

PIASA

NOVEMBER 9TH 2015

Bloody Red Sun of Fantastic L.A.

Curator René-Julien Praz

**A selection of the emerging
L.A. art scene shown for the
first time in France**

VIEWING

From November 4th to November 9th, 2015

ART TALK

Novembre 3rd 2015

CATALOGUE

Including an exclusive text by Travis Diehl - Writer, essayist, curator and video artist, he edits the artist-run arts journal «Prism of Reality» and his writing appears in many art magazines

PIASA

118 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré
75008 Paris - France

PRESS & COMMUNICATION

Cécile Demtchenko Woringer
T +33 1 53 34 12 95 - M +33 6 22 16 85 96
c.demtchenko@piasa.fr

Press release



PIASA

In November 2015, PIASA asked René-Julien Praz to conceive a sale devoted to emerging artists from the Los Angeles scene. The artists selected – whether established or cutting-edge – reflect a generation, era and culture that have inspired many of their contemporaries in recent years.

The emerging L.A. art scene shown for the first time in France

“Once I’d thought of the title, *Bloody Red Sun of Fantastic L.A.*, nothing could seem more fitting. The sheer wealth of images that these words evoke portrays with surgical precision the pathos of this mythical city, where glamour meets vulgarity and highbrow culture, the mainstream. Only in L.A. could kitsch rub shoulders with the sublime and seduction with repulsion: this city truly is a world of contrasts.

The struggles, clashes, hopes, ambitions and despair of millions of immigrants are an integral part of the city’s DNA. The city is built from their blood and tears as they fought and won their place in this multi-cultural Eldorado, facing lies and duplicity with courage, commitment, intelligence and solidarity, to finally be able to live together, whatever their colour or origin: Mexican, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Iranian... In this great melting pot, the religious - Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, Buddhists and Muslims – live alongside agnostics and atheists on these lands of the American Far West.

Jake Elliot’s 2014 short story, *Bloody Red Sun of Fantastic L.A.*, took its title from the lyrics of his favourite Doors’ song (a band which also started out in Los Angeles) and he explains just how appropriate the title seemed to him and how it went way beyond the face value of the words themselves. “Los Angeles, the City of Angels, where the Sun is the closest star and Hollywood the city of stars. My story takes place in the heart of this world.”

In 2006, the Centre Pompidou in Paris presented a grandiose exhibition: *Los Angeles 1955-1985: The birth of an art capital*, which documented, for near enough the first time in France, the cultural wealth of this city. A city of images: outrageous and elusive, open, generous and above all indefinable, seeing the extent to which this metropolis flirts with the very limits of what is possible.

As Bruno Racine (president of the Centre Pompidou from 2002 to 2005) explained at the time: “It was high time to show the European public the importance and the specificity of a city that had been the birthplace of such a broad scope of art and which had, for so long, lived in the shadow of its rival, New York.”

Artistic creation today in Los Angeles is seen as a model, an alternative scene that retrospectively transforms our perception of American art, by taking it beyond the theoretical and structural frameworks of identified movements. Reminiscent of its urban model, which is noteworthy by its uniqueness, its immensity and multi-cultural dimension, L.A.’s art stands out by its protean nature and a proactive dynamic that means it is in constant renewal.

PIASA

Sensation of excessiveness

From assemblage to Pop Art, or from Minimalism to Conceptual Art, L.A.'s artists express this same sensation of excessiveness, a desire to mix and experiment with hybrid art forms. (Bruno Racine in *Los Angeles 1955-1985: Naissance d'une capitale artistique* published by Editions Centre Pompidou 2006).

You need to understand that the climate, together with the city's geographical, urban, historical, human, social, economic and cultural features come together in a totally unique way. The effect of this concentration leads to this impression of immensity, to these spectacular juxtapositions, making it possible to portray the city itself by analysing its art scene.

And yet these specific characteristics are not enough to explain an art form that has found a continual source of inspiration in its diverse interactions with the New York art scene, with both European culture and that of the cultural origins of its multi-ethnic population, whether from neighbouring Mexico, other regions of North and South America, Africa or Asia. (Catherine Grenier in *Los Angeles 1955-1985: Naissance d'une capitale artistique* published by Editions Centre Pompidou 2006).

More than ever, Los Angeles is focussing on its artistic community; a mutation that began back in the 1980s, in parallel to the development of its museums, a period marked in particular by the opening of MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art) that hosted an exceptional exhibition in 1983. *Paintings and sculptures 1940 - 1980* brought together eight collections, including those of Dominique de Menil, Dr Peter and Irene Ludwig, Guiseppe and Giovanna Panza di Biumo, Charles and Doris Saatchi and the Weisman Family collection.

L.A.'s art draws its creative nourishment from the very complexity of this 'city/world', where underground movements mingle with more mainstream Californian culture and its communal expression, as seen in such makers of dreams as Hollywood and Disneyland.

The creation of a system of galleries and a network of collectors, combined with the increasing influence of the city's art schools (USC, CALARTS, UCLA) have put Los Angeles under the spotlight on the international art scene. "I still remember my first experiences of the L.A. scene, which I first visited in 1980. I was fortunate in that I met some very generous people such as Rosamund Felsen, who used to show the works of Los Angeles' most talented artists, first in her gallery on La Cienega Boulevard, then on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood after it moved. This incredible mentor was my passport to a unique community of artists."

PIASA

Los Angeles: cradle of the greatest contemporary artists

How can we ignore an art scene that gave birth to Chris Burden, Charles Ray, Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Jim Shaw, John Baldessari, Larry Bell, James Turrel, John McCracken, Robert Irwin, Ed Ruscha, Douglas Huebler, Michael Asher, Bruce Nauman, James Welling, Raymond Pettibon, Vija Celmins, Bill Viola, Jeffrey Valance, Billy Al Bengston and more recently Sam Durant, Mark Grotjahn, Tim Hawkinson, Sharon Lockhart, Walead Beshty, Larry Pittman, Mark Bradford, Elliot Hundley, Catherine Opie, Toba Khedoori and Sterling Ruby? An impressive list that just gets longer and longer as more students graduate and young artists arrive in new galleries and experimental art centres (Red Cat, Lax><Art, The Mistake Room; museums such as The Hammer Museum, LACMA, MOCA and in the near future, the Broad Museum; and so many other independent exhibition spaces that are popping up like daisies).

And it is precisely this upcoming generation of artists that I would like you to discover.

Social media – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter – means that today everything happens at breakneck speed. I decided it was time to say ‘stop’ and to provide you with a snapshot which, if it does not cover the whole contemporary L.A. art scene, is however a means to discover its artists and the works of some of them, these artists who are all continuing to preserve the idiosyncrasy, generosity and diversity of which the City of Angels is so fond.”

René-Julien Praz, Curator *Bloody Red Sun of Fantastic L.A.*

PIASA



JOE REIHSEN

I Did What I Had To Do, 2015

Acrylic on birch board

brass frame

60 x 48 in

Courtesy of the artist and Praz Delavallade
gallery, Paris

(non-contractual picture)

PIASA



MATTHEW CARTER

Balloon Dance, 2014

68 x 28 in

Courtesy of the artist and Luis de
Jesus Gallery, Los Angeles
(non-contractual picture)

PIASA



MOLLY LARKEY

24 x 18 in

Courtesy of the artist and Luis de Jesus
Gallery, Los Angeles

(non-contractual picture)

PIASA



BEN WOLF NOAM

April DTLA rush hour, series

78 x 50 in

Courtesy of the artist and Brand New
Gallery, Milano

(non-contractual picture)

PIASA



JOSHUA NATHANSON
Untitled, 2015
Acrylic and oil stick on canvas
72 x 50 in
Courtesy of the artist and Various Small
Fires Los Angeles

PIASA



AMIR NIKRAVAN

Untitled (Site 12), 2015

Acrylic on fabric over aluminium

30 x 30 x 1 in

Courtesy of the artist and Various Small
Fires Los Angeles

PIASA

A Selection by René-Julien Praz



After reading English Literature & History of Art at university, and various stays abroad (Germany, Sweden, U.K., U.S.A.), René-Julien Praz began working for the written press (Le Matin de Paris, Le Monde Magazine) and the radio (RTL and France Culture) in the 1970s, before joining the State broadcasting service public as a journalist and TV producer with the launch of FR3.

In the mid-1980s he moved over to the private sector as Director of Communication & Sponsorship of a large company. In 1995 he became Director of Public Affairs, Communication & Partnerships for a private foundation and, at the same time, co-founded the 'Rue Louise-Weiss Art Project' with a bunch of emerging and promising parisian galleries on the eastern left bank.

He became the first President of the Louise Association for the promotion of contemporary art in Paris, and opened the eponymous gallery Praz Delavallade – devoted to artists from the young Los Angeles scene. As an artistic director and independent curator, he has staged numerous exhibitions combining works by artists from Europe and the City of Angels. He has been present on the Los Angeles scene since 1980, and is a keen observer of, and active participant in, a scene that has made a powerful response to its eternal East Coast rival over the last decade.

PIASA

Contemporary Art Department

Adrien de Rochebouët

- cover: detail of Joe Reihsen's artwork, courtesy of the artist and Praz Delavallade gallery, Paris