

Interview with Gloria Gerace, Managing Director of Pacific Standard Time
by Alex Herboche
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AH: What exactly does your job entail?

GG: It actually has evolved as the project got larger in scope but, my role is two-fold: one of my roles is to be the liaison between the campaign called Pacific Standard Time and the 57 museums that are part of the Pacific Standard Time collaboration. So that means, when anything is asked of them, if they have problems or suggestions or ideas, they come to me. I've helped them organize into the groups that have done the focus weekends. I've facilitated special promotions. I actually go to every opening and I try to facilitate every exhibition as best as possible. And I take the information that they're giving me and I transfer it, I also act as the liaison between the 57 museums and the campaign consultants, that is the communication campaign consultants and the marketing consultants. And so I act also as the coordinator of those different teams with Getty leadership and with the 57 museums. [...] In terms of Pacific Standard Time I am a consultant, I'm not full time, I have other clients but I am the *one* person that is dedicated to Pacific Standard Time.

Can you tell me about how the project started?

It is a story that really starts with research. It's a research question that came to the foundation about archives and the Foundation supports archives and has a strong commitment to the history of Los Angeles as does the Getty Research Institute. So it also became, from the very beginning, an archive collaborative project between the Getty Foundation and the Getty Research Institute and several libraries and museums. They did oral histories, they did research and so it started as a project called On The Record and it was a research project and the research project's aim was to preserve the history of post WWII art scene in Southern California. As the different museums and curators and researchers did the research they said: much of this research has never been presented to the public. So the Getty did a round table with some key museums and explored this idea of whether there could be a series of exhibitions and the museums agreed, the Getty Foundation set up a grant making process of exhibition research and it then became the project called Pacific Standard Time. At that point, it was maybe 20-something museums that were the collaborative, when I came on board two and half years ago it was 30 museums and right after I came on board we expanded to make sure that as much of the story that could be told, would be told and, so that's when we got to be 57 different museums.

Why was this specific time period (1945-1980) chosen?

It only goes to 1980 because, in part, 1980 was a shift in Los Angeles in terms of MOCA - it now had a contemporary arts museum, MOCA opened I believe in 1980 - the Getty became the Getty Trust in 1982 so there was, in the art world, a shift. And so, for the people who established the project they first of all wanted it to have an ending point, they

didn't want it to be too broad but they decided that, since there is a kind of a shift of the perception of Los Angeles in the early 80s that this idea would be that it would be 45-80.

Where there any models of similar events you were looking at during the organization?

I would say there are no other models. When I came on board, that was one of the first things I did, I asked around. New York had done a small - I think there were 3 museums involved - in a project which was a series of exhibitions, in Germany there was a project at the Essen cultural center where they had 4 exhibitions related to design, but the 4 exhibitions, the curators didn't talk to each other and I knew about that because I was one of the curators that put on the exhibitions. So I think that, on the one hand, there have been some museums that have collaborated on a series of exhibitions but it has been like 2-3 museums. There's been cities that have had festivals celebrating their museums but the museums never did thematically connected exhibitions. [...] There's never before been a project which has been this many museums all doing thematic shows at the same time, with this level of research.

Were there any concerns about overlapping with other shows, such as the California Video show in 2008?

Definitely video is a portion but this is all a historic show so there wasn't a concern that there would be overlap with that particular show. The curators, when they first started PST there were - and this is a highly collaborative project and curators got together and from the very beginning, they looked at checklists together, they compared themes, they compared checklists and so, it always has been done as a collaborative project.

Could you talk about the work with the curators? Because each of the exhibitions seem to have a focus.

Yes, and that's been really one of the richnesses, on both sides. Every museum has been able to do a subject in as much depth as they would like, knowing that the rest of the story is being told by the other museums. So, that's one of the richnesses of this project is that, the exhibitions can be so focused on their theme, knowing that you can connect and many museums have connected and done partnerships with the other partners. So, from the very beginning, there's also the idea that the story is being told not only as inclusively as possible but also in different ways. The story that was told of African-American artists at Now Dig This! is very different from the story that was told of African-American artists at the California African American Art Museum. Different kinds of presentations that looked at different aspects and appeal to different ways of seeing this art and many of those same artists were again at the show that's now at Barnsdall called Civic Virtue, looking at those artists in a slightly different context again. So, you might see the same artists with different works, in several different ways that can only give you a richer view of any artist or art movement or theme. As somebody who has experienced all the exhibitions, now I get to recognize names and it's interesting to put that artist next to that artist there's one story but when you take that artist and put it with another artist, there's another story. So you really get the full story being told.

What is story being told? Has there been an intention to tell something in particular?

The story is that these were all Southern California artist their history is being told from the Southern California point of view as opposed to any other point of view. I went to the show that was in Paris in 2006 about California art and it was told from their perspective which was slightly different from the fullest story. Having Southern California museums tell the story about Southern California artists from our perspective and all of the variations of that story, that was our goal, to make sure that this is a story that is told as fully as possible, as inclusively as possible and from our perspective.

Did you have to cater for the fact that you would get different kinds of viewership, with some people going to several exhibitions and others going to only one?

In terms of who our target audience was, our goal was that we wanted the visitors who go to museums - we know from our research that people tend to go to a certain one or two museums, the people who are a museum-going public - we wanted those people to try another museums. And that's where the collaborations and, what we call "pushing" which is where, if you generally always went to the Santa Monica Museum, we wanted you to now try out 18th Street Art Center. If you always tended to go to the Getty, we wanted you to now try out the Santa Monica Museum. And so we made these kind of partnerships that the marketing teams of the different museums participated in how they could best push to their partners. We also know that there is a large group of people that we call the culturally curious they listen to NPR, they go to the theatre, they go to indie films, they experience art and they value art but maybe they don't go to museums. So our campaign was geared at the culturally curious, encouraging them to go to museums, and geared to the art-aware, the museum-going audience, to get them to go to more than one. We always hoped that people would experience more than one. And so that's where the thematic connections, everything we put out in terms of the campaign was: if you're interested in ceramics, here's 3 museums to go to. And that's where the focus weekends became very prominent in our campaign, that we have promoted: if you go to Orange County, here's 5 different things for you to do on a weekend. If you go to Long Beach, here's 3 things, it makes a nice day. So made it for people, we tried to cluster so that people were encouraged to go to more than one museums.

Was it a concern to have every different art form represented?

It was, yes. And that was, in one way, how we got to 57. We wanted to make sure that the major movements, the major threads of art-making, the major artists were all represented, and represented as richly as possible. So that's where you see, there was a John Outterbridge single show at LAXart, there was John Outterbridge at the African American Museum but John Outterbridge was also shown at Civic Virtue, where you're talking about the idea of the history city and art and showing art. So an artist like that who has not only one single point of view or way to think about him, we wanted to make as broad as possible. And we wanted to make sure that video art was represented and performance art. There's a show that's opening in Pasadena this Sunday that is looking

at a very specific thread of Abstract Expressionism that also ties to so many other artists. One of the other things was to explain to people that, these are historic shows, but these artists have been passed on to the artists of today, not only in Southern California, but in the world. And so that was always one of the messages, of the impact of these artists on Southern California art and on the global art scene.

Has the fact of showing old work in new settings, the connecting of these two times, exposed and evolution in exhibiting and curating since 1980?

Let's take the artists from the Women's Building, let's take an artist like Judy Chicago, who, when she started making art, her male counterparts were saying: you're a girl, don't make art, you can't be a girl and an artist at the same time. And I think that, when you look at Judy Chicago now, you just see her as a major world class artist. And so, a show like the Women's Building show at Otis, which is one of the most amazing shows. When younger women look at that show, I think it's important for them to say, you know, when Judy Chicago was trying to be an artist she was told: you can't be an artist, you're a girl. And, I'm hoping that doesn't happen in art schools today. I know it doesn't happen. So, I think that that's what we've seen. And I think that, looking back on artists that were not given an international presence because they were from California so they were looked down on, I mean you talk to an artist like Bob Irwin who is of course internationally renowned, when he started his practice people told him: if you don't move to New York, you'll never be a famous artist, and he said, in Bob Irwin's language, which is quite spicy: no way. And we can see, we can see the difference. I don't think that anyone still thinks you have to live in New York to become a practicing artist.

Why is it important for PST to happen?

Well, and I can speak from personal experience because I'm a Los Angelina, I think it's very important because so often, we don't tell our own story. And when we are criticized or given the stereotype that Southern California has no culture, we tend not to counter that perception. And yet it's so untrue. And, just as an aside, I did a exhibition once that had to do with the Los Angeles topic and then I did some visitor survey of what other topics would you like to explore and, generally you expect people to want something different. But in every case, like 99% of the people said: we'd like to hear more about what happened in Los Angeles. And I think that Southern Californians acknowledge now that we have a rich history, I think that some of these artists have been so celebrated around the world and maybe not as celebrated in their home town. I mean, that happens in more places than Southern California but I think that it is time to celebrate our own history and I think the idea of preservation has become more a topic to Southern California also. I think this was the perfect time to celebrate this rich history that we all have.

What is your opinion on the place of California and California artists in the art world today?

I should preface this by: I'm not an art historian. My background is more in architecture. But I can tell you I travel around a lot to other museums, in Japan and all throughout

Europe, I go to scores of museums every year and in fact, as I said, I happened to be in Paris when there was the exhibition about Southern Californian art. I think that, maybe not in New York but definitely in Europe and definitely in Japan and in Asia, that Southern California is recognized as a global leader in the art world. I think that the artists that are here do have international recognition from the art-aware people in the world. And, that's the other nice thing is that it was time for us to acknowledge the artists who have gotten acknowledged. Bill Viola just won the Emperor's Prize for Artists in Tokyo and it's fabulous that we can celebrate him in LA as part of Pacific Standard Time. And, I think it started also, with the art schools. It started with the acknowledgment of how fabulous our art schools are here. In fact there was an article in the New York Times and it was something about these fabulous art schools in Southern California, you know CalArts and Otis and Art Center, UCLA and USC. And I think that, we are known as the art making capital of the world.