

Exhibition: *Larry Sultan: Here and Home*

Dates: November 9, 2014–March 22, 2015

Location: BCAM, Level 2



(Image Captions on Page 3)

(Los Angeles—September 4, 2014) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Larry Sultan: Here and Home*, the first retrospective to examine the work and career of California artist Larry Sultan (1946–2009). The exhibition explores Sultan's 35-year career, from his early conceptual and collaborative projects of the 1970s to his solo, documentary-style photographs. Resonating throughout Sultan's work are themes of home and family, alongside his interest in the construction of identity, façade, and storytelling. Six major bodies of work make up this presentation, including *Evidence* (1975-1977), made collaboratively with Mike Mandel; *Swimmers* (1978–82); *Pictures from Home* (1983–92); *Editorial* (1993–2009); *The Valley* (1997–2003); and *Homeland* (2006–9). In total, *Larry Sultan: Here and Home* exhibits more than 200 photographs; a billboard; a film; and "Study Hall," a room offering a unique lens into Sultan's exploratory process both as artist and teacher.

"Larry Sultan is among the most influential photographers of his generation," said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. "His images capture something indelible about California while at the same time set the stage for personal reflection, public commentary, and social engagement."

Rebecca Morse, Associate Curator in the Wallis Annenberg Photography Department comments, "From the conceptual inquiries of his early collaborative work to the investigative strategies of his solo career, both personal and editorial, this exhibition reveals Sultan's exceptional range as an artist."

Larry Sultan: Here and Home is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by Prestel Publishing, with essays by Philip Geffer and Sandra S. Phillips.

Exhibition Organization

Larry Sultan: Here and Home is organized loosely in reverse chronological order and grouped by bodies of work.

Homeland (2006–9)

Considered to be Sultan's most overtly landscape-based body of work, *Homeland* is also the final series by the artist. Photographed in the coastal area of the San Francisco Bay, where Sultan lived since the 1970s, this series highlights the buffers between public and private space found on the edges of suburbia. Posing day laborers in familial situations—under a tree, maneuvering equipment, taking dishes to a potluck—Sultan explores the definitions of home and the longing to create it.

Editorial (1993–2009)

Between 1993 and 2009, Sultan took on over 160 editorial assignments for the *New York Times*, *Details*, *Vanity Fair*, and *W* magazine, among others. Sultan's artistic and commercial practices influenced each other significantly: An assignment for *Maxim* magazine inspired *The Valley* and heralded his use of artificial light. Scouting, staging, and directing dramas—all part of editorial assignments—ultimately became part of his working method in *Homeland*.

The Valley (1997–2003)

In 1998, Sultan was commissioned by *Maxim* magazine to photograph a day in the life of a porn star. He found himself in the San Fernando Valley, his hometown. In creating *The Valley*, the artist was captivated by the theme of domesticity in porn, as homes were readily rented for two or three days for a film shoot. Sultan's photographs document domestic elements, such as family photographs and interior decorative objects, as a component of the films. The images capture camera equipment, crew, and actors between takes napping, eating, joking, and relaxing—appearing more as an alternate family.

Pictures from Home (1983–92)

Using his mother and father as subject matter, Sultan created *Pictures from Home* over the course of nearly a decade. The series documents Sultan's parents in their home in the San Fernando Valley and in their retirement community in Palm Desert, California. Investigating personal identity, family relationships, and the ideas surrounding home, these photographs reflect the artist's fascination with storytelling and the narratives that are communicated through text and image.

Swimmers (1978–82)

Sultan, seeing the challenge in the immediacy and physicality of photographing underwater, set out to produce a series featuring vibrant images of students learning to swim. He describes a sensual and mysterious floating world from the perspective of the water's surface,

or just below, as students maneuver through the water. *Swimmers* is the artist's most formal series and acts as a bridge between his collaborative and solo works.

Evidence (1977)

Sultan and artist Mike Mandel—both from Los Angeles—met as graduate students in the San Francisco Art Institute's photography program in 1973. Between 1973 and 2000, the two artists collaborated on billboards, self-published books, and installations that were among the first photographic works to explore appropriation, authorship, and the relationship between context and meaning, ultimately defining the role of photography in conceptual art of the 1970s.

Evidence, one of five collaborations on view in this exhibition, represents the largest grouping of photographs to date. This body of work is a collection of black-and-white photographs pulled from the archive of corporations, research institutions, and public agencies across the United States. Through a National Endowment for the Arts grant, Sultan and Mandel were given access to archival photos from the repositories of major government agencies. Separated from their original context, these photographs depict technological and industrial procedures and experiments without any explanation of background or history.

About Larry Sultan

Raised in the San Fernando Valley, Sultan moved to Northern California in the early 1970s, but continued to draw inspiration from the architecture, atmosphere, and attitude of the Southern California of his youth. A lifelong educator, Sultan taught photography at the San Francisco Art Institute for 10 years (1978–88) and the California College of the Arts for 20 years (1989–2009) where he served as a Distinguished Professor of Photography. Larry Sultan's work has been exhibited and published widely and is included in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where he was also recognized with the Bay Area Treasure Award in 2005. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1946, Larry Sultan passed away at his home in Greenbrae, California in 2009.

Credit

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and made possible in part by The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, with additional support from The Brotman Foundation of California and the Wallis Annenberg Director's Endowment Fund.

Image Captions:

Left: Larry Sultan, *Batting Cage*, from the series *Homeland*, 2007, chromogenic print, 59 x 70 in., courtesy Michael Venera, © Estate of Larry Sultan, photo courtesy the Estate of Larry Sultan

Center: Larry Sultan, *My Mother Posing for Me*, from the series *Pictures from Home*, 1984, chromogenic print, 40 x 50 in., © Estate of Larry Sultan, photo courtesy the Estate of Larry Sultan

Right: Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel, *Untitled*, from the series *Evidence*, 1977 (printed 2013), gelatin

silver print, 8 x 10 in., © Estate of Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel, photo courtesy the Estate of Larry Sultan

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 pre-Columbian masterpieces 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 a million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives, such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement at lacma.org. Situated in Hancock Park on over 20 acres in the heart of Los Angeles, LACMA is located between the ocean and downtown.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

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