

carom carom . Lindsey Harald-Wong | Solomon Rousseau. January 10 - March 01, 2026. Winter. Dual.

603 N Western Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90004

34.08184747711551, -118.30927467084113

|||||

High Noon, low

Once again they all gather to see the pleasure reflected in their faces. They line the avenue at High Noon, low so nobody has the shady excuse of their lamination. The sunlight is falling straight down, pinning things to themselves. No stretching or pointing, only spindled compressions avoiding any edges. So they're all holding their breath, with shrill gasps breaking their grip once they make a complete revolution. All ventral, they keep turning in place without changing position. Or they're changing positions without turning a different direction. (They're disoriented but moving in a straight circle.) They line the street in order but nobody is ever facing the same way. It's hard to tell if they're all wearing the same clothes or if it's too bright to tell. Their paths form parallel lines on either side of the street but each side says a spiral: *North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, Northwest, Up, Down*

, *North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, Northwest, Up, Down,*

and all that's silage to feed the sill with spilling over:

Mud, Salt Crystals, Rocks, Water. 10 directions, none of them hardly helter. All reversing the noon.

And none in their silos, just rounded-up barely like they wind-up out West. Prodded like a Western.

Like Sun, spur

right-side down ruminants carom carom drunk on any number of grasses while scratching themselves out to pasture with a howl gaped like the lunar symmetry

reflected in their faces, the pleasure reflected in turning away, defected by how their phases are remarked (in front of everyone): eclipsed:

Mud, Salt Crystals, Rocks, Water. Hoof

ungulating approximations of day, accumulations of night

sundials with tumbleweeds counting rags caught with chloroform—the backdraft that feeds the lapping hum woof on bone

not making where the waters start panting with the dorsal sound of something

gathering below the surface above the parasol or pinwheel

Like sun, stream

, a punctured glare with upside-down iridescence—

a plain in flames

, dripping sideways

, *South, Southwest, West, Northwest, Up, Down, North, Northeast, East, Southeast,*

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ad hoc ("For this")

For now, *for this*, form does not appear as image, organization, or autonomous unit. *This* (on the page, in the room) appears as a surplus lack—a hole with the pile that drives its absencing still in place, but is also exactly a hole. *Squandered*. A lag in the difference of a place from itself: an (un)alignment, a measure, a pressure or pleasure held in place. A ricochet or rebound (or anything that happens at least twice). A surface where force has passed and left itself behind, fed by the backdraft of a movement. A void or a boundary that holds, redirects, or exhausts movement. Not forms, but reëls where pressure, accumulation, interval, and limit remain active and incomplete. Nothing resolves. Nothing lands outside itself without existing, exiting. Without sliding or slipping or spilling. Ensiling. Heaping. Without becoming effervescent. Without disappearing. (An involution.)

Nothing asks to be read. ("I'm writing.") No lifeform asks to live. No (school of) things. No abstraction of anything. Nothing organizes relations as participation, exchange, or social performance. ("I'm reading.") Bodies that find their way *in* are just not *out*: not contributors but variables—more holes, less air. Disturbances in light, shifts in balance, durations encountered as proximities. Silos with all the signage fallen off, all the silage sent away. (But I can see stains of where it was so I replace my reading with what's written by the fainting edges.) Everything curves

along the perspendicace¹ where I observe the lack at my end or I'm eavesdropping on these edges so I can fill them with letters, for later on. The scrape of their yawn is enough geometry for an origin. Non-linear but enough lining to get us *there*.

For now, for this, circularly, this orientation recurs at its edges: lengthwise but coiled: for standing, sitting, inverted; for east and west; for zenith and nadir; for spurned meridians that claim to fix position while drifting under the pressure of any encounter. These are not metaphors. Too much inertia. Not fires replaced by smoke signals painted orange. They are surgical operations. Repairs against the starved limits of an infinity, of somewhere plucked from the center of any field of vision. Horizons that repair against falling—there are too many signs of flight! So all the vertigo is pinned to thin air. That's why they're formal operations: space is divided, bodies are aligned—like I reproduce distance between days as proxy for the sun, fabrications of a moon. Figures of speech that are only letters.

Or, an elapsing that gives way to lost time, but more of it. Measures that allow one thing to stand in for another, to substitute something for itself.²

But wait: This is not a return of the real³ as purity, autonomy, or transcendence. It is a refusal of form as dogma. A negation of any distance that absolves itself from being as far away as it is nearby. An injection of external systems. (Even footnotes and citations are ways of going further in, or nearer out.)

For this, the exhibition turns on a return *to* the reäl: of form, of material, of labor, of *the work of art*. More precisely, it turns on the *ad hoc* forces, frictions, symptoms, holes, and structures that take-place through the reäl of an artwork (and the gallery): of any lifeform that (re)turns to another or any structure that remains open. But this is not an autonomous or secret real even though it tends to stay hidden—like a planetary orbit or a bouncing ball it is an automatic reäl that renders right-in-front-of-you its mysteriously (but obviously) knotted relations with physics, desire, fantasy, economy, logic, body, poetry; symbols and images. Constellations and common grounds.

Caroming caroming between flickerings and forevers, the exhibition simultaneously slows-down and speeds-up everyday, readymade encounters with (art) objects and surfaces to the point where the shared delirium that keeps everything 'in place'—so we forget enough of 'what's happening' in order to function (regularly)—is set into motion and we can see all the forms of distance elided by a civilization's insistence on good luck and bad timing. On restoring things to what they already are, rather than viewing forms as what always withhold completion. This makes us sick until we rip-off the covers (...and we didn't even know we were already lying in bed, half-asleep.) Now we can really see what's between the sheets. No insides or outsides, no dorsals or ventrals, no facts or essences.

No lies: only the constructed forces of a falling-into-place while being built-up.

But remember: although this stream-of-consciousness resists any 'stepping-outside,' the exhibition does not attempt to follow something like the assertion that interpretation replaces experience or substitutes for an artwork.⁴ The exhibition is 'going' nowhere. (Remember: there are no insides or outsides, for now.) Instead, the exhibition is more concerned with how the physicality (as well as the psyche) of any encounter with an artwork (interpretative or otherwise), doubles, iterates, perforates, re-populates (colonizes), dis/figures that instance 'for good.' This exhibition is the formation of a problem preliminary to any possible encounter (with a work of art), not an assertion 'about it.'

This problem (of negation) is a question of what happens when 'I' eclipse an artwork as soon as I approach it, and the artwork eclipses 'me' as soon as I turn away. That lapse (or alignment) is a revelation—an *unconcealment* (*aletheia*)—even though something remains concealed, momentarily. Something is blocked, but this block is exactly

¹ In *Le surnaturel et les dieux d'après les maladies mentales* (1946), George Dumas catalogues patients' coinages; "perspendicace" is noted as a schizophrenic portmanteau blending *perpendiculaire* and *perspicace* to name "very perspicacious spirits" standing perpendicularly above the subject's head. See also: Marcel Duchamp, *The Green Box*, trans. George Heard Hamilton (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1934).

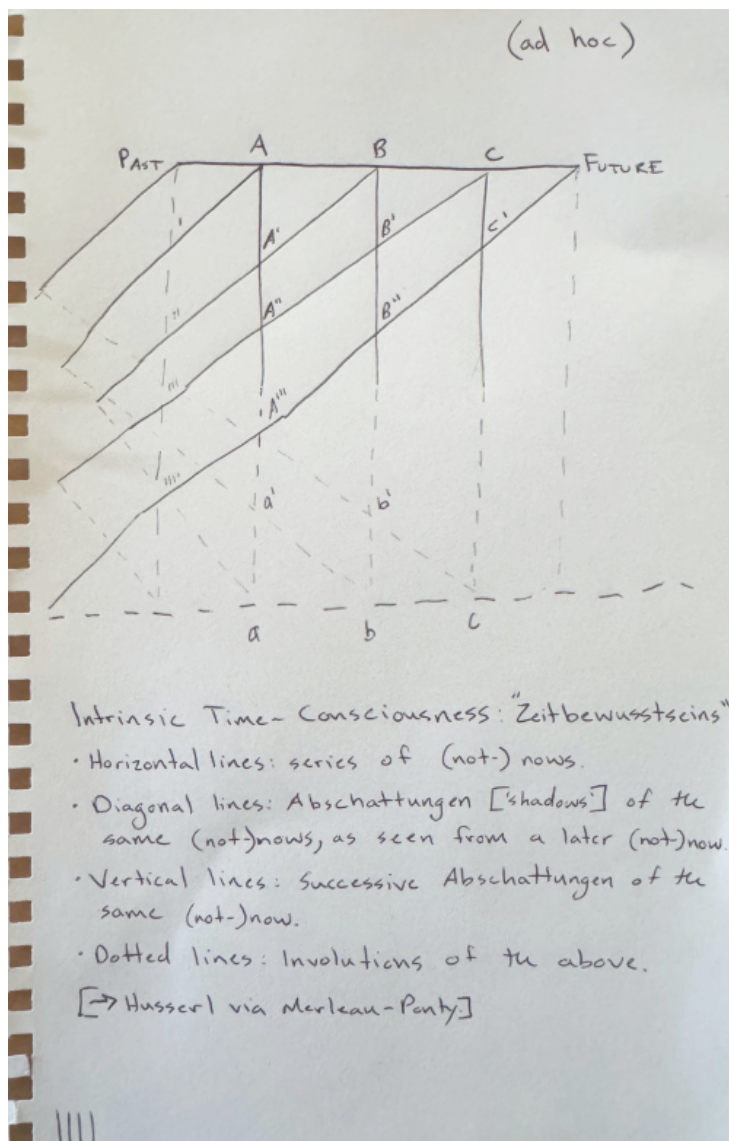
² *carom carom* names a relation that does not resolve after a single encounter. (It's not a title but a name that performs the relations acted-out by the exhibition.) The repetition does not intensify or explain the term; it subjects it to itself. A carom is a deflection produced by contact and constraint. And this doubled rebound either suggests a proximity to a hole or void, to falling (like the pool-ball into the pocket)—or it suggests a recurring ricochet between limits or boundaries. All the gravity of inertia *set into motion*. The exhibition works-through this recursive structure as both method and orientation.

³ Unlike (shallow) Hal Foster's identification with 'the return of the real' with off-site traumas and events that resist representation, I am insisting on a return *to* the reäl of the work itself, of a body itself, here and now. Foster's use of this phrasing—"the return of the real"—rests on a misreading of Jacques Lacan's concept of the same name. While "the return of the real" is excluded from symbolization and barred from representation. For Foster, it's not that representation is actually barred, it's that the representation occurs off-scene: his post-war analysis refers to literal historical events that are visible and represented (so whether or not they are traumatic or personally inaccessible to someone should not shift the status of the real of the work.) The real is more structurally deep than an event or a collection of traumas. He has mistaken the place of the real with the primitive scene (the Freudian moment of hearing Mama and Papa's primal sounds through the bedroom door). Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

⁴ Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), 3–14.

what shows the hovering, elliptical relations of one to the other: that, for a moment, the relation or movement is what appears in the place object. (Because something causes something *else* to happen, as long as we are looking.) So how do we live inside that instance without running for the exit or pointing to the entrance? (Or just standing there like an idiot, that's bound to happen anyway....) How do the works function, operate, speak, write, read, exist, and encode without referring to somewhere outside themselves—without depending on a 'meta-language' or a 'language from above (or below) to carry their actions, timing, and space? Or, how does an artwork incorporate the meta and the extrinsic into itself and make these collateral realities real by making them work intrinsically: 'for this' (*ad hoc*), here and now—without reference? (There is a hole in the work of art.)

With turns, in tongues, the exhibition is asking: when does an artwork speak its own language through others without becoming interpreted away or fully absorbed by a subject, system, or ideology? (Without mistaking the stars for their constellations, or a tire for a wheel.) How does a work of art keep the interval of its chance encounter in motion and under pressure—constantly changing phase and position—without completely falling away, disappearing from view or rejecting legibility? (And what is the scale of this encounter? Planetary? Particle? Person? All at once? [Yes.] How can readymade materials show themselves as unready-made, or already-made (again)? Where are the shifts between making, not-making, and not-not making? How is timing timed? What is a view (when it is eclipsed)? What is form *as motion*?



How much can something tear without being ripped apart?

I'll say: this is for this. *Ad hoc*. This is not a discourse, this is for turning away from the semblant,⁵ the gild of a lily.

["there is no sexual relation" -> "there is no formal relation" -> "there is no aesthetic relation" -> "there is (no) relation relation"]

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requiem for a Requiem—or, pre-histories and Landmarks

[autoreview]

(Don't look back!) While often framed as a 'post-post' return to material specificity, political objecthood, direct action (as abstraction) and spatial clarity following the discursive saturation of the 1990s, much of this recent formal turn—since the early 2000s—has frequently re-stabilized the artwork as a discrete, legible unit: reconciling form with display, and material rigor with institutional ease (or a lapse into institutionalized tendencies).

This exhibition starts opposite that reconciliation. Rather than reinstating form as a visible solution, it insists on in/formation (and de/formation) as an unresolved condition produced through relations among materials,

⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre XVIII: D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant* (Paris: Seuil, 2007), seminar of 1971. [This is where Lacan first states his famous phrase "there is no sexual relation" at the start of his formulation of his 'theory of sexualization'.]

architectural constraints, bodily scale, orientation, and duration. *Relations among relations*. At this place, drawing and sculpture—activities of ‘not-not making’—function not as self-assured objects but as sites where pressure, accumulation, interval, and limit remain active and incomplete.

At the same time, the exhibition rejects a contemporary fallback in which “material rigor” is recuperated as market-friendly sameness. The critical discourse around so-called “Zombie Formalism”—Walter Robinson’s coinage popularized by Jerry Saltz’s related diagnosis of fast-consumable abstraction—matters here less as a taxonomy than as a symptom: coagulating form’s drift in instant legibility, frictionless circulation, and speculative interchangeability. If form is already found as an instantly legible token circulating faster than it resists perceptual transaction, then “material specificity” becomes an aesthetic alibi for circulation itself. This exhibition insists on material resistance: relations that do not resolve into a finish, a signature effect, or a stable commodity-image. Here, form is confronted in *real time*: as a tidal force tethered to unconscious but functional (material) procedures.

The exhibition’s relation to relational aesthetics is similarly cut: it refuses the substitution of sociality for material thinking. Following the debates opened by Nicolas Bourriaud’s *account*⁶ of art as the production of interhuman relations, and sharpened by Claire Bishop’s critique of consensus aesthetics,⁷ the works here do not stage participation as content. Relation remains physical and scalar: weight, interval, occlusion, drift, adjacency, and the viewer’s body as variable rather than co-producer.

Since the late 1990s - early 2000s, exhibitions such as *Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties* (MoMA, 1995), *Ends of the Earth* (MOCA LA, 2012),⁸ *Requiem for the Sun: The Art of Mono-ha* (Blum & Poe, 2012), *The Shape of Time* (Kunsthaus Zürich, 2016), *Who Can Be Strangers? The Art of Mono-ha and Dansaekhwa* (Blum & Poe at Adrian Rosenfeld, 2017), and *Form Matters* (Haus der Kunst, 2019) have reversely studied material presence and spatial engagement as correctives to dematerialization and critical exhaustion. Parallel practices—from Rachel Whiteread, Tacita Dean, and Doris Salcedo to Richard Serra’s late work, Phyllida Barlow, and Theaster Gates—have reasserted form’s affective and spatial force within institutional contexts. Yet in many such cases, form has been recuperated as a readable outcome rather than sustained as a humming site of tension.

carom carom also enters a deeper field historically shaped by exhibitions such as *Primary Structures* (1966),⁹ *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* (Whitney Museum, 1969),¹⁰ *When Attitudes Become Form* (Kunsthalle Bern, 1969),¹¹ and *Information* (MoMA, 1970),¹² in which material decisions—placement, procedure, seriality, contingency—reconfigured the artwork’s relation to space and to the viewer. At the same time, the expanded terrain of Land Art and Earthworks (including the work of Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and Walter De Maria) redirected sculptural thinking toward geological scale, entropy, and deep time, relocating “form” within irreversible processes rather than within finished objects. The exhibition’s proximity to Land Art is neither romantic nor monumental. It aligns with a strand of post-1960s practice that treated entropy, duration, and site as constitutive (and later a problem of institutionalization), as the 2012 survey *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974* made explicit in its attempt to reframe Land Art’s media conditions and documentation economies. Here, “land” is not a spectacle outside the museum or gallery; it returns as floor, sill, residue, and boundary—where the institution’s promise of neutrality is tested as a physical claim. (It is the gallery.)

These historical substrates are not aligned in a definitive chronology but as an active set of connected unresolved procedures: the curatorial logics of the connected exhibitions *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* and *When Attitudes Become Form*, in which procedure, contingency, and on-site realization reconfigured both objecthood and curatorial authorship; and *Information*, which made institutional framing newly visible as a contested material of interpretation. These are not invoked to “situate” the present as a late echo, but because they name the moment when the gallery’s surfaces, routes, and administrative thresholds ceased to be neutral supports and became operative constraints. (Of course, there are many more examples beyond these institutional moments.)

⁶ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002 [1998]).

⁷ Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 51–79.

⁸ *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles).

⁹ *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors*, exhibition catalogue (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966).

¹⁰ *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969). Exhibited as part of the Live in Your Head program series organized by the Whitney.

¹¹ *When Attitudes Become Form: Works–Concepts–Processes–Situations–Information* (Bern: Kunsthalle Bern, 1969). Also exhibited as part of the Live in Your Head program series organized by the Whitney.

¹² *Information*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970).

The exhibition's commitment to material consequence and procedural restraint also intersects with the legacy of Arte Povera, not as a stylistic revival but as a shared refusal of representational surplus. In the late 1960s, artists gathered under the term articulated by Germano Celant displaced form from composition to condition, allowing matter—earth, metal, cloth, heat, gravity—to register time and action without symbolic elevation. That displacement remains operative here, where materials are not mobilized as signs of scarcity or authenticity, but as sites of ongoing interaction whose outcomes cannot be summarized from above. As in Arte Povera, form persists as a consequence of contact and duration rather than as an image or statement; however, the present context extends that position into a recursive field, where each event conditions the next and the work's legibility is produced immanently, without recourse to a meta-language that would stabilize meaning or arrest process.

Aesthetically, this text and context is also working-through a de-sublimation of the visual, psychological, and bodily legacies of abstraction and expressionism and their subsequent reconfigurations, where abstraction was frequently tethered to gesture, interiority, and the expressive trace of the artist's subjectivity. From the mid-twentieth century onward, abstraction often retained a residual anthropocentrism, even when formal vocabularies shifted—whether through the heroic scale of painterly action, the psychologized mark, or later, the aestheticization of affect and surface. In contrast, any seemingly 'abstract' work presented here operates without recourse to expressive transcendence or symbolic depth. Form does not stand in for emotion, identity, or interior life; nor does it function as an image of freedom or indeterminacy. Instead, abstraction is treated as a condition of a real relation: a set of material constraints, spatial pressures, and recursive operations that neither dramatize the artist's presence nor solicit interpretive projection. What persists is not expression, but consequence—an abstraction that remains immanent to its materials and situations, refusing the historical alignment of abstract form with subjectivity, transcendence, or aesthetic autonomy (and market solvency).

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Against Interpretation, against Form, against Abstraction, Against Civilization: Cause and Effect

To repeat some negations: this text antagonizes a confused and overdetermined ideological landscape by refusing form as resolution—as the 'in itself' as any kind of completion. (It's a hole.) The context neither returns to the autonomy of the minimalist object nor adopts the polished contingency characteristic of much post-2000 formalism. Instead, the work in progress draws on earlier problematics—post-minimalism, process art, and Land Art—not as historical styles, but as unresolved questions concerning relation, scale, and responsibility. As in the work of Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, Richard Long, and Robert Smithson, materials here are allowed to register gravity, entropy, repetition, and exhaustion. However, unlike the monumental or infrastructural ambitions that often accompanied Land Art, the work remains insistently local, bounded, and contingent, unraveling spectacle and im/permanence.

The context is also positioned parallel to relational aesthetics and 'installation' art (and their institutionalized afterlives). Rather than staging social interaction, participation, or conviviality as content—approaches associated with practices following Bourriaud's formulation—the works here restrict relation to physical, spatial, and temporal registers. (While laterally acknowledging these structures as unavoidable social bonds: that should be obvious, but that's not *it*.) Any other's presence is neither activated nor solicited; it is counted as one force among others, registering distance, interruption, and duration without being aestheticized as exchange. (Sometimes, nobody 'gets' anything and everything recoils: but this is still a force at work, a structural language and a functional forgetting.)

This parallel extends through post-institutional critique. The exhibition does not expose the gallery as an ideological apparatus, nor does it claim neutrality for the white cube: an object of exposé. Instead, the institution is treated as a material system: walls that bear weight, floors that accumulate residue, windows that get graffitied (and shot), lights that calibrate visibility, routes that discipline attention, circulations that enforces orientation and hierarchy. These conditions are neither thematized nor denounced; they are implicated as material consequences. And, on the page, this skepticism toward critique-as-style draws on the problem Andrea Fraser¹³ named—how institutional critique becomes institutionalized—while declining the comfort of an external position. The work at hand implicates the gallery's conditions without narrating the exhibition or the artwork 'from above.' (Or below.)

Meanwhile, the practices of the artists populating this exhibition are shaped by sustained engagement with East Asian aesthetic and philosophical traditions (as well as American and Western traditions) particularly those emphasizing relation over representation, interval over totality, and restraint as a generative—and paradoxically *infinite*—constraint. Crucially, however, the Eastern orientations associated with practices ranging from Mono-ha and Dansaekhwa to earlier architectural, calligraphic (e.g., Morita Shiryū), and ritual material systems are not presented as references or cultural signifiers. They appear structurally, in how materials are allowed to act, how

¹³ Fraser, Andrea. "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique." *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (September 2005): 278–283.

emptiness functions as interval rather than absence, and how (not-(not-))making proceeds through transformation rather than assertion. Drawing and sculpture are presented without hierarchy, operating as parallel registers in which material relations are tested at different scales. A drawing may function as a site of accumulation, abrasion, or measure rather than depiction; a sculpture may operate as a boundary, a sill, or a threshold—a place or timing—rather than an object. Supports, surfaces, and architectural features remain continuous with the works themselves.

Elsewhere and otherwise (but recently exhibited in Los Angeles), symptoms of this non-orientability of form recur along the work of artists such as Aria Dean, Sam Gilliam, Rindon Johnson, Kiyan Williams, Carmen Argote, He Xiangyu, Yu Ji... There are, of course, many others beyond these plucked references (or hiding in my blindspots), but I am limiting the scope to artists whose work has appeared in museums or other institutions so as to constrain this textual position to symptoms of the institutionalization of form as reproducing a *certain kind* of formalism. Also, it is important to note that the artists I have just mentioned are almost always directly political, if only by being identified, and so the unresolvability of form and (non)material takes-place from the start as an expressly political condition. The works in this exhibition do not situate any effects before any cause—or any cause before any effects. Any politics of the works occur in the exact moment of any encounter, and cannot be located either before or after this act. The political is placed along any others that arrive on scene. I have also avoided mentioning artists whose practices deal with form as something too-tightly bound to (found) objects, decontextualized merchandise, displaced utilities, apprehensively raw materials, or redoubled readymades. Such practices are closer to questions of objects and socials than to questions of dis-identified form or de/formation. (Though, the place of *desire* may be shared across these channels. The place of identity is what seems to shift with each of these currents.)

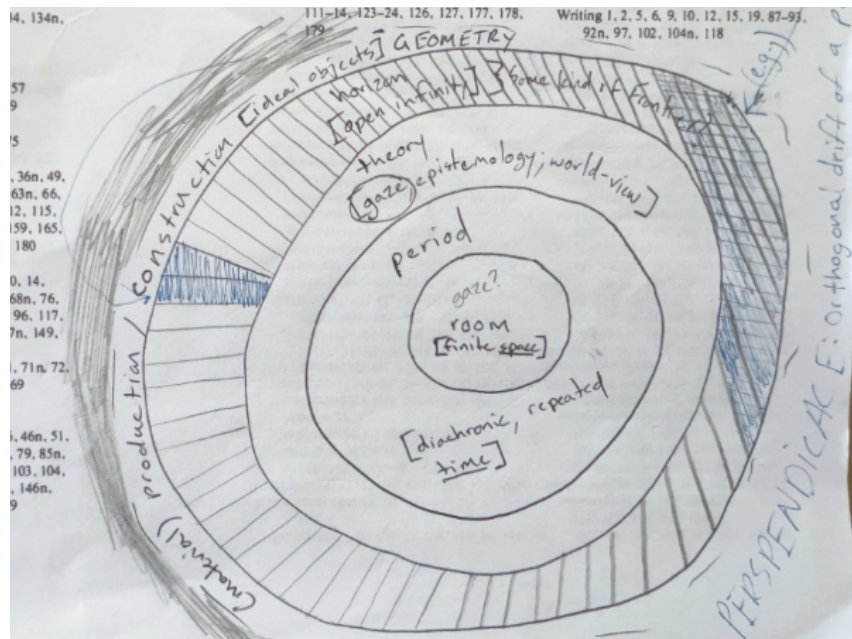
What is historically shared: among a younger generation of artists, form has reemerged not as a return to autonomy but as a site where historical saturation, material constraint, and structural recursion converge. In these practices, form neither withdraws into neutrality nor submits to commentary; it persists as a condition that cannot be transcended.

Along these paths, the exhibition proposes a critical reorientation of contemporary 'formalism.' It rejects *Form* as proxy, display logic, or stylistic return, and instead insists on form as relation held in tension—materially specific, historically implicated, and resistant to abstraction as transcendence or sublimation. There is no interpretive framework that precedes encounter, and no 'meta-language' that encodes outside the works. Meaning does not arrive through discourse or citation, but through the persistence of relations among materials, space, and perception. Form is not a style. Form is not borrowed from shapes and objects. Form is [unconscious,] phenomenal, linguistic.

What is presented is not a revival of form/alism, but a problematic of its stabilizations. (A question of inertia.) Of desire, negation, and repetition. (Causes *as* effects.) Loops and holes. Manifest destinies and goings nowhere.

Of a civilization *as* its (dis)contents.

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization.
A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its problems is a sick civilization.
A civilization that plays fast and loose with its principles is a dying civilization.¹⁴



See: *The Origin of Geometry* by Edmund Husserl.

¹⁴ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1955 (English trans. 1972), 31.



Ticking time bomb (603)

Once again we've skipped town and landed in alien territory. A new land called "Melrose Hill" where Koreatown suddenly disappears into thin air and we find ourselves surrounded by galleries gathered like grapes on the vine, ready to be wine or raisins—or ready to be eaten-up right away, maybe even swallowed whole.

Like a hollow sun, Zwirner's bleached-bone exterior reflects a vast, empty gleam from across the street. Or maybe it's more like that fake lunar surface they say NASA used to stage the moon landing. (And some say, on certain nights where the moon is particularly bright, we don't even need to use our own lights: we can just soak-up all the rays staring into our gallery from across the street.) Either way, it feels good to be surrounded, to find ourselves populated as much as we are populating. There's more silage out here, deeper reserves. And more action. No silos.

Next to us (on the same side of the street): Ochi, Wilding Cran, Morán Morán. Nearby or across the street ('walking distance'): James Fuentes, David Zwirner, Charlotte Call, Château Shatto, The Brick. It's pretty packed out here. (Which is good.) Packed enough that I'm probably forgetting to mention other galleries around there. And, like us, galleries keep moving here. But *why*? Well, it's simple really: rarely in Los Angeles do I see people actually walking around like it's a real city with real sidewalks, real places to go, real things to do—even if its found in a place with a fake name like Melrose Hill. It's a fake name, but a real place. With all the foibles and quirks of Los Angeles packed within walking distance. Somehow, that's an extraordinary treasure here—so we'll treasure it. And, evidently, people go where people already are, so there's a kind of gravity to this place that's unavoidable when otherwise confronted with the scattered space of Los Angeles.

Anyway, enough beating about the bush: We're on Western, way-out West (well, North—and central—actually). It's the Wild Wild West out here and like that phrase everything on this damn road repeats. Everything says "Furniture" more than once like I can't keep track of what I'm seeing without saying it twice. Maybe I can't (or maybe I'm just being incorrigible because of our proximity to Morán Morán). Maybe I'm searching for too much meaning in these signs. But maybe not: just look at all the asinine little market-machines telling us to call them "coco" (*très jolie*) while they move back-and-forth from that autonomous eatery, strutting their unimpressive stuff against the tides of door-dashers and uber-eatsers that fill-up the fire zones to ensure that we are as likely to die as they are. Meanwhile, there's a guy built like clock riding a bike that yelps at the same spot as he passes-by everyday. But we like him, at least he's on point. Like a ticking time bomb. (That sound is a sign.)



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Sundials—or, on pinning things to themselves

(*Sunlight.*) What looks like a view turns to a plucked perspective, an impassable viewpoint. With burrow walls above ground. A hole hiding in plain sight like a booby trap. No missteps, *or else*. Necessary obstacles. Or else a covering space (for a lack of caution). An eclipse not taken at face value. Clenched teeth with an open mouth. A yawn occluded between the gums while the lips stay in place. So much for a single tooth. Bucked and crossed, half signed on the X: \ or /

Overbit with buttresses. How? Carom carom, *carambolage*. Ricochet for cycling pulse. Drag and overdrive, under pressure: squared discs or flattened pipe. Drainage for steel wool woven unilaterally. Outsides outsized, insides incised. At lightspeed, fastening the gallery to its supports: artwork. Still a gap in gravity, still falling in place.

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Appendix 0

any sign of a place for Melrose Hill

[*autosemy*]

The area now commercially (*seductively*) referred to as “Melrose Hill” occupies land that was, prior to ‘American’ colonial settlement, part of the ancestral territory of the Tongva, whose presence in the Los Angeles Basin predates the city by many centuries.¹⁵ By the late nineteenth century, this land had been violently and extractively coerced into the expanding city through ranching, subdivision, and speculative real-estate development—processes that accelerated as Los Angeles grew rapidly in population and infrastructure at the turn of the twentieth century..¹⁶

(But let’s back-up a for a moment: after the disruption of Indigenous land tenure under Spanish colonization, the area that would later become Melrose Hill fell within the broader territorial and economic sphere of Pueblo de Los Angeles, founded in 1781 under Spanish rule and later administered by the Mexican state following independence in 1821. Though, unlike much of present-day Los Angeles, the Melrose Hill area was not part of a named rancho land grant during either the Spanish or Mexican periods. Instead, it remained on the margins of formal settlement: used intermittently for grazing and agriculture, but largely unsurveyed and unsubdivided until after U.S. annexation. This absence of rancho designation distinguishes the area from large swaths of Los Angeles that were organized under grants such as Rancho La Brea or Rancho Los Feliz, and helps explain why Melrose Hill enters the historical record primarily during the American real-estate subdivision boom of the early twentieth century rather than earlier colonial cadastral systems.)

In 1906, developers Sidney L. Briggs and M. P. Gilbert acquired and subdivided the tract that includes what is now called Melrose Hill, marketing it as a modest residential enclave near emerging commercial corridors.¹⁷ The name “Melrose” was already attached to Melrose Avenue—attributed in planning histories to developer Avery McCarthy, who named it after Melrose, Massachusetts—and the slight rise in topography within the tract was promoted as “Melrose Hill,” a designation that would later harden into a neighborhood name despite its limited use among residents.¹⁸ Between roughly 1911 and 1926, the neighborhood was built out primarily with Craftsman and California bungalow houses, forming a coherent early-twentieth-century residential fabric typical of Los Angeles streetcar-era suburbs.¹⁹

During these early decades, Los Angeles as a whole was still majority White, shaped by migration from other parts of the United States, but it already included significant Mexican and other Latino populations as well as Asian communities, whose settlement patterns were constrained by exclusionary housing practices and racial covenants

¹⁵ Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. *Tongva History and Tribal Territory*. Accessed January 2026.

¹⁶ City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning. *SurveyLA: Citywide Historic Context Statement*. Los Angeles, 2017.

¹⁷ City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning. *Melrose Hill Historic Preservation Overlay Zone: Context and History*. Accessed January 2026. <https://planning.lacity.gov/preservation-design/overlays/melrose-hill>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning. *Melrose Hill HPOZ Final Preservation Plan*. 2012.

elsewhere in the city.²⁰ Over the mid-twentieth century, however, the broader area surrounding Melrose Hill—what is now generally understood as East Hollywood—underwent substantial demographic change. Post-World War II migration brought growing numbers of Mexican, Central American, Asian, and later Armenian residents into East Hollywood, gradually transforming it into one of the city’s most densely populated and ethnically diverse districts.²¹

By the late twentieth century, this diversity was well established. In 1988, the City of Los Angeles adopted the Melrose Hill Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ), recognizing the architectural integrity of approximately forty-two early bungalow residences and placing design-review constraints on exterior alterations.²² While the HPOZ focused on architectural preservation rather than population, it effectively formalized a small residential enclave within a much larger, heterogeneous, and densely inhabited urban context.

Census data at the turn of the twenty-first century underscore this context. In 2000, East Hollywood had an estimated population of roughly 74,000 residents, with approximately 60 percent identifying as Hispanic or Latino, significant Asian populations, and smaller but persistent White and Black populations.²³ Immigration played a major role in shaping the area: a high proportion of residents were foreign-born, particularly from Mexico and El Salvador, and many households spoke Spanish or other non-English languages at home.²⁴ Subsequent American Community Survey data for the Central Los Angeles / East Hollywood Public Use Microdata Area show that, through the 2010s and early 2020s, the area remained both highly diverse and among the most densely populated parts of the city, even as socioeconomic pressures increased.²⁵

Now, here they come: the early 2020s saw the emergence of a high-profile cluster of contemporary art galleries along North Western Avenue, near the intersection of Melrose Avenue, Beverly Boulevard, and Santa Monica Boulevard. National and international art press began describing the area as an “up-and-coming” or newly discovered district, often under the label “Melrose Hill.” This framing has been sharply contested. As Matt Stromberg notes in his detailed survey of these narratives, the area “misleadingly dubbed ‘Melrose Hill’ ... is exceptionally diverse and notably dense,” contradicting portrayals of the neighborhood as vacant or neglected prior to the arrival of galleries.²⁶ The article further emphasizes that the corridor sits at the convergence of East Hollywood, Hollywood, and Larchmont, with Koreatown immediately to the south—long-established neighborhoods with deep residential and commercial histories.²⁷

Local responses documented in the same reporting highlight the disjunction between real-estate branding and lived experience. One neighborhood employee remarked, “No one calls it that. That’s what it says on the map, but I don’t hear anyone say ‘I’m going to Melrose Hill,’” underscoring how the name itself functions more as a development narrative than a vernacular one.²⁸ Critics have also pushed back against claims that art galleries are “reviving” a supposedly desolate area, pointing out that such language erases long-standing working-class, Latino, Asian, and immigrant communities who have lived and worked there for decades.²⁹

Central to the recent transformation of the corridor has been Zach Lasry—a real-estate investor, self-bought Hollywood producer, and son of the billionaire hedge-fund manager Marc Lasry—and the development firm Creative Space, which has acquired and repositioned several properties for gallery and cultural use.³⁰ In the *Hyperallergic* article, Creative Space’s leadership framed their role as limited and incremental—“We’re not trying to

²⁰ *SurveyLA: Citywide Historic Context Statement*. Los Angeles, 2017.

²¹ Los Angeles Times. *Mapping L.A.: East Hollywood*. Los Angeles Times Data Desk.

²² *Melrose Hill HPOZ Final Preservation Plan*. 2012.

²³ U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Summary File 3: East Hollywood, Los Angeles.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2018–2023 (5-Year Estimates): Central Los Angeles / East Hollywood PUMA. Accessed via <https://data.census.gov>

²⁶ Matt Stromberg, “Art Galleries Are Not Reviving a ‘Desolate’ LA Neighborhood.” *Hyperallergic*, July 25, 2023. <https://hyperallergic.com/art-galleries-are-not-reviving-a-desolate-la-neighborhood/>. [But remember the job of any magazine writer is to fit the mold of expectation, not to render a real analytical critique of what’s taking place. (He still visits the galleries... So he’s ‘covering his ass’ as much as he’s really thinking. And he still includes these galleries in his list of must-see shows for *Hyperallergic*—so he’s actually telling people to go here. What’s his point?)]

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.* See also: *Financial Times*. “LA Galleries Are Making Melrose Hill the New Art Hotspot.” February 24, 2024.

buy every single building”—and emphasized infrastructure improvements such as pedestrian safety and streetscape upgrades.³¹ Nevertheless, residents and observers have raised concerns about displacement, the loss of everyday neighborhood services, and the symbolic transformation of a dense, multiethnic area into an elite cultural destination.³²

Taken together, the history of Melrose Hill and its surroundings is not one of abandonment followed by false rescue, but of layered development: Indigenous land stewardship; early twentieth-century subdivision and bungalow construction; decades of demographic transformation driven by immigration and working-class settlement; and, most recently, the pressures of art-led real-estate development and rebranding. The current moment situates a contested re-narration of place, in which long-standing communities, preservation frameworks, and demographic realities intersect—often uneasily—with the economic and symbolic power of the contemporary art market.

³¹ Matt Stromberg, “Art Galleries Are Not Reviving a ‘Desolate’ LA Neighborhood.”

³² Ibid.

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