

PER PROSCENIA

Opening Reception: Saturday, May 12, 2018, 5 – 8pm

May 13 – June 24, 2018

Walter Askin
Elizabeth Bain
Sandra Vista

Organized by Jeanne Dreskin

Public Program: Sunday, May 20, 3pm

Artist Sandra Vista in conversation with exhibition organizer and art historian Jeanne Dreskin, moderated by Anna Katz, Assistant Curator, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA)

JOAN is pleased to present *Per Proscenia*, an exhibition of work spanning the late 1970s to early 90s by Los Angeles-based artists Walter Askin (b. 1929), Elizabeth Bain (b. 1945), and Sandra Vista (b. 1952). Within a renewed critical interest in painterly techniques that emerged in Southern California starting in the 1970s, the work of these three artists reveals an attention to the construction of spaces and surfaces to investigate and make visible acts of staging. While their vibrant visual fields question conceptual and material boundaries between painting, sculpture, collage, and drawing, their combinatory uses of two- and three-dimensional forms playfully gesture to a theatricality inherent in experiences of directed viewership.

Askin subscribes to a notion of “deep time” wherein art historical chronologies are commensurate not with movements or schools, but with the capricious flux of an ever-expanding cultural repertoire. His scenes revel in tropes plucked from histories of art, literature, and theater, but only to remain in service to canny juxtapositions of figures, artifacts, and archetypes. These worlds are unabashedly staged and curiously plotted. He positions his subjects within delineated spaces, but allows slippages between overall cohesion and fragmentation.

Bain’s tableaux originated in her study of nighttime landscapes outside her Downtown Los Angeles studio. Her arrangements merge signifiers of set and stage with those of architecture and the natural world, demonstrating how readily urban panoramas of the 1980s lent themselves to deconstruction. Angular geometries evoke Constructivist forms of the early 20th century whose frameworks have been dislocated or rearranged. As horizon lines transform into stage curtain hems, the planar becomes performative, vista becomes theater, and the dark density of a nocturnal metropolis becomes a pastiche of built surfaces and facades. Bain’s spaces announce themselves as stages—always to be looked at, never acted upon.

Vista experiments with figure/ground relationships by adjoining two-dimensional painted patterns. Biomorphic and abstracted forms animate one another, symbiotically mapping the viewer’s gaze across unstretched canvases. Vista adopts many of her techniques from the predominantly feminist Pattern and Decoration movement of the 1970s/80s, whose adherents reimagined patterns of international textiles and decorative arts, positing them as distinct from, yet on par with, western modernism’s “purist” forms. Vista, however, elides full renunciation of modernist vernaculars. She instead merges them with representational and volumetric flourishes, achieving an idiosyncratic “staging of the surface.”

In coordination with the exhibition, JOAN will host a conversation between artist Sandra Vista and exhibition organizer and art historian Jeanne Dreskin, moderated by Anna Katz, Assistant Curator, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. The program will focus on Vista's work and her relation to the Pattern and Decoration movement, which is the focus of an upcoming large-scale exhibition at MOCA organized by Katz.

Walter Askin lives and works in Pasadena. He received an MA in Art from the University of California, Berkeley in 1952. Solo exhibitions include presentations at the de Young Museum, San Francisco; Künstlerhaus, Vienna; the Hellenic Union, Athens; the Pasadena Art Museum; and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. His work has also been featured in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. From 1956 to 1992, he was a Professor of Art at California State University, Los Angeles. He has also taught and lectured at institutions including UC Berkeley; CSU Long Beach; the University of Hawaii; the University of New Mexico; Arizona State University; and the Irish Academy of Art, Dublin.

Elizabeth Bain lives and works in Los Angeles. She received a BFA in painting from Carnegie-Mellon University and an MFA from Otis Art Institute. Her wall constructions and paintings have been widely exhibited in Los Angeles and nationally. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art; Kathryn Markel Gallery, New York; the Santa Barbara Art Museum; and the Palm Springs Museum of Art. Public collections include The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art, Prudential Life Insurance, and Owens Corning Fiberglass. Her work has been discussed in *Art in America*, *Artwork*, *Art News*, *LA Weekly*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Images and Issues*.

Sandra Vista lives and works in Los Angeles. She received a BA in Art and a California Single Subject Teaching Credential in Art from San Diego State University, as well as an MFA in Painting from California State Long Beach. Between 1983 and 2015, Vista was an art instructor in the Los Angeles Unified School District and between 2000 and 2003, she served as an adjunct instructor at East Los Angeles College. Solo exhibitions include presentations at Vincent Price Museum and Coagula Curatorial, Los Angeles. Her work has also been shown in exhibitions nationally and internationally, including presentations at the Organization of Independent Artists, New York; the National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago; and at artist residencies in Budapest and Balatonfüred, Hungary. Vista maintains an independent writing practice and has curated exhibitions at I-5 Gallery, Los Angeles, and Arena I, Santa Monica.

Jeanne Dreskin, a writer and independent curator based in Los Angeles, is a Ph.D. candidate in history of art at the University of Pennsylvania. She has previously held publications and curatorial positions at The Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA); and Dia Art Foundation, where she organized public programs and assisted on exhibitions and publications by artists including Francis Alÿs, Franz Erhard Walther, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Zoe Leonard, Blinky Palermo, and Robert Whitman. She has presented original research and writing at institutions internationally, including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Leiden University, Netherlands; The Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona; and the College Art Association Annual Conference. Her writing has been published by *Aperture*, *Artforum*, *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles*, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Anna Katz is Assistant Curator at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), where she is organizing the first full-scale, scholarly survey of the Pattern and Decoration movement (1972-1985), opening Fall 2019 at MOCA Grand Avenue. She has recently organized the exhibitions Give and Take: Highlighting Recent Acquisitions and, in collaboration with the Getty Conservation Institute, Jackson Pollock's Number 1, 1949: A Conservation Treatment. From 2015 to 2017 Katz was the Wendy Stark Curatorial Fellow at MOCA, during which time she organized Peter Shire: Naked Is the Best Disguise; assisted on the exhibitions Carl Andre: Sculpture as Place, 1958–2010, Doug Aitken: Electric Earth, and Catherine Opie: 700 Nimes Road; and organized the museum's public programs. Previously a Joan Tisch Teaching Fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art from 2008 to 2013, she holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Art & Archaeology at Princeton University. Katz has taught art history courses at Occidental College, Pomona College, Pratt Institute, and UCLA and has recently contributed to the catalogues Doug Aitken: Electric Earth (2016), Kerry James Marshall: Mastry (2016), and Whitney Museum of American Art: Handbook of the Collection (2015).