

Architecture's Border Crossings

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10/3/2017



This is produced in partnership with Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, a far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles.



What is PST: LA/LA?

Neutra, Eames, Barragan. They're all included in the Getty initiative [Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA](#), but unlike the Getty's past two PST iterations — Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A. held in 2013, and [Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A., 1945–1980](#) held the year before that — PST: LA/LA looks at Los Angeles through the lens of another region, Latin America, one that is simultaneously a partner, an outsider and an influencer of our local politics, economics and cultural production. And although PST: LA/LA is not only representative of the design arts — the series covers music, performance, film and literature and art — the exhibitions concerned with an architectural scope offer much to even die-hard architecture wonks. More than a mere sharing of aesthetics, the surprises uncovered in PST: LA/LA offer insights into individual designers' approaches to a similar building material, a cultural zeitgeist or mode of political thinking at the time.

Three of the PST: LA/LA exhibitions looking broadly at 20th century architecture, urbanism and design, "[Found in Translation: Design in California and Mexico, 1915–1985](#)" (until April 1, 2018), "[The Metropolis in Latin America, 1830–1930](#)" (until January 7, 2018) and "[Condemned To Be Modern](#)" at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (until January 28, 2018) uncover less the styles of architecture across each region and more its underpinnings, material appropriations or social and political consequences. Pieces that highlight such connections include Cuban furniture designer Clara Porset's adapted *butaca* chair — distinctly modern in its streamlined profile and reclined posture, but made using weaving and fastening methods characteristically Mexican (where she worked), and examples of Chicano activism via murals and their influence in San Diego and East Los Angeles during the 1980s.

"Condemned To Be Modern" curator Clara Kim (the current curator at London's famed Tate Modern), even turns the

regional tables on L.A. to re-examine our own architectural monuments like Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House and its Mayan influences, through performances and projections at the Barnsdall Park location.



Maya Blue, 2017 (video still) Choreography / Performer: Crystal Sepúlveda | Courtesy of Clarissa Tossin

At the Craft and Folk Art Museum, small and large scale design interventions are considered in the group show “[The US-Mexico Border: Place, Imagination, and Possibility](#),” where works like architects Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello's border fence proposals — ones that provide water repositories for crossing migrants, and cross-border libraries or game courts for people to interact — are interspersed with more large-scale planning strategies by Estudio Teddy Cruz.



Ronald Rael & Virginia San Fratello Teeter-Totter Wall, 2013 | Collection of Rael San Fratello



Ronald Rael & Virginia San Fratello "Snow Globes" series | Collection of Rael San Fratello

More PST: LALA Stories

"[Albert Frey and Lina Bo Bardi: A Search for Living Architecture](#)," at the Palm Springs Art Museum Art Architecture and Design Center (until January 7, 2018) is sited appropriately where Frey's most famous works reside. The desert resort town made his concept of "living architecture" famous. Bo Bardi, an Italian architect working in Sao Paulo, had a common desire to connect people and nature through buildings.

At the Richard Neutra VDL house in Silver Lake, "[Tu casa es mi casa](#)" (until January 17, 2018) will connect that modernist house with one in Mexico City via the exchange of texts, objects and installations by contemporary writers and architects. Three California-based writers — Aris Janigian, Katya Tylevich and David Ulin — were asked to craft a letter to one of the three Mexico City-based design teams — Frida Escobedo, Pedro&Juana, and Tezontle studio — who've responded with site-specific installations at the Neutra house.



Frida Escobedo with writer David Ulin's installation for "Tu casa es mi casa" | Courtesy of Mimi Zeiger



Hector Zamora. "Hyppars," 2014. Poured concrete, vitrine. On view in "Condemned to be Modern" | Courtesy of the artist

The organizers of *Tu casa es mi casa* took note that many of the Getty's offerings considered historical architecture practices, and wanted instead to feature the work of current contemporary practices in Mexico in concert with the setting of the historic Neutra house in Silver Lake. Mexican architect Frida Escobedo's contribution, for example, takes inspiration from the glassy reflective surfaces of Neutra's former home and situates a new 45-degree angled wall within the space, covered with mirrors on one side — this sets up perspectives and views into and out of the windows of the house, and makes new connections to the site and the city, some of which the original architect might never have imagined.

Andrea Dietz, a local architect and one of the curators of the "Tu casa es mi casa" exhibition says of the architectural connections referenced in many of the PST: LA/LA offerings, specifically those looking at 20th century works, "Everyone was dealing with the universal ideal of modernism in different ways, and it hit everyone in different ways. The parallels are that modernism is the unifier, but each region and each individual transformed that universal idea in their own way." Dietz is also on the exhibition design team for "Albert Frey and Lina Bo Bardi: A Search for Living Architecture."



Installation shot of "Albert Frey and Lina Bo Bardi: A Search for Living Architecture" at Palm Springs Art Museum | Lance Gerber

Story continues below

As for the Palm Springs show and the intermingling of those two architects, Dietz says, "Bo Bardi and Frey had no literal connection — so their connection is implied. Lina Bo Bardi translated Frey's 'Living Architecture' publication into Italian and published it under her name. She was clearly interested in his ideas, but more than any other connection, their story is about global ideas passing through different local cultures. They happened to wrestle with these ideas in a similar way, with similar values." Where Frey allowed rock formations and other rugged desert contexts to form the spaces of the homes he designed, Bo Bardi worked with walls of glass to bring in wide views of lush tropical vegetation in a very different Brazilian climate.

Also notable for their nods to design and architecture in the series are Hauser and Wirth's "[Building Material: Process and Form In Brazilian Art](#)" (until October 18) featuring works influenced by modernism's innovations in concrete technology and Neo-Concrete movements of the 1950s and 1960s; Brazilian painter [Adriana Varejão's "Interiors"](#) at Gagosian Gallery (until October 25) which describe a familiar type of architectural repetition in the ubiquitous, white-tiled sterility of swimming pools, spas, and hospitals; Guadalajara-based artist Jose Dávila's six-ton concrete site-specific work for LAND (Los Angeles Nomadic Division) called "[Sense of Place](#)" (until May 27, 2018) will be on view in West Hollywood park from sunrise to sunset through November 2017, when it will begin to disassemble into 40 individual sculpture pieces and then migrate throughout the city to be reinstalled in approximately 20 different public sites. The projects overall work to reveal complicated relationships between art and architecture across borders, and across contemporary and historical modes of thinking; not to clarify them. The intention is to tell the true and messy story of cultures intermingling where they manifest in real life — in the different

scales of urban development between materials, contexts and formal interventions.

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