

Five Women Artists in 1970s Los Angeles

June 21–August 9, 2024

Opening Reception: Friday, June 21, 2024, 6–8 PM

Ortuzar Projects is pleased to present *Five Women Artists in 1970s Los Angeles*, a group exhibition curated by Tom Jimmerson. Featuring the work of Nancy Buchanan, Hildegard Duane, Susan Mogul, Susan Singer, and Nancy Youdelman, the exhibition links these five artists through their shared commitments to feminism, photography, storytelling, and the ingenuity necessitated by the indifference that greeted their practices as young women artists in 1970s Los Angeles.

Perhaps even earlier than the others, Nancy Buchanan recognized the need for new art institutions following the closure of several Los Angeles mainstays, including Ferus Gallery and the Pasadena Art Museum, as well as the exodus of *Artforum* magazine to New York. With fellow University of California, Irvine graduate students Chris Burden and Barbara T. Smith, she founded F-Space gallery in nearby Santa Ana in 1971. In the years following she was a founding member of the feminist art collective Double X and participated in Paul McCarthy's short-lived journal *Criss Cross Double Cross*. In the same spirit, Buchanan's earlier photo-sculpture *Twin Corners* (1974)—composed of metal shavings piled in a corner and a photographic self-portrait of the artist's legs and pubic region—slyly trolls the masculine assumptions of a then-dominant Minimalism by deploying the now classic feminist strategy of “fitting in” as a formal object while at the same time “standing out” as a pointedly political statement.

In the DIY spirit of Los Angeles art of the time, Hildegard Duane “unveiled” her sprawling *Snow White* (1981) at Steps Into Space, a fashionable Melrose Boulevard boutique. The installation presents a number of stylized portrait photographs topped by a vintage wedding dress and veil, set alongside a text panel that effectively draws attention to the puzzling status of narrative itself. *Snow White* is accompanied here by a selection of videos produced in the facilities of the Long Beach Museum of Art's well-regarded Video Art Program. Duane's work is notable for its clever deployment of Hollywood story tropes, its use of recognizable actors and its remarkably high production values (rare in the realm of 1970s-era video art). Indeed, the artist once ruefully acknowledged that her videos were intended, at least in part, as a “calling card” for work in the film industry that never materialized.

Show business is also a recurring theme in the work of Susan Mogul. Hollywood's iconic Capitol Records Tower is toppled by a giant Mogul in her exactly-cut, black-and-white photo collage *Crisis in Capitol* (1978). Also present in her work is the artist's prickly, if loving relationship with her mother, a serious yet ultimately amateur photographer and interior decorator. That relationship is narrated in Mogul's *Shopping Bags* (2019). The artist's peculiar choice of medium emphasizes the way capitalism and commerce became a mode of communication between mother and daughter, their complex interactions expressed in shopping trips and gifts exchanged over the years. Poignant stories to this effect appear on each of the bags, with images presented on one side and text on the other. A newer work, Mogul's *Shopping Bags* recycles ideas and images already present in her earliest artworks, perhaps making Mogul a “seventies” artist still.

If art of the 1970s taught us anything, it is that scale is content, or that when an artwork is unusually large (or tiny, for that matter), size is part of its meaning. Susan Singer emerged as an artist and photographer at just this moment and her larger than life-size *BODIES* book (1976–77) seized on this insight with a vengeance. Her one undeniable masterpiece—Singer soon left art to teach in the LA Unified School District—exemplifies ideas central to so much of 1970s art thinking: that the camera can escape the confines

of “fine art photography” and function as a tool in the toolbox of the conceptual artist; that the art book is not always a second-order document but can be a primary artwork in its own right; and that artmaking can be a richly social activity highly dependent on collaborators, including the “bodies” depicted of fellow artists Barbara T. Smith, Allan Kaprow, and curator Hal Glicksman, among others. As much as anything from this period, Singer’s *BODIES* corral an array of new art developments, compiles a selection of prominent and lesser-known personalities and then condenses it into a powerful expression of its moment in time.

Nancy Youdelman is a founding member of California’s feminist art movement. Indeed, she participated in the first iteration of Judy Chicago’s Feminist Art Program at California State University, Fresno in 1970 and followed Chicago and the program to its more prominent home at California Institute of the Arts soon after. Youdelman contributed to historic events including *Womanhouse* (1972) and Womanspace Gallery (1973–74). Like other artists in this exhibition, Youdelman made a deep and early commitment to photography and storytelling. Her nightmarish *Shallow Grave* (1973)—six color prints arrayed in sequence—imagine and then stage the circumstances of her own burial. Youdelman’s four unique artist’s books, on the other hand, evidence a lighter, more whimsical touch, often re-enacting past dreams, such as one in which Youdelman “dreamed she had a tail.”

With barely more than ten artworks by just five artists, this one exhibition can only hope to suggest the outlines of the more comprehensive, and necessarily more intersectional, study that this important moment in Los Angeles art history requires. In the meantime, *Five Women Artists in 1970s Los Angeles* provides a serviceable introduction to the events of that time and that place.

Nancy Buchanan (b. 1946, Boston, MA) is a Los Angeles-based conceptual artist working across forms, including performance, video, installation, drawing, and mixed-media. She was a founding member of the artist-run F Space Gallery in Santa Ana, California, and showed at the Los Angeles Woman’s Building, and continued her feminist activism as a member of the artists collective Double X. Buchanan’s work has been included in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the New Museum, New York; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; as well as the Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, PA; and the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, which holds her archive of papers and videos. She is represented by Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, where she has presented solo shows in 2017 and 2020. Buchanan is the recipient of four National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artist grants, a City of Los Angeles (COLA) grant, and a Rockefeller Fellowship in New Media.

Nancy Youdelman (b. 1948, New York, NY) lives and works in Clovis, California, primarily exploring the mediums of sculpture and photography. She was a student in the very first feminist art class that was taught by Judy Chicago in 1970 at California State University, Fresno. She then joined the Feminist Art Program (1971–1973) at the California Institute of Arts, Valencia, where she participated in the internationally acclaimed project *Womanhouse* in 1972. She earned her BFA from CalArts in 1973 and her MFA in 1976 with an emphasis in Sculpture from University of California, Los Angeles. Her work is in the public collections of the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others.

Hildegarde Duane is a Los Angeles-based artist making art through photography, video, and storytelling. Duane attended Barnard College, New York; the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; and Harvard University's doctoral program in Chinese Art History. Her work is held in collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; the Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid and other galleries and museums worldwide. She is the recipient of the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and the National Endowment for the Arts artist grant.

Susan Mogul (b. 1949, New York, NY) is a Los Angeles-based artist and filmmaker. Mogul's work has been featured in historic exhibitions such as *Los Angeles 1955–1985: The Birth of an Art Capital* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2006); *California Video* at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2008); and *Where Art Might Happen: The Early Years of CalArts* at the Kunsthaus Graz, Austria (2020). The artist's first solo museum exhibition, a major survey of her work, opened in August 2022 at the Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland. She is also a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and Getty Trust Fellowship.

Susan Singer (b. 1947, Pittsburgh, PA) is a conceptual artist, photographer, and educator who lives and works in Lakewood, California. She received her BA from California State University, Northridge in 1972 and MS in Counseling from the University of LaVerne, California in 1988. Her work is included in the library collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; the Art Institute of Chicago; Harvard University, Boston; and Princeton University, New Jersey.