

Los Angeles Times

ENTERTAINMENT



CONTESTED VISIONS

IN THE SPANISH COLONIAL WORLD

LACMA



Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

PST, A to Z: Moments to remember, so far

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I'm now about halfway through my Pacific Standard Time odyssey, in which I plan to see all of the exhibitions at museums and other venues exploring the origins of today's Los Angeles art world, about 60 in all. The official opening was early October – a few venues jumped the gun by a few weeks – and by the end of the year the majority of the PST exhibitions will have opened.

It's an adventure that has been at times overwhelming, but always enlightening. There hasn't been a PST show at which I haven't learned something new or become acquainted with a figure I previously knew little or nothing about. I've tried to share these thoughts with you in "PST, A to Z" posts on the Culture Monster blog, but every now and then there's a remarkable moment or a standout work that for whatever reason, just didn't make the final draft. So in the wide-ranging, eclectic spirit of PST, here are a few memorable episodes, in no particular order:

Architecture critic and writer Esther McCoy: Perhaps I'm biased as a writer, but I keep thinking about this show at the MAK Center, not only for the quality and beauty of McCoy's insights on modern architecture, but to marvel at the sheer range of her interests. In addition to tracts on modern architecture and class struggle, and pulpy whodunits, she wrote a 1953 novella, "The Pepper Tree," about a second-generation Japanese American family interned during World War II.

Monica Mayer's "virgin" drawings: These intensely patterned ink and graphite images at the Museum of Latin American Art depict various invented virgins – "Our Lady of the Opening Eyes," "Our Patriarch Lady," "Our Shy Lady" – as ambivalent icons, glorious, but eerily dark. Created in 1978, they also show us a different side of Mayer, better known for her performance work.

The Eameses body litter: Designed by Charles and Ray Eames in 1943 and intended for use on World War II battlefields, this molded plywood stretcher was never put into production, making the one on view at LACMA a unique object. Curved and canoe-like, it's a startlingly grave opening statement to an extremely upbeat exhibition, but it reminds us of the Eameses' commitment to solving design problems not only in well-appointed homes, but wherever they arose.





E.K. Waller's photos of the members of the Lesbian Art Project: Waller took a pair of group portraits of the five founding members in 1977. In one, they butch it up in men's clothing, their faces tight and oh so serious. In the other, they wear gauzy dresses with feathered hats and fans, laughing gaily. On view together at Otis College of Art and Design, they playfully suggest that no matter where you fall on the gender spectrum, you are always in drag.

The Golden State Mutual Negro Art Collection: Founded in 1925 to provide life insurance for African Americans routinely denied coverage elsewhere, black-owned Golden State Mutual collected African American art from the mid-1960s until 2007, when it had to (sadly) sell most of the collection at auction in an ultimately futile bid to remain solvent. What remains unsold (some 65 works) is on view at the California African American Museum, along with some of the company's marketing materials — adorned with images of the Watts Towers and illustrations by Charles White — that attest to its deep-rooted support of Los Angeles' African American community.

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-- Sharon Mizota

Photo: Details from two photographs of the founding members of the Lesbian Art Project. May Sterling, Sharon Immerfluck, Arlene Raven, Nancy Fried, Terry Wolverton. Credit: E.K. Waller Photography

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