

THE NEW SEASON

## Installation View of Los Angeles



Kerry James Marshall/Jack Shainman Gallery

THE past year has been a roller-coaster ride for the Los Angeles art scene. First there were thrills galore offered by [“Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980,”](#) a celebration of the city’s postwar art history to which some 60 institutions contributed exhibitions extending from October through March. Then there was Jeffrey Deitch’s bumpy second year as director of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, culminating in the departure of the museum’s much admired chief curator [Paul Schimmel](#) and the resignation of artists like Barbara Kruger and Ed Ruscha from the museum’s board.

You would think the city’s art world might want to take a hiatus this season for rest, recuperation and spiritual self-reflection. But Los Angeles is not about to cede its hard-won position as one of America’s true art capitals, so the shows must go on. And some promising ones are coming up, including, most notably, a Ken Price retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art opening Sept. 16.

Price’s five-decade career as one of the most imaginative sculptors of our time was obscured by the fact that he worked

mainly as a ceramist, an occupation marginalized in high art. Nor did it help that his works were almost always modest in size and made with highly developed traditional skills. And the fact that his sculptures were invariably delightful to look at may also have dimmed his reputation for those who believe contemporary art must be abrasive to be serious. But he was an extraordinarily inventive artist with an exquisitely fine-tuned formal sensibility. “Ken Price Sculpture: A Retrospective” will present 100 of his works, from his eccentric variations on traditional forms like cups and plates to the animated, gorgeously colored blobs from his last two decades. This overdue and, unfortunately, posthumous retrospective — he [died](#) this year — should gratify longtime fans and newcomers alike. The installation has been designed by the architect Frank Gehry, Price’s friend.

At least superficially, Price’s work was the opposite of an earlier trend in avant-garde art that will be examined by “Destroy the Picture: Painting the Void, 1949-1962,” at the Museum of Contemporary Art starting Oct. 6. Including works by Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Robert Rauschenberg and many others, the exhibition will draw a connection between developments in postwar abstract painting and the seemingly destructive approaches to the canvas that many artists around the world practiced during the same time, including slicing, tearing, burning and puncturing. The idea of destruction as both a creative process and a metaphorical protest against worldly violence continues to animate a lot of art today, to the point of cliché. Organized by Mr. Schimmel, this exhibition goes back to a time when destruction still meant something.

“Blues for Smoke,” another show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, opening Oct. 21, will examine a less familiar trend: the influence of the African-American tradition of the blues on art of the past half century. Given that this tradition is primarily musical, it should be interesting to see how the exhibition’s organizer, Bennett Simpson, a curator at the museum, makes a case for “the centrality of a black cultural aesthetic to the narratives of modern and postmodern art,” as the

museum's Web site puts it. The show will include works by about 50 artists dating from the 1960s to the present.

In a related vein, for East Coasters who missed the Pacific Standard Time extravaganza, one of its more attention-getting shows comes to MoMA PS1 in Queens on Oct. 21. Organized by the Hammer Museum, "Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960-1980" presents 140 works by 35 artists, including Melvin Edwards, David Hammons and Betye Saar.

Drawing was of the essence for the Surrealists more than for any other modern-art movement. Artists as various as Salvador Dalí, Jackson Pollock and Louise Bourgeois found it a sharp tool for excavating fantasies percolating in the unconscious. Often overshadowed by collage and assemblage, it gets its due in "Drawing Surrealism" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the show, opening Oct. 21, will present about 250 works by an international roster of nearly 100 artists.

An artist that the Surrealists looked to for inspiration was the French Symbolist Gustave Moreau (1826-98), the painter of lurid biblical and mythological visions. Beginning Sept. 16, "A Strange Magic: Gustave Moreau's Salome" at the Hammer Museum will feature one of Moreau's greatest works, "Salome Dancing Before Herod" (1874-76), in which the New Testament femme fatale erotically beguiles her stepfather before demanding the head of John the Baptist on a plate. About 50 related paintings, drawings and studies borrowed from the [Gustave Moreau Museum](#) in Paris will shed further light on his masterpiece of castration anxiety.