

Not a Festival, Not a Biennial: On Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA

A thesis submitted to the faculty
California College of the Arts
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

Master of Arts
In
Curatorial Practice

By:

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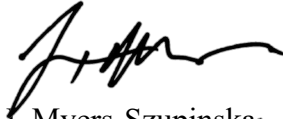
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Not a Festival, Not a Biennial: Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA

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Since its founding in 2002, the Getty's Pacific Standard Time (PST) initiative has created a new funding landscape in Southern California. Organized in five-year cycles, each with a particular theme, this periodic structure contributes to institutional scholarship in the region, while manifesting as a massive, decentered program of research, exhibitions, and performances at scores of institutions across an expansive geography.

This thesis investigates the development of the 2017 edition of PST, subtitled LA/LA, which was devoted to research and exhibition around Chicana, Latin American, and Latinx artists. Funding more than seventy exhibitions at a wide range of Californian cultural institutions, including many that would not otherwise have been able to support exhibitions of this scale and ambition, PST: LA/LA therefore presented a significant opportunity to correct historical exclusions, and to reshape the cultural field for decades to come.

While PST contributes substantially to scholarship in the region, the very ambiguity of its form makes it hard to criticize—even as its public profile and social project heighten the stakes of critical engagement. Drawing upon interviews with key figures at the Getty (Andrew Perchuk and Selene Preciado) as well as curators working at grantee institutions (including Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, Bill Kelley, Jr., Daniela Lieja Quintanar and Joanna Szupinska-Myers), this thesis confirms the enabling effect of PST's support, while arguing that the initiative's episodic nature limits its ability to create lasting change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION

Thank you to my thesis committee: J. Myers-Szupinska, Primary Thesis Advisor; James Voorhies, Chair of the Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice; and Lucía Sanróman, Thesis Mentor. Their guidance has been instrumental to this process. Thank you to J. for their generosity and patience in finding a structure that could serve the scale of the subject matter. Thank you to Jim for reminding me of the importance of objectivity. I owe special thanks to Lucía, who reminded me that above all I should follow the evidence and write an interesting paper.

Thank you to the faculty of the Curatorial Practice Program who have challenged and supported me throughout the last two years, including Christina Linden, Dena Beard, Claudia La Rocco, Elizabeth Thomas, Sarah Dean, and Michele Carlson.

Thank you to Andrew Perchuk, Deputy Director at the Getty Research Institute and Selene Preciado, *Pacific Standard* Time Program Assistant at the Getty Foundation for providing both their own and the institution's perspective on one of the Getty's most ambitious projects to date.

Thank you to the curators who generously agreed to speak with me on and off the record, sharing their honest opinions on the development and execution of exhibitions under *PST*, including Daniela Lieja Quintanar, Bill Kelley, Jr., Joanna Szupinska-Myers, and Cecilia Fajardo-Hill.

Thank you to my colleagues at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Sarah Russin, Daniela Lieja Quintanar, and Andrew Freire, as well as Robert Crouch and Ciara Ennis, co-curators of LACE's *PST LA/LA* exhibition *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature*. Our collective experience producing this project over my four years at LACE was unforgettable, and I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on the larger project in which we played a part.

A special thanks to my parents Robert Ball and Janet Goldstein-Ball, my brother Robbie Ball, my partner Dylan Crary, and my pup Carrott for allowing me to talk endlessly about the interviews, research, and writing that consumed my second year of graduate school. Thank you for your careful listening and for always, at minimum, pretending to be interested.

Thank you to my dear friends and housemates Nicole Fraser-Herron, Wil Crary, Emily Alter, and Matt Danna for reminding me to go outside on the weekends.

Thank you to Naz Cuguoğlu and Orly Vermes for being the most kind and supportive peers I could have imagined. I am lucky to have spent the last two years with you both.

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1—Changing the Landscape: Pacific Standard Time

Clarissa Tossin's *Ch'u Mayaa* (2017) (**Figure 1**) is a performance and video work depicting the artist pressing her body against the famous Hollyhock House in the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and influenced by Mayan architecture, Tossin creates a new history for the structure through her physical relationship to the building. She makes its architectural references to Latin America visible by evoking postures and movements found in ancient Mayan pottery and murals.¹ Her dance claims ownership over the structure and its surrounding hilltop at Barnsdall Park. In a statement on the work, Tossin writes, "through the movement of a female dancer the house is re-signified as belonging to Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican architecture lineage."²

Ch'u Mayaa was originally commissioned for the exhibition *Condemned to Be Modern* at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery—also located at Barnsdall Park, next to the Hollyhock House.³ The work was later presented and eventually acquired by the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. The artwork represents the mission of the Getty's 2017 edition of their Pacific Standard Time (PST) funding initiative, subtitled "LA/LA" which aimed to remedy the lack of scholarship and engagement among California institutions with Latin American, Chicana, and Latina artists. This work unearths a historical relationship between Latin America and Los Angeles through contemporary art and positions a Latina artist for international recognition through research and presentation based in Southern California. *Ch'u Mayaa* could therefore be considered an ideal example of what the PST initiative, at its best, stands to achieve.

¹ Clarissa Tossin, "Ch'u Mayaa," <https://www.clarissatossin.net/Ch-u-Mayaa>. (accessed February 8, 2020)

² Ibid.

³ *Condemned to Be Modern*, curated by Clara Kim, was presented at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery from September 10, 2017–January 28, 2018 as part of *PST LA/LA*.

PST serves as California's contribution to an ongoing global discourse around building more inclusive art historical narratives through engagement with non-Western artists and artistic practices.⁴ Unlike its international counterparts, such as Museum of Modern Art's C-MAP project or the Tate Museum's *Talking About Our Collection* program, each of which direct cross-institutional collaborations back toward collecting and exhibitions at their home institution, PST funds scholarly research and exhibitions at institutions beyond the Getty itself.⁵ Not only does PST funding provide opportunities for multiple years of in-depth research across diverse institutions across the region, its founding in 2002 created a new funding landscape for Southern California. In 2017 alone, PST: LA/LA funded more than seventy exhibitions across the region and represented an enormous monetary and scholarly effort towards correcting the historical exclusions of Latinx, Chicanx, and Latin American artists from regional institutions.

The history of this initiative is crucial for comprehending its project. The idea for Pacific Standard Time began in the early 2000s, when Andrew Perchuk (**Figure 2**) joined the Getty Research Institute as their Head of Contemporary Programs and Research while finishing his

⁴ It is important to note the recent history of museum programs aimed to rectify the historical exclusion of non-Western artists and artistic practices. As these programs have developed, a critical counternarrative has followed in which critics, artists, and scholars have measured the success of these programs and propose new ways to dismantle this hierarchy. The relationship between Latin America and Western institutions has been carefully examined by figures such as Gerardo Mosquera, Cuban curator and critic. Mosquera writes specifically that these programs can often forefront the hierarchical relationship between Latin America and the West by creating a separation between curating and curated cultures. Offering alternative solutions, for example, is Mosquera's contribution to the curatorial team for the 1989 Bienal de La Habana which fronted alliances between countries in the Global South and marginalized artists to empower networks within the peripheries. For more on the separation between curated and curating cultures, see Mosquera, Gerardo. "Some Problems in Transcultural Curating" in *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in Visual Art*. ed. Jean Fisher (London: Kala Press, 1994).

⁵ The C-Map Program is an international research initiative at the Museum of Modern Art. C-Map focuses on multiyear art historical research outside of North America and Western Europe. The Tate Museum's *Talking About Our Collection* is a public engagement program where viewers can supplement museum texts that omit underrepresented people and stories. For more information, visit <https://www.moma.org/research-and-learning/international-program/global-research> and <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/talking-about-our-collection> respectively.

PhD on post-World War II art in Los Angeles. Perchuk noticed a general lack of interest in this period's historicization, and began deep archival work across the city to preserve and present the art coming out of Los Angeles and its art schools at this time.⁶ As ideas for exhibitions developed within the GRI, Perchuk arranged a meeting with curators and directors at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Hammer Museum, the UCLA Chicano Research Center, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), to gauge interest in holding concurrent exhibitions around this topic. The response was positive, and the Getty Foundation was brought in as a funding partner for these organizations. This began a somewhat uncharted collaboration among the Getty's previously distinct programs. As stated by PST Program Assistant Selene Preciado,

...the structure of the Getty is complicated because it's made out of four different programs. You have the Foundation, the GRI, the Center, and the Trust. We share the same campus, but we rarely overlap. The arms don't interact or work together because they each run their own programming. PST was the first time they were all brought together to collaborate. The Getty Trust always has the last say, but they need the art historical expertise at the GRI or the Center.⁷

Following internal discussions between the Getty and the select group of LA museums, the Getty announced an open call for institutions in Southern California to submit exhibition and research proposals as part of the newly titled Pacific Standard Time: Art and Los Angeles 1945-1980. Over sixty exhibitions were ultimately granted by the Getty Foundation, creating a new multi-million-dollar funding ecosystem for arts institutions in the region. PST also represented a notable expansion from the Getty's famous hilltop enclave to interact with the wider geography of Los Angeles and Southern California. **(Figure 3)**

⁶ Andrew Perchuk, Thomas Crow, and Howard Singerman. "Pacific Standard Time: A Preliminary Conversation" *Art Journal* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23279667>

⁷ Selene Preciado, interview by author, phone call. January 22, 2020.

The overwhelming success of the first edition in terms of critical reception and audience numbers led the Getty to transform PST into an ongoing project, with support from the City of Los Angeles. In an interview with the author, Perchuk stated,

We would have been very happy with ten or twelve exhibitions when we started. However, more and more places wanted to join, and it really grew organically from our initial set of partners. And then the first one was considered a big enough success that our board and the City of Los Angeles said: you have to do it again.⁸

PST therefore transformed the Getty into a producer for a funding initiative that had few exact precedents. It is comparable in some ways to forms of government support for the arts found mainly in Europe; it has things in common with biennials, while in other ways it most resembles a perennial urban festival. From an initial focus on preserving LA's postwar art history, its mission shifted to encompass establishing Southern California as a site for the art world circuit and an epicenter for art historical research.

When picking the theme for the initiative's next large-scale iteration—what would become PST: LA/LA—the Getty was not interested in engaging again in a theme based strictly on chronology. Instead, they looked to subthemes within the first iteration for insight.⁹ Among the subthemes, Latinx artist and artistic practices emerged, as Perchuk stated,

[The first] Pacific Standard Time had eight exhibitions that focused on Mexican American, Chicanx, or Latinx artists—which was, some said, the largest representation of Latinx art and artists in the city at one time. It was clear that there was a lot more that could be done about Los Angeles's relationship to both Latinx culture and Latin America that had been previously understudied.¹⁰

⁸ Andrew Perchuk, interview by author, phone call. January 21, 2020.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The most notable of these exhibitions had been *ASCO: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective 1972-1987*, curated by Rita Gonzales and C. Ondine Chavoya at LACMA. ASCO was a Chicana performance collective based in East Los Angeles, who famously spray painted their names on the surrounding walls of LACMA in 1972 to challenge the institution's lack of Chicana artists in their exhibitions or collection. **(Figure 4)** Forty years later, ASCO became the retrospective subject of the museum's contribution to the inaugural PST presentation (and a key marketing image for the initiative). **(Figure 5)** *ASCO: Elite of the Obscure* served to legitimize Chicana artistic practices within Southern Californian art history.¹¹

With "LA/LA," the Getty sought to enlarge this exhibition's achievements to a grand, and even unprecedented, scale—including over seventy simultaneous exhibitions, a performance festival, and an international marketing campaign. In doing so, the Getty entered a complex and ongoing global conversation around historical exclusion and remedial inclusion, in a way that was both wildly ambitious and somewhat ambiguous about its commitments. The Getty's publicity for PST: LA/LA spoke to a mission of "rewriting art history" but lacked language around the parameters of its planned revision.¹² It is the task of this thesis to elaborate on that ambiguity, and to locate this initiative within the local context of Los Angeles. In section two I will map out the development of PST: LA/LA and its contested mission statement by local Latinx curators. Section three will present curatorial perspectives on producing exhibitions for the initiative, while section four will reflect on the role of publications in cementing the scholarship produced

¹¹ Sanromán, Lucía. "PST Mexican American and Chicano Exhibitions Legitimize the Periphery" *Art Journal* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 77. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23279670>

¹² Pacific Standard Time, "PST LA/LA Opening Day News Release" http://www.pacificstandardtime.org/assets.ctfassets.net/gha7u91n24t7/4XGMkQqRRSsEyKKSACmgso/16d1cf73c732738b45724b09b69ce14c/PST_LA_LA_Opening_Day_News_Release.pdf (accessed October 7, 2019)

during PST: LA/LA. Section five concludes by offering a critical evaluation of PST: LA/LA—suggesting that, beyond the achievements of a single festival and funding cycle, however far-reaching, true inclusion demands sustained engagement and support.

2—A Struggle for Clarity

Once the Getty had settled on a theme for PST's second iteration, the GRI and the Foundation assembled a team of curators and scholars to develop its conceptual parameters. Two members of this team were Chon Noriega, director of the UCLA Chicano Research Center, and Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, independent curator and art historian. Together they developed a proposal for the Getty that would become "LA/LA". In our interview, Fajardo-Hill stated,

We thought about the project as a correlation. We called it "LA/LA" to mean Los Angeles/ Latin America. The acronym was eventually removed, along with the original chronology we proposed.¹³ The Getty ended up deciding projects could range from precolonial times to today. But any person that studies Latin American history knows that it's not possible to properly cover such a wide range. The first PST was very much looking at a very specific time—thirty-five years—but with PST: LA/LA it became hundreds of years.¹⁴

This insistence on an expansive chronology led PST: LA/LA to include a range of topics that arguably verged on randomness: exhibitions focusing on Chumash pottery, 18th century paintings from Mexico, photographs of Los Angeles murals, and much more. Allowing partner institutions to select possible topics over hundreds of years—with institutions rarely thinking collectively in their proposal conception—also reduced the Getty's ability for critical oversight. This expansive gesture for inclusion simultaneously flattened the diversity and internal dynamics of identity within Latin America by organizing the theme under this generic geographic term. Despite this problematic openness, Fajardo-Hill nevertheless felt that Latinx and Latin American art was

¹³ Fajardo-Hill stated that she and Noriega originally proposed that *LA/LA* begin with examining the Latin American migration in the 1960s and 1970s. Artists from Latin America came to the United States during this time and many became part of an avant-garde scene. Fajardo-Hill had proposed doing a symposium looking specifically at Latin American artists during these decades, which the Getty chose not to support.

¹⁴ Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, interview by author, phone call. February 20, 2020.

desperately lacking representation in Los Angeles institutions and that PST: LA/LA—however broadly defined—could help push local exhibition-making towards inclusivity. She continued,

The public's perception of Latinx people is mostly negative, and art institutions in Los Angeles are very segregated. Apart from the Vincent Price Museum, LA institutions are completely uninterested in engaging with Latinx art.¹⁵

The Getty first presented this title and conceptual framework at a press conference for previous partner organizations and perspective new partners. Held in Los Angeles, the press conference included primarily art historians and curators based in New York. The Latinx community of Los Angeles responded with a state of frustration and confusion; the exhibitions around Chicana artists had been some of the most successful in the first PST, and yet Chicana artists appeared to be missing from this iteration. Bill Kelley, Jr., a Los Angeles-based curator and art historian, relates a sense of outrage from Latinx and Chicana scholars working in the region:

I found it troubling because the conference had East Coast people talking to us about Latin American artists without mentioning the migratory experience in Los Angeles. We are only hours from the border; scholars from New York should not have been telling any of us about our relationship to Latin America. There's a visceral connection here in terms of memory, migration, commerce—anything you want—that is directly linked to the border. The local context was missing from the conversation.¹⁶

If the Getty claimed that this edition of PST was dedicated to Latin America and Los Angeles, Kelley argued, they would need to ground the initiative in Los Angeles and its complexities.

Kelley continued:

When the theme was first announced, I was at 18th Street Arts Center with [curator] Pilar Tompkins Rivas. Discussing it, we thought: this is going to be a problem. There are issues here that need to be addressed. And if you're in the Latinx and Chicana Los

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bill Kelley, Jr., interview by author, phone call. February 4, 2020.

Angeles community, you've been moaning about these issues for years. So: who was going to tell the Getty?¹⁷

Fearing the Getty would neglect the contributions of both Latinx and Chicax artists based in Los Angeles, Kelley worked with Rivas to organize private gatherings with other curators and artists around the city. After hearing similar concerns from their community, the group sent a letter to the Getty asking to meet. The Getty responded positively and together they met at Self Help Graphics & Art in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. This location, as Kelley relates, was important: they wanted the Getty to come to a community organization in a Latinx/Chicax neighborhood, to show that work happening in the city was thriving and vital. As Kelley relates,

The Getty's definition of "community" is institutional. It's not actual people. The PST funding was for institutions, so the scope was defined by institutional needs and interests. It's not defined by our community. We told the Getty that we thought they were missing a giant chunk of the actual conversation.¹⁸

Following this meeting, the Getty changed their marketing language to include both Latinx and Chicax identities under its theme and removed the acronymic meaning from "LA/LA" (thereafter the definition of "LA/LA" would be open-ended). However, it is worth noting that the Foundation does not understand itself as curatorial in nature—it does not determine inclusion as such, but rather selects and funds proposals—and indeed, exhibitions including Latinx and Chicax artists were already by that point in conversation with and encouraged by the Foundation.¹⁹ Therefore, the imputed erasure of Chicax artists from PST: LA/LA may not have been an issue in the programming, as much as a problem with the initial marketing language and

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Preciado.

public face of the initiative which demonstrated a thematic blind spot—remedied by specifying Chicane communities on one hand, abstracting away from Latin America on the other.

Despite the Getty's struggle to publicly define the regional and cultural categories for "LA/LA" the inclusion of Latinx and Chicane artists brought some of the richest exhibitions to the initiative. *Laura Aguilar: Show and Tell* at the Vincent Price Museum—where Rivas is now the director—was the first comprehensive retrospective of Aguilar's photographic works (**Figure 6**). Not only did this exhibition present a history of the photographer, but it also traced a history of the Chicane and queer community in the 1980s and 1990s around East Los Angeles. The Vincent Price Museum is located on the campus of East Los Angeles College, where Aguilar was once a student, representing a kind of homecoming for the artist and her work.

Another example was *La Raza* (**Figure 7**) at the Autry Museum of the American West, done in collaboration with Chon Noriega and the UCLA Chicano Research Center which holds the *La Raza* archive. Curated by Amy Scott, Chief Curator at the Autry, and Luis C. Garza, a *La Raza* photographer and curator, this exhibition featured photography from an important Chicano newspaper and magazine between 1967 and 1977 and provided an opportunity for a member of *La Raza* to present the historical narrative of the magazine from his own perspective.

Such exhibitions highlighted the narrative of Chicane artists in Los Angeles and foregrounded underrepresented artistic practices to an international audience. These exhibitions therefore aligned themselves with the expanded mission of PST: LA/LA, and rewarded Kelley's and Tompkins' committed advocacy.

3—Notes from the Curatorial Field

The Getty's hands-off approach towards each institution's specific exhibition topic within PST: LA/LA meant that the presentations within the initiative ranged broadly in both content and form. Given that PST: LA/LA spans such an extensive programmatic structure, the scope of this paper does not allow for a full summary of each contribution. However, accounts from three different PST curators representing different types of institutions—Daniela Lieja Quintanar from the Armory Center for the Arts, a nonprofit arts center in Pasadena, California; Joanna Szupinska-Myers from the University of California, Riverside ARTS, a university museum; and Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, an independent curator working with the Hammer Museum—shared with me their experiences researching and curating under the initiative. Their recollections provide a diverse set of perspectives on exhibition-making under PST: LA/LA and reveal additional benefits and struggles participants faced through the initiative's five-year cycle.

Below the Underground: Art and Renegade Action in 1990s Mexico at the Armory Center for the Arts presented the work of 26 artists and collectives active in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey in the 1990s. **(Figure 8)** Curated by Irene Tsatsos, Chief Curator/Director of Exhibitions at the Armory, and Daniela Lieja Quintanar, Curator at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, this exhibition included performance art, zines, archives, radio stations, and political protests.²⁰ The 1990s were a pivotal moment in these cities, consumed with income inequality, international and local political turmoil, devalued money, and heightened violence. These struggles set the stage for artists to create a vibrant underground, consisting of night clubs,

²⁰ Exhibition Gallery Guide, *Below the Underground: Renegade Art and Action in 1990s Mexico*, The Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA. 1.

alternative art spaces, and political actions. Artists featured in the exhibition actively worked against Mexico's post-NAFTA neoliberal regime and the simultaneous international art market boom. Most of the works were never conceived to be presented in a museum or gallery, and some were never understood to be artworks at their conception.²¹

Given the density of the *Below the Underground*'s historical context, Lieja Quintanar and Tsatsos concluded that the research topic was too broad to fully contain within a single exhibition. Lieja Quintanar recalled this in our interview:

We were traveling through Mexico and realized this topic was too big. Irene then invited me to co-curate two additional shows to create a whole year of programming. The two preceding shows would then lead into the material presented in *Below the Underground*. First was *Between Words and Silence*, which included artistic practices that look at translation, and then *Down and to the Left*, which focused specifically on the NAFTA era in Mexico. These shows were not technically part of PST, but they benefited from the research we were doing. Unfortunately, we had to still fundraise for those shows.²²

Tsatsos and the Armory were able to dedicate an entire year of exhibition programming to artists from Mexico and working on its politics directly because of the research cultivated under PST: LA/LA. Altogether, the three exhibitions presented fifty-five artists over the three exhibitions—an unprecedented amount of Latinx artists in a single year for the institution. Although funding the additional exhibitions—including Lieja Quintanar's time as a freelance contributor to all three projects—was challenging, the travel and research funds provided by the Getty supported programming beyond *Below the Underground*'s three-month presentation. While the additional shows allowed for a longer period of exposure to these histories for the Armory's audience, the production of the two exhibitions leading up to *Below the Underground* did not receive Getty

²¹ Ibid.

²² Daniela Lieja Quintanar, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA. January 10, 2020.

support, either financially or through the large PST marketing campaign. The Getty is not responsible for the Armory's decision to create three exhibitions instead of one, but additional funding may have mitigated the risk of a small team becoming spread too thin.²³

Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas at UC Riverside ARTS presented contemporary artists from across the Americas whose practices utilize elements of science fiction to present new realities and visions of futurity. Curated by Robb Hernández, Assistant Professor of English at UCR, Tyler Stallings, Artistic Director of the Culver Center of the Arts, and Joanna Szupinska-Myers, Senior Curator of Exhibitions at the California Museum of Photography, this exhibition provided an opportunity for cross-departmental collaboration at the University.

Szupinska-Myers shared with me during our interview,

We first tried to figure out what expertise was already located at UCR. We came upon the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy, which is one of the world's largest publicly accessible collections of science fiction literature and ephemera. We started talking with the folks there and realized science fiction in Latin America hadn't really been investigated yet or was just starting to be looked at as a framework.²⁴

The curators saw science fiction's potential in dismantling and questioning imperialist and colonial histories to speculate about both the past and future.²⁵ Using funding from the Getty, they traveled across the United States and Latin America to find contemporary artists engaging with science fiction. Szupinska-Myers continued:

First, we needed to know what was happening in the United States. We went to the cities with the largest Latino populations that had vibrant art scenes. It was really important to

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Joanna Szupinska-Myers, interview by author. Los Angeles, CA. January 7, 2020.

²⁵ Kency Cornejo. "Decolonial Futurisms: Ancestral Border Crossers, Time Machines, and Space Travel in Salvadoran Art." *Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas* (New York: Artbook | D.A.P., 2017), pg. 21.

us to do more than New York. The first year we went to San Francisco, San Diego, Houston, Austin, and Arizona. We then went to Latin America. When we went to Argentina and Brazil, scholars were already familiar with PST and were all about it. When we got to Chile, people responded ‘this is incredible, tell us more.’²⁶

The international recognition of PST therefore allowed for collaborative opportunities. The curators then developed a checklist featuring both artists based in the US and selected from their encounters in Mexico and South America. They selected artworks such as *Autonomous Intergalactic Space Program* (2009-present) (**Figure 9**), by artist Rigo 23, Beatriz Cortez and Rafa Esparza’s *Nomad 13* (2017) (**Figure 10**) and Cortez’s *Memory Insertion Capsule* (2017) (**Figure 11**), each of which were based in speculative and alternative modes of living.

The Getty’s guidelines for PST: LA/LA stipulated that funds could not be spent on commissioning new artwork. Curators across partnering institutions were required to find alternative forms of funding for artists interested in making new work. Szupinska-Myers shared how the team at UCR were able to still present new work for *Mundos Alternos*:

It wasn’t a situation where we could make commissions, but we worked with artists and found ways around it, like with Beatriz Cortez’s *Memory Insertion Capsule*. She had a residency coming up, so she found another way to front the cost of that production so that it would be ready for the show. So, there were workarounds.²⁷

Works like Cortez’s *Memory Insertion Capsule* and the previously mentioned *Ch’u Mayaa* by Clarissa Tossin were therefore created without the use of PST funds—but for PST exhibitions. Some curators and artists who valued the creation of new work found alternative funding to make commissions happen—but one might speculate about the works that were never made for

²⁶ Szupinska-Myers.

²⁷ Ibid.

lack of funding, and artists whose careers could have been supported, had the Getty allowed for PST: LA/LA funds to be spent on commissioning new works.

Co-curated with Andrea Giunta, Cecilia Fajardo-Hill's curatorial contribution to PST: LA/LA was *Radical Women: Latin American Art 1965-1980* (**Figure 12**) at the Hammer Museum.

Fajardo-Hill describes the exhibition's history as tied to the development of the overall initiative:

From early on in my career, I wanted to do an exhibition about women. When I first moved to California in 2009, I proposed it to the Museum of Latin American Art. I started working on this project in January 2010 and invited Andrea Giunta to co-curate it with me. But then in 2011 I was let go from that institution. The project was too ambitious and would have cost more money than MOLAA was willing to provide.²⁸

Radical Women was therefore conceptualized even before the presentation of the inaugural PST.

When Fajardo-Hill was brought in as member of the early development team for PST: LA/LA, the Getty told her they would fund the exhibition if she could secure a venue. She would eventually partner with the Hammer Museum to produce *Radical Women*.

The ambitious nature of this project expanded as the project moved to the Hammer. Fajardo-Hill and Giunta had struggled for years with broad scope of their topic and the pressure to produce an exhibition that would become the quintessential handbook for scholars looking at women artists from Latin America. They understood that leaving certain artists out meant risking that art history would continue to erase them and their practice. They eventually settled on the theme of the political body as a way to narrow an expansive checklist. Fajardo-Hill recalled:

²⁸ Fajardo-Hill.

Many of the women we were looking at made work around the political body. This allowed the checklist became more focused. Of course, I was pushing to include as many artists as we could, but we had space and budget constraints. Eventually we had to nail down a theme. Of course, I love many artists that were not in *Radical Women*, but they didn't function with core idea.²⁹

Overall, these three examples show how the funding for research and exhibition-making allowed for travel and research not previously supported on such a scale by most Los Angeles institutions. While hurdles still existed—topics that were too broad, restrictions on art commissions—the projects produced would not have been realizable without the Getty's financial support. However, the constraints faced by these curators impeded on their ability to support Latinx, Chicax, and Latin American artists to their fullest potential.

²⁹ Ibid.

4— Publications and What Lies Beyond the Exhibition

Given the task of expanding art history to create more inclusive narratives, many curators and institutions developed publications for their PST: LA/LA exhibitions. These publications continue to serve as living documents of the years of research over the course of the initiative. For example, Fajardo-Hill and Giunta knew *Radical Women* and its catalogue would be carried through art history moving forward. They felt a deep sense of responsibility to include as many artists as they could within the exhibition's survey, as the first mapping of radical and feminist practices in Latin America.³⁰ This commitment to inclusion affected both catalogue and exhibition. Fajardo stated the first checklist covered the time period between 1940 and 1985 (later cut to 1965–1980) and included over four hundred artists, leaving the curators to methodically decide who would and would not make it into the exhibition:

We had about two years before the show opened to plan out the catalogue. It was a painstakingly difficult publication. If we had divided the catalogue by themes, it would have reflected the exhibition design, but it wouldn't have been as useful as a tool for scholars. So instead, we decided to go through the checklist geographically and illustrate the artists in the show with essays and in-depth biographies. But it was a big decision because we needed to create a bridge between the exhibition and the book.³¹

The Getty did not regulate the formats or production of the publications linked to PST: LA/LA, and the ambit of publications echoed the variability of the exhibitions in scholarly expectations and subject matter. For example, catalogues for exhibitions like *Radical Women* were published with an awareness that they would become an important starting point for curatorial research and an educational tool for art historians.³² However, when publications and exhibitions are produced

³⁰ Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta, "Introduction," *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985*. (New York: Prestel Publishing Ltd, 2017), 17.

³¹ Fajardo-Hill.

³² C. Ondine Chavoya and Elena Shtromberg, "Lessons from *Pacific Standard Time LA/LA*" *Latin American and Latin Visual Cultures*, vol. 1. no. 2 (2019): 92.

simultaneously the publication, as the artifact of the knowledge produced, can come to dominate. With *Radical Women*, for example, the thematic categories that organized the artworks within the exhibition felt blurry, with many pieces easily fitting into multiple sections. By comparison, the organization of the catalogue is more detailed and utilizes a regional organization.³³

Other publications embraced a delayed timeline, appearing after the exhibition in order to make room for further dialogues and installation photography—or (in certain cases) due to a lack of support staff during the exhibition’s production. For example, the catalogue for *Below the Underground* will be published in 2020, over two years after the exhibition itself. Given the difference in staff and budget between the Hammer Museum, with the backing of the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Armory Center for the Arts, with only four employees in the exhibition programs department, the attention towards publication support from the Getty was clearly not based on equal needs among different-sized institutions.

³³ Fajardo-Hill and Guinta pg. 48.

5—An Unresolved Finale: What Comes Next?

When Andrew Perchuk began developing PST, he envisioned it primarily as an archival project, with the aim of preserving the history of the city where the Getty is located. As the project continues to expand beyond its original intention, Perchuk shared with me his feelings on its exponential growth:

We're still struggling with how to define it. It's not a festival. It's not a biennial. And I'm not sure we've ever successfully found the right definition. I mean, in some ways, the closest thing we thought was something like Documenta—but Documenta usually has a single curator or a small group with a curatorial vision. My and Joan Weinstein's, [Deputy Director of the Getty Foundation during PST: LA/LA] job has been to recognize the diversity and even the contradictory nature of what is created under *PST* and then still make it a project that is in some way comprehensible to people.³⁴

Similarly, critics have attempted to define the purpose of the initiative both within and outside of its rotating theme. Reflecting on the first PST, Los Angeles critic Michael Ned Holte that,

Pacific Standard Time is less an exhibition of artworks made in Los Angeles than an exhibition of scholarship conducted in Los Angeles, and as such a demonstration of the Getty's increased reach in shaping (or reshaping) the entire field of art history, not only in Southern California, but, really, everywhere.³⁵

From its origin as a collaborative art historical project among several local institutions, PST has ultimately become a funding initiative with a much broader, and arguably, vaguer, remit. With multi-million-dollar funding opportunities for both research and exhibition implementation every few years, the Getty has become one of the biggest funders of arts institutions in Southern California. Unlike a biennial, it does not provide a singular curatorial voice, but instead supports a broad range of institutions, promoting Southern California as a destination for art historical

³⁴ Perchuk.

³⁵ Michael Ned Holte. "Critical Distance: 'Pacific Standard Time' and the History of Remembering" *Art Journal* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 108.

research and production. On the other hand, the lack of a strong conceptual frame leaves a sense of ambiguity, randomness, and confusion when trying to grasp the initiative as a whole. PST: LA/LA was particularly vulnerable to this, since its early development is marked by continued expansion—both in terms of chronology and thematic precision—rather than a careful articulation of its conceptual framework.

The Getty's reluctance to define PST and specifically PST: LA/LA also creates a muddled understanding of who the audience is, and what each iteration aims to perform. The comparison to Documenta, for example, imagines the audience of PST to be an international art audience. Yet if that were the case, why would the Getty not emulate more directly the common format of such events, such as singular curatorial vision? Or, on the other hand, is the intended audience local? Were the Latinx and Chicanx communities in Los Angeles meant to be the direct beneficiaries of the initiative's mission? If that was the case, the Getty should have focused their efforts towards collaborating with those communities within Los Angeles, as Bill Kelley, Jr. has advised, rather than with "general" arts institutions, most structurally uncommitted to Latinx or Chicanx artists.³⁶

Equally, one can point out structural tensions between the Getty's overall goals for PST, and those of the 2017 edition, insofar as this particular edition attempted (at least through implication) to answer troublesome questions around identity and inclusivity, and to provide some resolution to the ongoing exclusion of Chicanx, Latinx, and Latin American artistic practices. For his part, Perchuk states:

³⁶ Bill Kelley, Jr., "Challenges in Defining and Building Community within the Curatorial: The Pacific Standard Time, LA/LA Edition," *FIELD Journal*, Issue 15 (Winter 2020). <http://field-journal.com/editorial/challenges-in-defining-and-building-community-within-the-curatorial-the-pacific-standard-time-la-la-edition> (accessed February 28, 2020).

I wouldn't say that "LA/LA" solves the problem. I do think that now curators and scholars of Latin America are much more cognizant, that they know they should be knowledgeable about a lot more. I think artists and people in Los Angeles are now more interested in looking to connections to Latin America. PST: LA/LA was positive in that way—but there is still a long way to go.³⁷

Arguably, the notion of a national / ethnic identity as a temporary "theme"—to be followed by other themes along different lines—is by nature limited. Inclusion cannot be enacted through a one-time effort, to be followed by other topics. Rather, it demands continuity. Had the Getty decided to continue the work of PST: LA/LA by creating a program or fund for ongoing art historical engagement with Latinx, Chicana, and Latin American artists, or tasked partnering institutions to produce solo exhibitions of the artists presented in PST: LA/LA, art historical scholarship and artistic support would have continued at a major scale in Southern California. Such efforts would tackle the problems that Perchuk rightly sees as unresolved. Although the Getty can hardly be held responsible for the inclusivity efforts of other organizations in perpetuity, it has ample resources to do such work—unlike many of its grantees.

A thorough critical examination immediately following PST: LA/LA, by the Getty itself or otherwise, also would have been beneficial to identify what the initiative was able to accomplish and where it fell short. The Getty produced a publicly accessible economic report for the City of Los Angeles, but an internal review of the "LA/LA" programming was not formally produced.³⁸ Scholarly attempts to unravel the entire initiative were rare, although reviews of individual shows were plentiful. This could have possibly been out of fear for severing relationships with the Getty and its generous funding, or due to the political landscape present at the initiative's public presentation. As Preciado stated,

³⁷ Perchuk.

³⁸ Preciado.

PST started the same year Trump assumed the presidency, in 2017. The public and the media were focused on his anti-immigrant rhetoric—his policies and racism against Latinx people. “LA/LA” suffered from this, because folks were scared to engage in serious critique around the topic.³⁹

Rather than continuing to engage with the themes of PST: LA/LA after its presentation, however, the Getty has already moved on to preparations for the next iteration, even as the broadness of its themes seems only to be expanding. The next edition is scheduled for presentation in 2024.

Subtitled “Art x Science x LA,” it is not only without bounds set by chronology or geography but is newly open to proposals from institutions focused around science and history, in addition to the usual art partners. It appears the ambiguity found within PST: LA/LA may only grow as the initiative continues.

The long-term effects of the initiative’s research are still playing out. However, on initial impression it seems that many regional institutions have simply returned to their regularly-scheduled programming, without significant ongoing gestures toward inclusion of Latin American, Latinx, or Chicanx artists. At the end of our interview Fajardo-Hill stated that she felt institutions in California have completely disengaged with Latin American and Latinx artists since the initiative. This underlines my recommendation that the Getty should either create programs that allow for ongoing support for Chicanx, Latinx, and Latin American artists, or that it should shift the structure of the Pacific Standard Time program to create accountability around representation on the part of the Getty and partner institutions. Ongoing accountability for the partners would also prevent such organizations from using PST funds for a one-time shift in their programming, versus creating real structural change.

³⁹ Ibid.

Inarguably, PST:LA/LA created an unparalleled opportunity for presenting Chicax and Latinx artistic practices and histories. Many exhibitions in PST: LA/LA echo Tossin's movements in *Ch'u Mayaa*, (**Figure 13**), refiguring Southern California and Latin America's histories, revealing hidden entanglements and imagining new ways forward. Unlike Tossin's performance, however, the Getty's engagement with Latin American, Latinx, and Chicax artists has been too quickly relegated to the past; the next edition of PST is now the focus. If the Getty aims to build a more inclusive art history, however, they should not move on so quickly.

6—Coda

I joined the staff at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions—a small artist-run space turned nonprofit organization—in the fall of 2014. The organization was then involved in *PST LA/LA*'s research phase. Our project, a monographic exhibition of the Chilean artist Juan Downey curated by Robert Crouch and Ciara Ennis, was clearly the most ambitious project on LACE's exhibition calendar.⁴⁰ Quite frankly, prioritizing Juan Downey's work didn't align well with the organization's mission statement: namely, to elevate emerging artists based primarily in Los Angeles. Downey had an illustrious video and performance practice that fit within LACE's 40-year history—in its early days the organization pioneered the work of artists such as Mike Kelley, Johanna Went, Chris Burden, ASCO, and others—but Downey was not an emerging artist and did not have a strong relationship to Los Angeles.

Although an odd fit for the institution, *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature* was an exciting endeavor because of the institutional relationships LACE was able to cultivate through PST: LA/LA. Curator Stuart Comer served as a curatorial advisor and publication contributor for the exhibition.⁴¹ Partnering with Pitzer College Art Galleries as a co-presenter, LACE was able to secure from MoMA loans of artworks which would have otherwise been monetarily and logistically impossible. For example, LACE has no temperature control in its galleries, a common precondition for most museum loans. The production budget also allowed LACE to hire an exhibition designer and produce a symposium around cybernetics—the study of

⁴⁰ When *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature* was first proposed to the Getty, Crouch was the Associate Director/Curator at LACE. He is now the Executive Director at Fulcrum Arts and served as an independent curator for this exhibition. Ennis is the Director/Curator at Pitzer College Art Galleries.

⁴¹ Comer is the Chief Curator of Media and Performance at the Museum of Modern Art.

communication systems between machines and living things—featuring scholars from Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Irvine, and New York City.

Such an ambitious program was a reach for the institution, despite the funding support that came with PST: LA/LA. LACE's staff was expected to retain the same number of paid hours—most employees were paid for under 40 hours a week of work—while taking on more responsibilities. One additional contractor was hired to manage the exhibition's installation, but our exhibitions manager was still asked to work twelve-hour days without proper overtime compensation. The reasoning for this was the Getty's rule against covering operational and administrative costs incurred by the organization during PST: LA/LA's runtime. LACE's small staff therefore soon became exhausted and somewhat disillusioned with the project.

When *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature* opened to the public with the citywide launch of the initiative, LACE saw an audience atypical of its local community. Tour groups from across the United States and Latin America had the exhibition on their itineraries. Scholars, curators, and collectors came through the space on a daily basis, and press coverage for *Juan Downey* exceeded any other exhibition we had produced in recent years.

But at what cost? The exhibition did not align with the organizational mission and was perhaps more ambitious than the institution's actual staff could realize without a degree of self-exploitation. Split between two venues separated by an hour's drive (on a good day), viewers often felt the exhibition's narrative was disjointed. LACE's presentation ultimately suffered further as unproductive negotiations with the Downey estate led the curators to cancel all the planned restaging of Downey's performances. This decision forced the exhibition's half at

LACE to be primarily ephemeral, with much of its artistic gestures left to the exhibition designer.

When selecting a thesis topic, PST: LA/LA came to mind as an unresolved personal experience. In the moment I was so preoccupied with the tasks necessary to produce and present the exhibition that there was little thought as to what role the organization played in the initiative's global conversation. This thesis offered a chance to figure that out. What were we all doing within this larger initiative? How had we contributed—or failed to contribute—to its intended mission? Although PST: LA/LA seems now to be relegated to the absent mindedness of recent art history, its work is clearly unfinished.

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Figure 1: Clarissa Tossin, *Ch'u Mayaa*, 2017. HD single-channel digital video, color, sound, 17:56 min.



Figure 2: The Getty Research Institute's deputy director Andrew Perchuk, left, and Joan Weinstein, associate director of The Getty Foundation, right, pose in front of Ed Ruscha's *Standard Station* (1966) at The Getty Center in Los Angeles. Sept. 22, 2011.

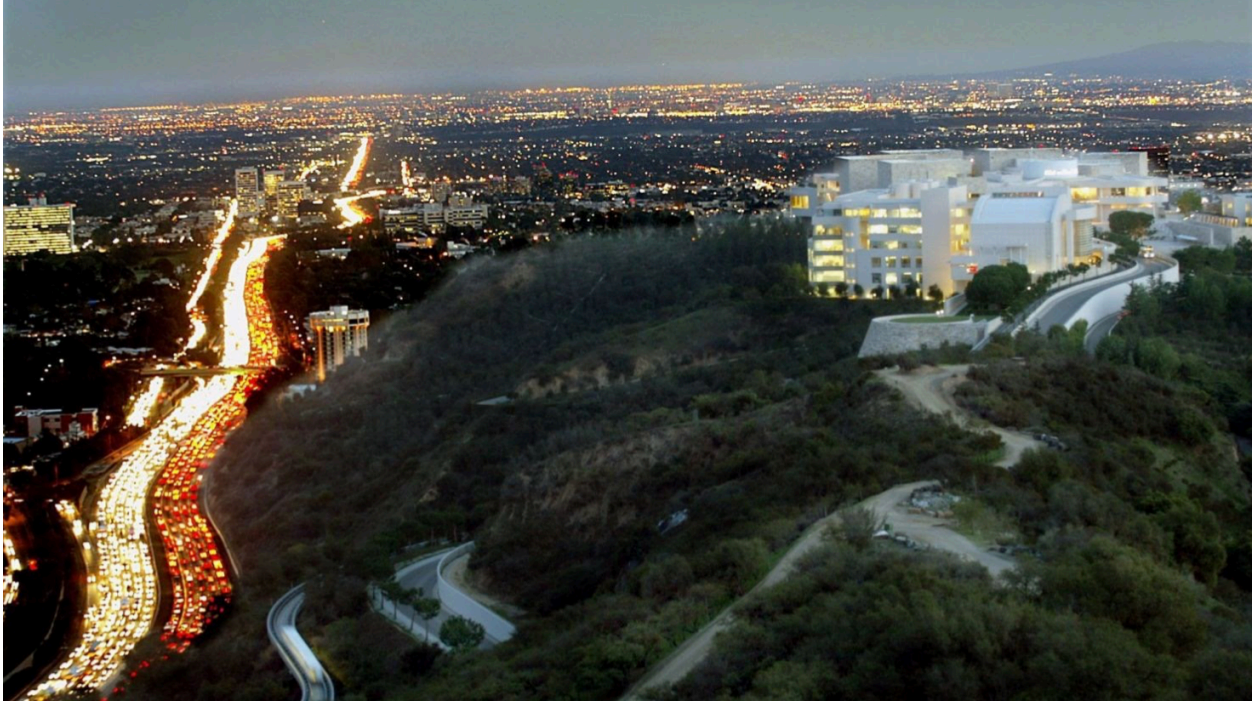


Figure 3: The Getty Center overlooking Los Angeles, 2015.



Figure 4: ASCO, *Spray Paint LACMA*, 1972. Color photograph. Photograph: Harry Gamboa, Jr, showing Patssi Valdez.



Figure 5: Installation view of *ASCO Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972-1987*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, September 4–December 4, 2011.



Figure 6: Installation view of *Laura Aguilar: Show and Tell*. Vincent Price Art Museum, Los Angeles, California. September 16, 2017–February 10, 2018.



Figure 7: Installation view of *La Raza*. Autry Museum of the American West, Los Angeles, CA. September 16, 2017–February 9, 2019.



Figure 8: Lorena Wolffer, *If She is Mexico, Who Beat Her Up?* Reperformed as part of *Below the Underground: Renegade Art and Action in 1990s Mexico*, Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, California. January 14, 2018. Photo by Ian Byers-Gamber.



Figure 9: Rigo 23, *Autonomous Intergalactic Space Program*, 2009-present. Installation view, *Mundos Alternos, Art and Science Fiction in the Americas*, UC Riverside ARTS, Riverside, CA. September 16, 2017–March 18, 2018.



Figure 10: Beatriz Cortez and Rafa Esparza, *Nomad 13*, 2017. Installation view, *Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas*, UC Riverside ARTS, Riverside, CA. September 16, 2017–March 18, 2018.



Figure 11: Beatriz Cortez, *Memory Insertion Capsule*, 2017. Installation view, *Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas*, UC Riverside ARTS, Riverside, CA. September 16, 2017–March 18, 2018.



Figure 12: *Radical Women: Latin American Art 1965–1980*, installation view. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. September 15–December 31, 2017.



Figure 13: Clarissa Tossin, *Ch'u Mayaa*, 2017. HD single-channel digital video, color, sound, 17:56 min.