

Mizota, Sharon. "PST, A to Z: 'She Accepts,' 'It Happened'." *Los Angeles Times*, 6 January 2012.

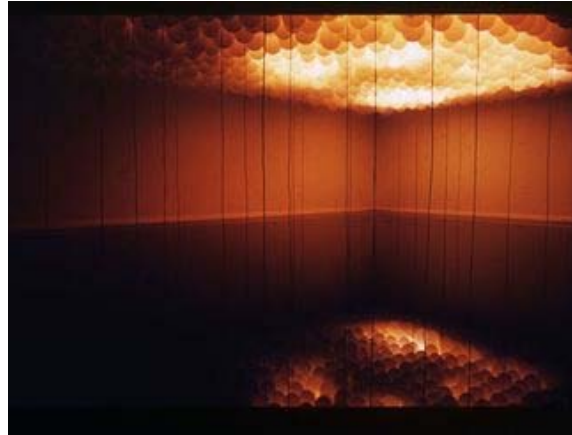
*Pacific Standard Time will explore the origins of the Los Angeles art world through museum exhibitions throughout Southern California over the next six months. Times art reviewer Sharon Mizota has set the goal of seeing all of them. This is her latest report.*



"She Accepts the Proposition: Women Gallerists and the Redefinition of Art in Los Angeles, 1967-1978," and "It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles, 1969-1973, Part 1: Hal Glicksman at Pomona," had more in common than the fact that their unwieldy titles began with complete sentences. Although they took place at opposite ends of the region—at Crossroads School in Santa Monica and Pomona College Museum of Art, respectively—they both documented what art critic Lucy Lippard described in 1973 as "the dematerialization of the art object," or the rise of conceptual, post-Minimal and Light and Space art. They also both focused on gallerists or curators as champions of this sometimes challenging work, and they were both hosted by educational institutions. (Unfortunately, both exhibitions have now closed, although "Part 2: Helene Winer at Pomona" of the 3-part "It Happened at Pomona" is now on view.) But as it happens, on the days I visited, each exhibition was filled with the voices of young people.

This inadvertent soundtrack, however delightful, seemed a bit at odds with the art displayed in "She Accepts." The exhibition included works and documentation by artists such as Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Allen Ruppersberg, and others—mostly men—who were represented in L.A. starting in the late 1960s by some adventurous women: Riko Mizuno, Eugenia Butler, Claire S. Copley, Morgan Thomas, and Constance Lewallen. The gallery at Crossroads School is an arcade-like space, open on one side to a central stairwell through which student voices carry. If anything, the sound revealed how even such "dematerialized" work relied so heavily on the quiet, white space of the traditional gallery. William Leavitt's re-creation of "Wind Sound," from 1970, is a recording of wind that travels via radio waves from a transmitter at one end of the space to a transistor radio at the other. With voices echoing through the gallery, it was nearly imperceptible.

Similarly, when I visited “It Happened at Pomona,” the exhibition was filled with a class from Sycamore Elementary School in Claremont. They thought the installations of Tom Eatherton—a dark, oval room in which the walls glow—and Lloyd Hamrol—a window onto a softly lit pink space whose ceiling is lined with balloons—were “cool,” but were rather unimpressed by photographs of Judy Chicago’s 1970 performance “Snow Atmosphere,” in which she used flares to create a smoky haze in a canyon. They seemed more interested in playing hand-clapping games on a museum bench or making the gallery attendant nervous by bouncing too close to Ron Cooper’s shattered windshields.



Such spatial possibilities—gallery as playground or some other kind of space—are a large part of Michael Asher’s work. His contribution to “It Happened” was to keep the museum open 24 hours a day for the duration of the exhibition (10 weeks). This gesture was a re-staging of a piece that curator Hal Glicksman invited Asher to do in 1970. The original involved keeping the museum open around the clock, but also included architectural changes that literally kept the doors open (or rather, dispensed with them entirely). This time around, the doors were intact, although this didn't stop people from visiting at all hours of the night, according to the gallery attendant. A few were even found napping or eating inside Eatherton’s installation.



Asher is also well known for an intervention at Claire S. Copley Gallery in 1974, in which he not only left the gallery empty, but removed the wall separating the exhibition space from the office. The gesture effectively put Copley’s day-to-day operations on view as art. This piece was documented in “She Accepts” on a reading table with books and articles about Asher’s work. The table’s presence seemed to suggest that much of what these women gallerists achieved might be better understood through reading than by looking at the works they exhibited.

Indeed, “She Accepts” functioned less like a group show than a walk-through scrapbook, with works serving as touchstones for the gallerists’ bios, which appeared on long wall texts in the hallway outside the gallery. This separation between text and art—I wish it had been better integrated—highlighted the difficulty of representing the stories of these women who weren’t quite a movement in the same way that their counterparts at the Woman’s Building were. But they certainly represented a phenomenon, promoting and embracing some of the most adventurous art in Los Angeles, and indeed, in the nation.

As several PST shows have explored, this willingness to champion unconventional new forms reflected not only the women’s status as emerging gallerists, but also ideas that were percolating through the art scene and the broader political movements of the time. Artists were in part attempting to escape the dictates of commerce by refusing to produce objects that could be readily bought and sold.

Of course this posed a problem for young gallerists who still needed to make a buck. How does one sell an Ed Moses piece that Mizuno exhibited in 1970 that involved removing the gallery's ceiling and part of its roof? It's not surprising that most of these businesses were short-lived, lasting no more than a few years. (Mizuno's however was the exception, persisting in various forms from 1967 into the early 1980s.)

Coming to terms with this situation, in 1977, Copley, Lewallen, and Thomas banded together to form the non-profit Foundation for Art Resources (FAR), an organization devoted to presenting unconventional works in public spaces. Early projects included Louise Lawler's "A Movie Will Be Shown Without the Picture" from 1979, which is exactly what its title suggests, and Dan Graham's "Clinic for a Suburban Site" from 1980, which turned the second floor lobby of the Los Angeles Central Library into an exhibition and reading room exploring issues of public space. FAR, whose leadership has changed over the years, is currently "in a less actively experimental phase" according to the wall text, but it has been accepting the proposition—that art can be anything—for over 30 years.



*Photos, from top: William Leavitt, "Wind Sound" 1970. Installation at Eugenia Butler Gallery, 1970.*

*Lloyd Hamrol, "Situational Construction for Pomona College," 1969. Credit: Lloyd Hamrol*

*Judy Chicago, "Snow Atmosphere," 1970. Credit: Courtesy of Judy Chicago*

*Claire S. Copley and artist Ger Van Elk in front of gallery during run of Wegman exhibition. Credit: Gary Krueger (1973). Courtesy of Allen Ruppensberg.*