous city east of Los Angeles with lovely 1920s buildings and tree-lined boulevards. It was the perseverance of Walter Hopps, cofounder of Ferus, who had become the museum’s curator. Hopps had been introduced to modern art by Walter and Louis Arensberg, Duchamp’s major patrons.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, the Arensbergs had amassed one of the world’s largest single collections of art by Duchamp and used him as the conduit for buying work by Constantin Brancusi, Man Ray, Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and other modern

artists. For health and financial reasons, they had moved from New York City to Los Angeles in 1921. They maintained their relationship with Duchamp by post, regularly buying work by him and his peers and hanging it from floor to ceiling on the walls of their Italianate Hillside Avenue home. At the outset of World War II, they aided Duchamp's immigration to the United States from his native France. Duchamp visited his patrons in 1936, 1949, and 1950 and described Southern California "as a white spot in a gloomy world."¹⁵

This feeling was not due to a welcoming atmosphere for his type of art. When dealer Julien Levy rented a gallery on Sunset Boulevard in 1941 to exhibit Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, along with pieces by Salvador Dalí and others, the actor John Barrymore got so drunk at the opening, he unzipped his pants and unceremoniously urinated on a work by Surrealist Max Ernst.

When Hopps had visited the Arensbergs' home as a teenager on a high school field trip in 1949, he had experienced a *coup de foudre*. He asked so many questions, the Arensbergs invited him to come back, which he did often, sitting in their library, reading books about modern art, and asking yet more questions. Walter Arensberg, who dedicated much of his time trying to prove that Francis Bacon wrote works attributed to William Shakespeare, recognized the tall, gawky teenager's budding eccentricity.

That connection secured the retrospective. Hopps would write later, "The fact that I grew up with their collection, and considered it to be my basic art education, seems to have something to do with this coup."¹⁶

In 1962, Hopps, then thirty, flew to New York to meet the septuagenarian Duchamp at the apartment of William Copley, the wealthy adopted son of the owner of Copley Press in San Diego who was an arts patron and Surrealist painter familiar with Hopps's role at Ferus. Duchamp was astonished by Hopps's familiarity with his work and agreed to the show without restrictions.

Duchamp doubtless enjoyed staging his retrospective far from Manhattan, the center of the art world. Half a century had passed since his Cubist painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* had been the scandal of the 1913 Armory Show, which introduced European modern art to New York. By 1963, the once scandalous Cubists and Dadaists were categorized as movements in art history. Duchamp told MoMA curator William Seitz: "My 'Nude' [Descending a Staircase] is dead, completely dead."¹⁷

Though Duchamp believed the weight of art history oppressed cultural controversy, he resurrected his outlaw reputation in Pasadena. For the exhibition poster, Duchamp recycled a 1923 placard stating "Wanted/\$2000 Reward" and inserted photographs of himself along with a long list of possible aliases. In his own scratchy handwriting, he penned the name of the museum and the show's title: "Portrait of Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy." That pun on the French observation of life and love, "Eros c'est la vie," was the pseudonym that Duchamp had adopted for a series of costumed photographs of himself taken by Man Ray.

A week before the opening, Duchamp and his wife Alexina, known as "Teeny," who was married previously to Henri Matisse's son, the art dealer Pierre Matisse, stayed at Pasadena's Hotel Green. Every morning, Duchamp would stride through the ornate Moorish lobby and amble five blocks east, inhaling air scented with the blossoms of nearby orange groves, until he reached the Pasadena Art Museum, where he would spend the first hour of his day speaking in French to the gardener, who recited verse by Surrealist poet Paul Éluard.

The Duchamps had flown from New York to Los Angeles on the same plane as the dashing dark-haired Copley and the flamboyant young British Pop artist Richard Hamilton, who described himself as the only Duchamp scholar who had never seen an actual Duchamp. For Hamilton, like many of the young artists embracing Pop art, Duchamp was an ideal.

Duchamp's art and life exemplified rebellion against the establishment though, at seventy-six, he stood erect and slender, with immaculate clothes and manners and the angular features and sleek hair of a matinee idol. He had lived in New York since World War II but still epitomized French reserve.

Hopps, who was never very practical about money, spent double the exhibition budget of \$12,000. Instead of creating a new catalog, Hopps tore out the relevant sections of Robert Lebel's authoritative new book on Duchamp, added his own handwritten marginalia, mimeographed the pages, and stapled them together.

The Arensbergs had given their collection to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1954 after decades of futile and frustrating negotiations with first the L.A. County Museum of History, Science and Art and then with UCLA. At Duchamp's urging, many of the larger pieces were shipped back to Los Angeles while numerous ready-mades were re-created for the show. Most of the young generation of Los Angeles artists and collectors had never seen any of the work before.

The installation was not without its challenges. Since many of the gallery walls were covered with brown burlap, Hopps and his preparator Hal Glicksman designed a series of zigzag panels covered in the same color used on Duchamp's *Green Box*. They stood them in the center of the galleries to support Duchamp's 1912 Cubist paintings. Other galleries contained his optical experiments and his ready-mades. These were everyday objects that the artist had transformed into his own sculpture simply by renaming and reorienting them, such as the upturned urinal titled *Fountain* that had caused a scandal when shown in 1917 under his pseudonym R. Mutt. Duchamp had signed a bottle rack and given it to Robert Rauschenberg, who loaned it to the show. Another gallery was dedicated to chess with a regulation set on display as well as the pocket-sized boards that the artist had designed for his own use. The old Chinese mansion contained 114 pieces that established Duchamp as the unwitting pioneer of Pop art.



Andy Warhol, Billy Al Bengston, and Dennis Hopper at the 1963 Duchamp retrospective at the Pasadena Art Museum
Photograph by Julian Wasser, © Julian Wasser, courtesy of Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica

For the second time in a week, Los Angeles was the place to be for denizens of the modern a

world. Dealers, collectors, and artists arrived from New York and Europe. The dinner held before the opening was hosted by patrician art collector and museum board president Robert Rowan and his wife Carolyn and attended by trustees and old-guard arts patrons. However, it was the party after the opening that was remembered by anyone who scored a coveted invitation.

That landmark fete was held in the ballrooms of the nineteenth-century Hotel Green. The black-tie dress code meant another trip to the thrift store for artists Larry Bell and Billy Al Bengston, both of whom had more dash than cash. Craig Kauffman, son of L.A. County Superior Court judge Kurt Kauffman, didn't have to scavenge. Ed Ruscha imported an attractive girlfriend from his hometown of Oklahoma City, and the couple looked like they were ready for their Hollywood close-up. Julia Wasser, a contract photographer for *Time* magazine, snapped Bengston and Hopper clowning with Warhol in front of Duchamp's 1914 *Network of Stoppages*.

Warhol was in black tie but Taylor Mead was denied entrance for wearing Wynn Chamberlain's sweater, which was so large it came down to his knees. Hopps sorted it out but then Wasser pushed past them to get a photograph of Duchamp, which prompted Mead to start screaming, "How dare you! How dare you!" Warhol dryly observed, "The idea that anybody had the right to be anywhere and do anything, no matter who they were and how they were dressed, was a big thing in the sixties."¹⁸

When Duchamp realized that Mead was an underground actor and poet, he cordially invited him to his table. But Mead soon took off dancing with Patty Oldenburg. She and Claes Oldenburg were living in Los Angeles for a year while creating performances and sewing the giant soft sculptures of everyday objects that Claes showed at the Dwan Gallery. Warhol was left to spend time talking to Duchamp and drinking too much champagne, which meant pulling over to the side of the road on several occasions on the drive home. "In California, in the cool night air, you even felt healthy when you puked—it was so different from New York."¹⁹

Hundreds of artists and hipsters and hangers-on overindulged in pink champagne into the late hours. Duchamp's old running mate Man Ray had moved from Los Angeles back to Paris, but a few other old friends came to the affair, including Beatrice Wood, a seventy-year-old ceramist whose purported love affair with Duchamp and writer Henri-Pierre Roché was the basis for the 1962 film *Jules et Jim*. She exhausted three much younger partners by dancing all night long at the party, claiming that chocolate and young men were the secrets to her longevity. (The day before, she had hosted a luncheon for Duchamp at her home in Ojai, wearing Indian robes and serving food on her own golden lusterware.)

Hopper, predisposed to being the life of the party, recalled, "I stole the sign that said 'Hotel Green' with a finger pointing. When I saw it, I recognized that it's the same shaped finger as from Duchamp's painting *Tu M'*. I got some wire cutters and went to get it. He signed the finger with 'Marcel Duchamp, Pasadena, 1963.' So Hopper and Hopps made the last ready-made!"²⁰ (The "Signed Sign" sold for \$362,500 at a Christie's auction on November 11, 2010.)

Getting Duchamp's signature quickly caught on. Joe Goode pulled the pink cloth from one of the dining tables and asked Duchamp to sign it. He happily obliged. Hopper recalled, "We all signed it. Andy signed it as 'Andy Pie'; Jasper Johns, Ed Ruscha, Larry Bell, Kenny Price."²¹ Goode, who was subletting an apartment from Hopps, later managed to convince him to accept the souvenir in exchange for two months of back rent.

In an interview with *Los Angeles Times* art critic Henry Seldes, Duchamp said he wanted to avoid being “the victim of the integration of the artist into society.” He saw the direction of contemporary art as “very dangerous,” because it had become fashionable, while he believed that “great art can only come out of conditions of resistance.”²²

Such resistance in the realm of contemporary art was about to disappear altogether, and even Duchamp dropped his Gallic reserve to admit, “Life begins at 70. This show is fun. It gives me a wonderful feeling.”²³

That wonderful feeling was borne out in the following few days when he and Teeny were transported to Las Vegas by Copley, who had operated a gallery in Los Angeles in 1947 to show Surrealist and Dadaists such as Max Ernst, Man Ray, and Joseph Cornell, whose boxes were priced then at seventy-five dollars. Sales were so scarce, the gallery survived only six months.

The small plane had a curved seating area where collectors Betty Asher and Betty and Monte Factor took turns with Hamilton and Hopps in sitting next to Duchamp. After checking in at the Desert Inn, they dined at the Stardust Lounge, where Marcel and Teeny were treated to long-legged showgirls performing a risqué version of the *Folies Bergère*. A photograph of the event reveals everyone smiling broadly, apart from the Duchamps, who looked stunned. The group then drove downtown to see towering neon signs and glowing casinos, evidence of American extravagance beyond even their expectations.

When the others started gambling, Duchamp returned to his role of archvoyeur. Though he was fascinated by games and had devised a system of gambling in the 1920s that allowed him to breed even during his stay at Monte Carlo, he refused to play. When Hopps pleaded with him to demonstrate the system, Duchamp slyly responded, “Wouldn’t you rather win?”²⁴



At the Stardust Lounge, Las Vegas, 1963: Teeny Duchamp, Richard Hamilton, Betty Factor, William Copley, Monte Factor, Walter Hopps, Betty Asher, and Marcel Duchamp

Duchamp saved his gamesmanship for chess. After they returned to Pasadena, he visited PAM on October 18, 1963, to play on the board set up in his own exhibition. The event was to prove the truth of Man Ray’s observation that “there was more Surrealism rampant in Hollywood than all the Surrealists could invent in a lifetime.”²⁵

Eve Babitz, a curvaceous nineteen-year-old, was Walter Hopps’s girlfriend, a fact that he was trying to keep from the notice of his wife Shirley. He had refused to invite Babitz to the museum opening or the grand party. When Babitz got a call from photographer Julian Wasser inviting her to play chess with Duchamp she leaped at the opportunity for revenge. “I was going to be pissed off f

the rest of my life or pay them back,” she said.²⁶

Duchamp was dressed for the chess match in a dark suit and a straw hat that he had acquired in Las Vegas. At nine in the morning, the museum was not yet open to the public, and Duchamp seemed unruffled when Wasser set up his equipment and told Babitz to remove her blue artist’s smock. Nearby stood two large sheets of glass containing Duchamp’s play on sexual frustration, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. Babitz had just started taking birth control pills so her 36 D breasts were larger than usual. “I thought they should be photographed really ... for immortality,” she said later.²⁷ Duchamp seemed more impressed by the fact that Babitz was the goddaughter of Igor Stravinsky, whose *Firebird Suite* he and Beatrice Wood had seen in Paris in 1910.

Babitz’s lackluster chess didn’t discourage Wasser from shooting roll after roll of film. Babitz, who later became a successful writer, knew the photographs would be a triumph, something that Hopps would look at for years. “I always wanted him to remember me that way,” she said.²⁸

Babitz was hungover and perspiring under the hot lights, but she felt it was all worthwhile when her unsuspecting lover walked in. The nude Babitz coolly greeted him, “Hello, Walter.” He turned ashen and dashed into his office. Raised voices could be heard. Babitz recalled, “It made him return my phone calls, which is what I wanted out of life.”²⁹ (Their affair resumed the following week when he flew with her to San Francisco to see the debut of *The Beard*, Beat poet Michael McClure’s play about Jean Harlow and Billy the Kid.)

While Wasser took dozens of photographs, the one that became a celebrated poster depicts Babitz seated on a wooden chair and leaning her elbows on the table so that her breasts dangle and her hair hides her face; Duchamp, with a neutral expression, holds a cigar and focuses on the board. For Duchamp, it was completely unplanned and therefore a perfect coda to his retrospective.

* * *

The back-to-back receptions in honor of Warhol and Duchamp invigorated the feisty Los Angeles art scene. Warhol said, “For a while there in the early sixties, it looked like a real solid art scene was developing in California. Even Henry Geldzahler felt he had to make a trip out once a year to check on what was happening.”³⁰ A few months later, one of the city’s few progressive critics, Jules Langsner, wrote in *Art in America*, “In the space of a half-dozen years, the state of the Los Angeles art community has changed from the nuts who diet on nutburgers to a living and vital center of increasing importance.”³¹



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