

**LETTERS FROM LOS ANGELES: TEXT IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ART
DISTINGUISHES L.A.'S UNIQUE INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY**

ARTISTS INCLUDE: ED RUSCHA, Wallace Berman, Hans Burkhardt, Alexis Smith, John Baldessari, Lita Albuquerque, Scott Grieger Greg Colson, Raymond Pettibon and others

MANY OF THE EXHIBITION'S ARTISTS WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE AT THE GALA OPENING

(Los Angeles, CA – December 16, 2012) The LA Art Show will present an expansive high-profile exhibition highlighting more than thirty LA artists who incorporate elements of words and letters in their work. Taking place January 23 – 27, 2013 at the Los Angeles Convention Center, *Letters from Los Angeles: Text in Southern California Art* focuses on LA's unique affiliation with typography. More than any other city in the world, Los Angeles is defined by text, from the legendary Hollywood sign to the logos of Beverly Hills, MGM, 20 Century Fox & Paramount studios, this city's identity has long been reflected in word. Conceived and curated by Jack Rutberg, in association with Aldis Browne, *Letters from Los Angeles: Text in Southern California Art* puts a spotlight on this unique aspect of L.A. art, and may well be the first time this theme is addressed in an art exhibition.

In describing this exhibition, Jack Rutberg states, "Los Angeles' association with typography in the visual arts is perhaps unique. Text in modern art can be traced to the last decades of the 19th century with the invention of original lithography in posters when artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Cheret and Steinlen portrayed the demi-monde of Paris celebrated specific cafes, performers and liquors and other commercial products.

Later, the abstract use of typography appeared in many art movements of the 20th century, from the Russian Constructivists and Bauhaus, Dada, Surrealists and others. Yet, the use of text to define a city, remains something entirely unique to Los Angeles. While other cities are represented by monumental structures such as New York's Empire State building, the Acropolis in Athens, Big Ben in London and the Eiffel Tower in Paris, L.A.'s most iconic symbols are text. So it is perhaps understandable that Los Angeles has a pronounced affinity for the usage of text in the visual arts, which distinguishes it from its historic precedents."

A particularly fitting location, The LA Art Show's exhibition, *Letters from Los Angeles: Text in Southern California Art* will begin immediately upon entering the Los Angeles Convention Center where two monumental works by Alexis Smith reside. The South Hall Lobby of the Convention Center features an enlarged map of the Pacific Rim. Spanning 50,000 square feet, this work is inset with medallions showcasing cultural motifs from Pacific Rim cultures. The Convention Center's West Hall Lobby floor features Smith's night sky on its two levels. Truly monumental

works, each of these works appears abstract up close with a complete readable perspective when viewed above.

In addition to Alexis Smith, *Letters from Los Angeles: Text in Southern California Art* will feature a literal *Who's Who in Art*. Artists include: Lita Albuquerque, John Baldessari, Bill Barminski, Wallace Berman, Chris Burden, Hans Burkhardt, Huguette Caland, Greg Colson, Doug Edge, Mark X Farina, Jud Fine, Eve Fowler, Gajin Fujita, Scott Grieger, Mark Steven Greenfield, Raul Guerrero, George Herms, Dennis Hopper, Ed Kienholz, Lynn Hanson, Charles LaBelle, Mark Licari, Michael C. McMillen, Jim Morphesis, Bruce Nauman, Stas Orlovski, David Allan Peters, Paulin Paris, Raymond Pettibon, Lari Pittman, Ken Price, Bruce Richards, Ed Ruscha, Richard Shelton, , J. Michael Walker, Tom Wudl and others.

The artists featured in *Letters from Los Angeles: Text in Southern California Art* have used text in extraordinarily diverse ways: immortalizing L.A.'s signs, streets and gas stations, using comic book captions to convey dramatic angst, juxtaposing text with appropriated images, framing collages with wry observations and titles, employing the power of language to pose disquieting comments in conceptual works; surrealist re-configuring of old prints and clippings with snatches of verse and prose. The range of approaches is as individual as the artists themselves. The vast and diverse ways Southern California artists incorporate words, numerals and text into their compositions reflects an aesthetic that might be seen as a logical antecedent to the current spotlight on contemporary-graffiti and tattoo art.

Text in art in L.A., is generally regarded as having been most popularized by Edward Ruscha since the 1960s. This exhibition however, will also include the artist whose works in the 1960s were most ubiquitous on the scene - Corita Kent, who will be the subject of a major retrospective exhibition at the Tang Museum at Skidmore College in New York, through the support of the Andy Warhol Foundation.

Quoting the Warhol Foundation: ".....Sister Corita, who achieved fame in the 1960s as a liberal activist artist nun, ...incorporated text borrowed from a wide variety of sources, from advertising to literature to scripture. ... their ingenious textual amalgams exhort viewers to create a better society, and mix secular and religious, pop culture and fine art, suffering and joy. As such they are a vibrant expression of the contradictions and enthusiasms of sixties culture.

Letters from Los Angeles: Text in Southern California Art will also be the subject of a panel discussion. Details to follow.

The Los Angeles Art Show takes place from January 23-27, 2013 at the Los Angeles Convention Center, South Hall 1201 Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015. Los Angeles Art Show programming is included with show admission. For additional information about the Los Angeles Art Show, to register for lecture or purchase online tickets, please visit www.laartshow.com.

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