

Exhibition: *Ed Moses: Drawings from the 1960s and 70s*

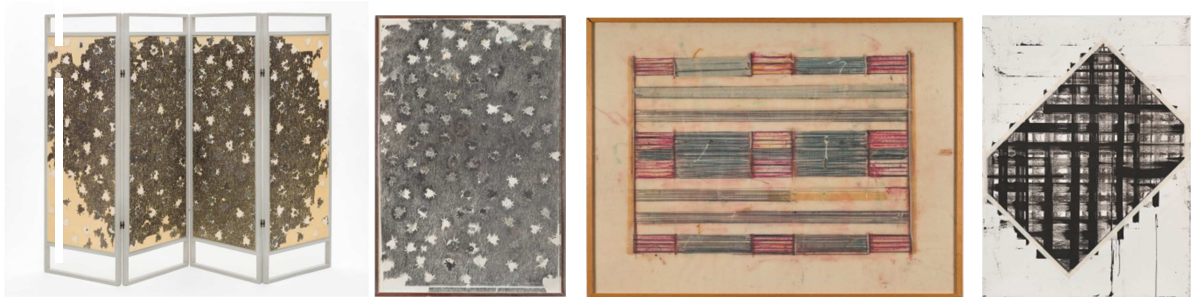
On View: May 10–August 2, 2015

Location: BCAM, Level 2

Exhibition: *Drawing in L.A.: The 1960s and 70s*

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(Image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles, April 15, 2015)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Ed Moses: Drawings from the 1960s and 70s*, the first museum presentation of the artist’s drawings in nearly 40 years. Ed Moses has been a significant figure in the development and history of art in Los Angeles since his first monographic exhibition at the Ferus Gallery in 1958. His unconventional materials and techniques led him to a unique mode of expression grounded in graphic experimentation, which included large floral graphite drawings from the 1960s to his signature diagonal grids of the 1970s. Moses has continued to draw throughout his career; however, the drawings of the ’60s and ’70s represent a period of intense experimentation and innovation that has sustained his work, in all media, for years after.

Ed Moses comprises nearly 90 works, more than 40 of which have been promised as gifts to LACMA by the artist. Additional works on view come from the museum’s permanent collection and local lenders. The exhibition is arranged in chronological order beginning with a few examples of the artist’s drawings from the 1950s, then it focuses on works from the ’60s through the mid -’70s.

“Ed Moses has been central to the history of art made in Los Angeles for more than half a century,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. “To fully appreciate his large and diverse body of work, one must look at the pivotal period of the 1960s and ’70s, when Moses was intensely focused on drawing.”

“Moses’s commitment to drawing suggests an assertion of the handmade in the face of pervasive technological growth and development,” said Leslie Jones, curator of Prints and Drawings at LACMA. “He proclaimed drawing’s viability as a medium of exploration and innovation, even at the most unlikely time and place, helping to establish drawing as a medium with a future as well as a past.”

Exhibition Overview

Moses’s work from the late 1950s and early 1960s illustrates his interest in gestural abstraction. Beginning in 1961, he looked even farther back to the origins of abstraction and the work of Piet Mondrian in particular. *Chrysanthemum Diptych* from 1961 is a direct reference to Mondrian’s drawings and paintings of chrysanthemums and is one of Moses’s first works centered on a floral motif. The artist’s roses, chrysanthemums, and lilies convey ornamentality, and when these drawings are mounted like Japanese screens, as in *Rose Screen* (1963), connections are drawn to non-Western cultures wherein the decorative arts are highly esteemed and appreciated. Moses’s selection of the flower as a pattern, however, was less about its connotations than its inherent potential for repetition, which provided a template for his mark making.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, Moses preferred grids to floral patterns as a structure for mark making. In comparison to the minimal forms that characterized art of the period, Moses employed the grid as much for its own pattern as for its associations with logic and order. As with the artist’s earlier rose drawings, the grid drawings are filled with tight, obsessive, repetitive scribbles in graphite. Moses’s drawings seem to be perpetually in progress. This unfinished quality also characterizes his approach to displaying artwork. In the 1971 exhibition of Moses’s work at Pomona College, drawings were hung at varying heights, some merely push pinned to the wall, with others leaning, a strategy that created less formal viewing situation not unlike the changeable environment of an artist’s studio. The LACMA presentation features a selection of grid drawings displayed in a manner reminiscent of the Pomona installation.

Moses’s interest in the geometry of the grid may also relate to his exploration of architecture, which led to the construction of buildings in the mid-1960s, as well as the “deconstruction” of Mizuno Gallery in 1969. In that pioneering installation piece, Moses removed part of the wall and gallery roof, exposing the wood slats so light could make diagonal patterns on the floor and walls. It is represented in the exhibition through projections of rarely seen documentary images.

In the late 1960s, artist Tony Berlant introduced Moses to Navajo blankets. Moses saw a visual connection between the linear patterns of the blankets and Piet Mondrian’s late

grid paintings, and he adapted Navajo designs for his drawings of the early 1970s. By associating the modernist Mondrian with the Navajo and incorporating Native American patterns into his own work, Moses blurred distinctions between “high” and “low” and “art” and “craft.” At the same time, Moses began to incorporate new and more diverse materials into his practice, including watercolor, tissue, vellum, powdered pigments, and resin. Completing his first works on canvas in more than 10 years, he chose not to mount them on stretchers; instead, the resin works hang like tapestries or animal hides, creating a hybrid art form in which drawing became more integrated into the body of the work, regardless of medium.

Diagonal grids, signaled in earlier drawings, dominate in Moses’s work beginning in the mid-1970s. The grids, whether ink on paper or acrylic on canvas, were executed with the same tools and methods of chance and repetition that characterized his drawings of the '60s. Since then, Moses has constantly altered his aesthetic, experimenting with assemblage, installation, and printmaking, and exploring new techniques and materials.

About the artist

Ed Moses was born in Long Beach, California, in 1926. He enlisted in the Navy at 17 and served as a surgical technician during World War II. After the war, Moses studied at Long Beach City College before transferring to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), to train under the expressionist painter Rico Lebrun. In 1958, Moses had his first exhibition of abstract paintings at the Ferus Gallery. The artist currently works and resides in Venice, California.

Drawing in L.A.: The 1960s and 70s

Ed Moses: Drawings from the 1960s and 70s is complemented by *Drawing in L.A.: The 1960s and 70s*, an installation of nearly 80 drawings from LACMA’s permanent collection and local lenders. *Drawing in L.A.* features work by nearly 50 Los Angeles-based artists from the same period, including John Altoon, Eleanor Antin, Larry Bell, Billy Al Bengston, Tony Berlant, Charles Gaines, and Ed Kienholz. Works range in technique from charcoal and ink to collage and xerography, and encompass realism, conceptual drawings and abstraction. The installation includes drawings by well-known artists, and others who have long been neglected and provides a unique opportunity to see the wide variety of drawings that were being made in Los Angeles in the 1960s and '70s.

Related Public Programming

Exhibition Walk-through with Artist Ed Moses
Sunday, May 31 at 2:30 pm

Join the artist for a walk-through of *Ed Moses: Drawings from the 1960s and 70s*, during which he discusses his seminal works.

Catalogue

Ed Moses: Drawings from the 1960s and 70s will be accompanied by a 56-page catalogue with an essay by curator Leslie Jones.

Credit

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and is made possible through the generous support of Violet Spitzer-Lucas and the Spitzer Family Foundation. Additional support provided by Dr. and Mrs. Ken Tokita and the Moses Family.

All exhibitions at LACMA are underwritten by the LACMA Exhibitions Fund. Major annual support is provided by Kitzia and Richard Goodman, with generous annual funding from Janet Chann and Michael Irwin in memory of George Chann, Emily and Teddy Greenspan, Jenna and Jason Grosfeld, and Lenore and Richard Wayne.

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, in addition to representing Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection that includes over 120,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present, encompassing the geographic world and nearly the entire history of art. Among the museum's strengths are its holdings of Asian art; Latin American art, ranging from masterpieces from the Ancient Americas to works by leading modern and contemporary artists; and Islamic art, of which LACMA hosts one of the most significant collections in the world. A museum of international stature as well as a vital part of Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collections through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over one million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement. LACMA is located in Hancock Park, 30 acres situated at the center of Los Angeles which also contains the Page Museum and La Brea Tar Pits and the forthcoming Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. Situated halfway between the ocean and downtown, LACMA is at the heart of Los Angeles.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Image captions:

Left: Ed Moses, *Rose Screen*, 1963, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum Acquisition Fund, © 2015

Ed Moses, photo © 2015 Museum Associates/LACMA

Center, left: Ed Moses, *Rose #5*, 1963, Collection of Jena and Michael King, © 2015 Ed Moses, photo © 2015 Museum Associates/LACMA, by Brian Forrest

Center, right: Ed Moses, *Untitled*, 1972, Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Ken Tokita, © 2015 Ed Moses, photo © 2015 Museum Associates/LACMA, by Brian Forrest

Right: Ed Moses, *Cubist Drawing #11*, 1977–78, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, promised gift of Ed Moses, © 2015 Ed Moses, photo © 2015 Museum Associates/LACMA, by Brian Forrest

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