

# Getty

MAGAZINE | SUMMER 2023



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On the cover:  
*Luis Acosta, n.º 64*, about 1940s, Alfredo Boulton. Gelatin silver print. Partial donation of the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I couldn't have agreed more. The experience of just going somewhere that is beautiful, that is quiet, that exists solely so that you can be in the presence of beauty, is a really rare thing. There's something very important about exposing people to places that exist for no reason other than to give them aesthetic pleasure and a sense of peace.

We also discussed the role of museums in challenging how we observe and experience art. Maybe museums should encourage us to bring our own perspectives and life histories as we approach less familiar subjects. "You can be touched by an object that is 9,000 years old, as if it were created today," Laurence said. "You feel an emotion in front of it. But you can also dislike a universal masterpiece. And that's okay. That's exactly what art is about."

Museums should also give visitors a wide array of art to experience. At Getty, we have the tremendous privilege to not have to constantly hustle for funding, including from the government. So we have the freedom to curate exhibitions on a variety of topics, irrespective of politics or national leanings. Not every museum is in such a privileged position, and it gives us a responsibility others don't have—to help people explore our world.

One way Getty is bringing new perspectives to new audiences is through collection sharing. We recently partnered with the National Portrait Gallery in London to purchase *Portrait of Mai*, a masterpiece by Britain's Joshua Reynolds. The portrait features a man of Pacific Islander ancestry, in majestic dress, painted nearly 250 years ago—and it makes a profound statement about our heritage and the colonialism of the time. Getty's interest is in having audiences today ask questions about the origins of this work, and to conduct research and education into the themes it represents. For years to come, *Portrait of Mai* will cross our continents and be exhibited to audiences here and in the UK.

One of our frequent partners in this endeavor to share our collective heritage is the Louvre. Most recently, teams there helped us bring the cultural heritage of ancient Mesopotamia to Los Angeles.

This comment from Laurence, on the topic of museums helping each other, was one of my favorite takeaways of the evening: "We also have a duty to work together with other institutions. I do believe that international relations are very important in museums. Museums and culture go in places where diplomacy fails."

To hear more of the conversation and our thoughts on women in the cultural sphere, academic and artistic freedom, and the future role of museums, visit [villa-albertine.org](http://villa-albertine.org).

Katherine E. Fleming

**W**hat role should Getty and other cultural institutions play in today's world?

Great question, and one I recently explored before a live audience in New York with Laurence des Cars, the Musée du Louvre's director, as part of the Villa Albertine Museum Series sponsored by the French Consulate.

As someone who moved from academia to the art world only a year ago this August—and who wants to use that "outsider's" perspective to good effect—I've been pondering this very question. So Laurence and I had a lot to say when we delved into the thorny subtopic of whether art institutions should strive to entertain or stick to educating people about art.

"How do you get the Louvre's visitors to look beyond the *Mona Lisa*?" was the first question from moderator Elizabeth Easton, director of the Center for Curatorial Leadership, to which Laurence replied: "The big challenge for the Louvre is not to be trapped in one of two extremes—become only a tourist attraction or become an elitist place with a complex collection that can be understood by only a few people. You have to be welcoming to everyone. And in this post-COVID situation, and with a war on European territory for the first time since World War II, we need to give a museum visit real purpose. This purpose can be pure pleasure. The joy you have looking at works of art."



Martin D. Jenkins Behavioral Science Center,  
Morgan State University, designed by Louis  
Edwin Fry Sr. Photo by Eli Pousson

## First Round of Conserving Black Modernism Grants Awarded

From a community center devoted to Black art and culture to an award-winning swimming pool in Kansas, eight sites are part of the first year of grants for Conserving Black Modernism, a joint funding program of Getty and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to preserve historic modern architecture in the United States by Black architects and designers.

The new grants totaling \$1.2 million were announced in June as the Getty-funded portion of the National Trust's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, the largest US resource dedicated to the preservation of African American historic places.

"Getty's partnership helps us take a decisive step towards raising visibility and preserving the work of generations of Black architects whose underrecognized architectural genius, creativity, and ingenuity shaped our national understanding of modernism," says Brent Leggs, executive director of the Action Fund and senior vice president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Among the buildings supported by Getty are the Carson City Hall in Los Angeles County, designed by trailblazing architect Robert A. Kennard; the McAfee Pool in Wichita, Kansas, renamed to honor Charles McAfee, its designer and the pioneering past president of the National Organization of Minority Architects; and the Martin D. Jenkins Behavioral Science Center at Morgan State University in Baltimore, designed by Louis Edwin Fry Sr., the first African American to receive a master's degree in architecture from Harvard University. To read about all the grant projects, visit [getty.edu/projects/conserving-black-modernism](https://getty.edu/projects/conserving-black-modernism). ■

## An Innovative Acquisition of Joshua Reynolds' *Portrait of Mai*

Getty and the National Portrait Gallery in London have jointly acquired Joshua Reynolds' *Portrait of Mai (Omai)*.

The shared ownership of the painting and strategic partnership between the two institutions stems from an innovative model of international collaboration that enables and maximizes public access to the work in perpetuity. Getty and the National Portrait Gallery will share the painting for public exhibition, research, and conservation.

"Getty, which strives to identify new models for thinking about and sharing cultural heritage, is delighted by this opportunity to participate in an innovative approach to ownership—one that places *Portrait of Mai* in a rich and multifaceted transatlantic context," says Katherine E. Fleming, CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust.

The painting will first go on view at the National Portrait Gallery when it reopens this summer following a major transformation project, and later be exhibited at other institutions across the UK. *Mai* will travel periodically between the UK and US, sharing time equally between them. The first Getty presentation is slated for 2026 and will extend to the period when Los Angeles hosts the 2028 Olympic Games.

Reynolds' spectacular *Portrait of Mai (Omai)* holds a pivotal place in global art history, depicting the first Polynesian to visit Britain, and is widely regarded as the finest portrait by one of Britain's greatest artists. Known as "Omai" in England, Mai (about 1753–1779) was a native of Raiatea, an island now part of French Polynesia, who traveled from Tahiti to England on one of Captain Cook's ships. He lived in London from 1774 to 1776 and was received by royalty and the intellectual elite. Mai returned to his homeland in 1777 and died there two years later.

Timothy Potts, Maria Hummer-Tuttle and Robert Tuttle, Director of the J. Paul Getty Museum, describes *Portrait of Mai (Omai)* as one of the greatest masterpieces of British art. "It is also the most tangible and visually compelling manifestation of Europe's first encounters with the peoples of the Pacific islands," Potts says. "The myriad artistic, historical, and cultural issues that Mai's portrait raises for 21st-century viewers and researchers will be the starting point for a joint research project led by the Gallery and Getty in the years ahead." ■



Installation view of *Portrait of Mai (Omai)*, about 1776, Sir Joshua Reynolds. Oil on canvas. Purchased jointly by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Board of Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery, London, 2023. Support provided to NPG by the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Art Fund and other generous supporters. Image courtesy of the previous owner



## Wonderful Things

On the evening of May 1, a celebratory crowd attended the opening reception for *Tim Walker: Wonderful Things*. Walker's vivid and surreal photographs famously blend the realms of art and fashion. Ten recent series by Walker are featured in the exhibition. Nine were inspired by his exploration into the vaults of the V&A Museum's art and design collections. The 10th and latest commission is based on two Getty collection paintings, by Lucas Cranach and Dieric Bouts, and provocatively riffs on the Renaissance painters' uncanny representations of fabric, nudity, and fantasy.



1. Tim Walker, Adwoa Aboah, Daniel Wheatley, and Madeleine Østlie
2. Gideon Lewin and Joanna Mastroianni
3. Darya Sizina and Nadezhda Kuleshova
4. Bongbong Buan, Colin Eggesfield, Crystal Lowe, Debbie Greene, David Greene, Kathleen Francesca, Brandon Clark, Deep Bhasin, and Cameron Mathison



5. Kevin Roldan, Joe Jenkins, and Dian Oved
6. @younghoneybear and Joy Green
7. Paul Martineau, curator of photographs at the Getty Museum and curator of the exhibition's Getty presentation
8. Alex Vasquez, Ryder Bird, and Amy Roiland
9. Timothy Potts, Maria Hummer-Tuttle and Robert Tuttle Director of the J. Paul Getty Museum, welcomes guests to the opening
10. DJ Zen Freeman
11. Puey Quiñones (center)



### Dawoud Bey & Carrie Mae Weems: In Dialogue Opens

On April 3 Getty held a lively opening reception for *Dawoud Bey & Carrie Mae Weems: In Dialogue*, a photography exhibition that pairs the artists' powerful, moving work for the first time. DJ LeRoy Downs performed sets while Weems and Bey, local emerging artists, and other guests mingled.

The following evening Getty hosted a sold-out event, a conversation between Bey and Weems moderated by curator LeRonn Brooks of the Getty Research Institute. The two artists, friends for more than 45 years, discussed how they met in 1977 at the Studio Museum in Harlem when Bey was in a mentorship role; how the artistic and political climates they grew up in shaped their careers; and how factors such as race, class, and gender have influenced their photography. They also reflected on their creative processes. "Out of the hundreds of photographs that were made, there were...maybe 10 that are really fabulous," Weems said. "For me as an artist, that's when I'm really excited about the work, when the work is actually then bigger than me. When I'm surprised." The conversation was followed by a Q&A with the audience and a concert by esteemed jazz musician David Murray, a longtime favorite of the two artists.



Above: David Murray

Left: Carrie Mae Weems, LeRonn Brooks, and Dawoud Bey discuss the artists' lifelong friendship.



### Migration Stories

On May 13 the Getty Research Institute celebrated the close of its 2023 artist residency program with a conversation between Felipe Baeza, Getty's current artist in residence, and Laura Gutiérrez, associate professor of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. The speakers shared their parallel migration stories: both moved from Mexico to Chicago and then onward to pursue their dreams. Their discussion also explored how their immigration experiences shaped their creative and scholarly processes, their attraction to the concept of "unruly" bodies, and Baeza's use of imagination as a mode of survival.

"I have learned to leave all logic aside," Baeza said. "It used to feel so rigid before conceptually and materially, and now it feels more fantastical and free."

### Don't Forget to Call Home

Back in 2019, artist Yasmine Nasser Diaz began working on a replica of the kitchen in her childhood home for her installation *the sound of your voice is home*. She designed the yellow wallpaper from memory, and made sure each object was authentic: a mortar and pestle, a container of clarified butter, and a big jar of Yemeni honey. "I know myself," says Diaz. "I would feel so unsatisfied if it didn't feel quite right."

The most important object was the cassette player on the kitchen table. Diaz, who was born in Chicago to Yemeni parents, would be summoned to the kitchen along with her six siblings to listen to messages sent from relatives overseas.

Diaz recently joined independent curator Ikram Lakhdhari to talk about *the sound of your voice is home* (2022), which invites viewers into this kitchen while audio recordings of memories and WhatsApp messages play in the background. The piece touches on themes of immigration, parental expectations, growing up between cultures, and the power of audio.

"When you're listening to other people trying to get in touch with their family, it hits a bit differently," said Diaz. "I've noticed that this experience often makes visitors think about how they stay in touch with their own family, and perhaps prompts them to reach out."

After the talk, audience members had the opportunity to record messages and handwrite letters to loved ones. For Ibraheem Ali, whose own parents immigrated to the US, this was an opportunity to write to his father. He usually texts or calls, but in this case, a "physical letter has a little bit more meaning and power to it," he says.

—Caitlin Shamberg, Editorial Director, J. Paul Getty Trust



Above: Yasmine Nasser Diaz (left) and Ikram Lakhdhari take questions from the audience.

Top right: Still from *the sound of your voice is home* (detail), 2022, Yasmine Nasser Diaz. Multimedia installation. Courtesy the artist and OCHI Projects. Photo: Deen Babakhvi



Dawoud Bey, Hamza Walker (curator and director of LAXART), Carrie Mae Weems and Jeffrey Hoone



**Donors Honor Dawoud Bey and Carrie Mae Weems**

Shortly before the April 3 opening reception for *Dawoud Bey & Carrie Mae Weems: In Dialogue*, Timothy Potts, Maria Hummer-Tuttle and Robert Tuttle Director of the J. Paul Getty Museum, welcomed the exhibition's supporters to a preview and celebration with the artists and curators. He praised Bey and Weems, noting their extraordinarily influential careers, and acknowledged the exhibition's partners, including major supporter Jordan Schnitzer, a longtime champion of Getty exhibitions; Megan and Peter Chernin for generous support of the exhibition and community outreach programming in Los Angeles; sponsors Jan and Trish de Bont; Susan Steinhauser and Dan Greenberg, who donated works included in the show; and the Getty Photographs Council, which supported the acquisition of a work by Bey. The artists spoke warmly of their mutual friendship and respect while expressing gratitude for the exhibition's enthusiastic reception.

Jeffrey Hoone, Dawoud Bey, Carrie Mae Weems, Ravi S. Rajan (president of CalArts), and Jordan Schnitzer

Photos by Molly O'Keefe/Capture Imaging



**Patron Sunset Reception**

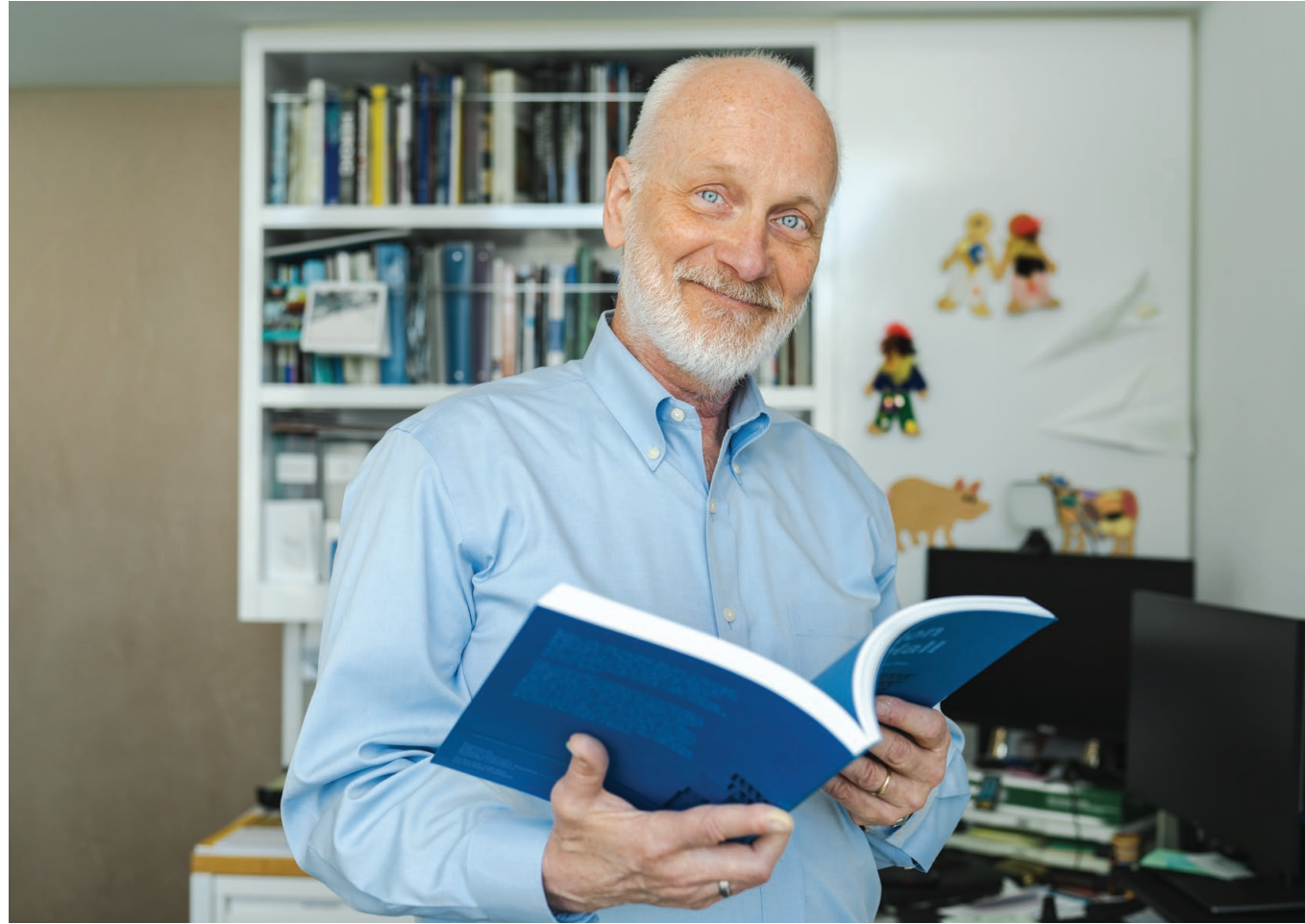
In the spring of 2017 a small group gathered on the porch of J. Paul Getty's ranch house at the Villa to toast a new initiative: the Getty Patron Program. That first meeting became an annual tradition, and on June 8 Patrons gathered at the Getty Center for the seventh Patron Sunset Reception. This year's event brought together more than 350 Patrons, guests, and international partners for a festive celebration of art, music, and the power of collaboration.

Attendees enjoyed the opening of *Beyond the Light: Identity and Place in 19th-Century Danish Art* and a musical performance by acclaimed Danish jazz pianist Nikolaj Hess. Distinguished guests included the Honorable Christina Markus Lassen, Danish ambassador to the US; Astrid la Cour, director of SMK, the Danish National Gallery and Getty's exhibition partner; and members of the Danish cultural community.

Since its inception, the Patron Program has engaged nearly 400 families and raised over \$3.3 million in support of Getty initiatives.



- 1. The Honorable Christina Markus Lassen, Ambassador of Denmark to the US. Photo: Austin Donohue
- 2. From left: Hanne Støvring; Berit Basse, Consul General of Denmark in New York; Christina Markus Lassen; cocurator Thomas Lederballe; Astrid la Cour; cocurator Freyda Spira; Nikolaj Hess; and cocurator Stephanie Schrader
- 3. Patrons tour *Beyond the Light: Identity and Place in 19th-Century Danish Art*.
- 4. Guests mingle in the Getty Center Museum Entrance Hall under Mercedes Dorame's installation *Woshaa'axre Yaang'aro*.
- 5. Pianist and composer Nikolaj Hess performs. Photo: Austin Donohue



*From restoring historic furniture in the Netherlands to teaching conservation in Taiwan, Antoine “Ton” Wilmering has devoted his career to preserving great works of art*

**The gist of what I do:** As a senior program officer at the Getty Foundation, I work with colleagues across Getty and with specialists in the field of art and cultural heritage preservation to identify a particular issue or challenge—for example, the conservation of modern architecture—and then we speak with people out in the field to determine: “How much of an issue is this? What might the solutions be?” So I’m almost like a mediator; we listen to the field on the one hand and then on the other support the field with finding a solution. Our funding strategies could include grants to support training residencies, workshops, a symposium, and sometimes publications to help address that larger issue.

**Early introduction to art:** I grew up in Haarlem, in the Netherlands. I’m the fourth of six kids, so it was a lively family. My parents’ families went through the Second World War, and they lost basically everything they had. But my grandmother had retained a few paintings and antique furniture that were packed into a very small house. One painting was so big that it covered an entire wall: a 19th-century Dutch farm landscape. I was close to her, so I think maybe that’s where my interest in art comes from. And I have always been interested in making, which runs in the family with all my siblings. I attribute this to my tinkering father and to living in a country where it basically always rains so you simply had to find fun indoor activities. In my late teens I

had a small lathe, so I made wooden bowls for family and friends, and then I began making some very simple furniture, with fine lines, precise and neat.

**An eye for spaces and textures:** I always liked interiors—historic interiors and modern interiors. I like how people create a space in the world around themselves. I always felt that I had a good eye for quality, for good proportions, for the use of materials. And my father had a very small textile manufacturing facility, a sort of small knitting factory. It had three large machines that made a type of fine wool that was used for clothing. I helped him out quite a bit. You kind of learn to feel the material. Even now, when I go clothing shopping, I always feel the fabric’s quality first. I think my eye and tactile ability formed a really good combination for becoming a conservator.

**Discovering conservation:** In high school I played bass guitar in a band. But we were lacking a lead guitarist. Through a friend of a friend, we found someone who was the son of the city organist, and he went to cabinetmaking school. That was the first time I thought, “Wow, you can actually make a living by making furniture.” I thought: “People are interested in this? They pay money for this?” That opened a whole new world for me, and I became very interested in furniture restoration and conservation.

At that time, there was no furniture conservation program available in the Netherlands, so I cobbled my education together through internships at the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem and the Amsterdam Museum, and then spent 15 months at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Each time the collections grew better and the challenges in conservation became more complicated. I found my first official job in the Netherlands working at a palace that used to belong to the royal family and housed some of their former art collections.

**Conservation 101:** One of the main principles of conservation is that you have to respect the original work. Even if you don’t like some of it, it’s still the intent of the maker. So, to make it structurally sound, restore decorative elements, or unify the piece to make it presentable in a gallery, you seek to do the minimal amount of work to give a work of art the maximum benefit. “Minimal intervention” is a mantra in the field.

**From New York to Taiwan to California:** I moved to New York for a position as a furniture conservator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I also became involved with hosting and training interns, and I found that particularly fulfilling. My wife is an artist from Taiwan, and we thought about starting a family. But living in New York City basically off one salary, we were not quite sure how to do that. So then we thought, “Well, how about moving to Taiwan?” Tainan National University of the Arts launched a new conservation program, and they were looking for a professor in wood conservation. So, we made the leap. We left everything behind and lived there for four years while I was teaching. It was so wonderful on the one hand and great to work with students, but it was difficult to integrate, as my Chinese was extremely nascent.

In 2003 I participated in the Getty Conservation Institute [GCI] Guest Scholars program. I spent three months at the GCI researching how the discipline of furniture conservation grew out of traditional cabinetmaking and carpentry for an article in a professional journal. During that time I heard about an open position at the Getty Foundation that intrigued me. I was a conservator and not a grant maker, but it turned out that my background was a good fit for the job. Like our director says, you don’t wake up one day and say, “I want to be a philanthropist” or “I want to work in grant making.” You grow into it for different reasons. For me the main reason was that it opened the door to supporting and helping the field of conservation more broadly.

**A good day at the office:** I find it satisfying to know that certain grants will help people grow or gain more or new skills. A relatively small amount of money can impact people’s lives in very positive ways. I also find it fascinating to learn about emerging conservation issues in art and architecture and to work with the field to address problems when there’s somehow a barrier to finding a solution. That’s where grant making can be really helpful: to make resources available for specialists who then push the field to that next level. I find this personally very rewarding. I also feel fortunate to be working with wonderful colleagues both within the Foundation as well as across the Getty.

**A tough day:** In working with prospective grantees, I first evaluate whether a particular project falls within our initiative’s strategies and assess how much it potentially could contribute to reaching the goal that we stated in the program plan. I start out with the hope that everything nicely fits. Sometimes, however, you realize that a project may not be feasible, even if you wish it were. Maybe the more you talk with a prospective grantee, you feel that you’re not really connecting on the same ideas, and then you just have to be very tactful in declining. This is not always easy, especially when you see the potential is there, but it is just not coming together. Fortunately, the good days outweigh the tough days by a lot.

**Most rewarding moment:** In the first year of our Keeping It Modern initiative to conserve modern architecture, we were identifying projects that would set the tone for what the initiative was going to be. I learned about a very beautiful chapel in Taiwan called Luce Memorial Chapel, built in 1962–63. It was an early design concept of I. M. Pei, but then was further finished by a Taiwanese architect, C. K. Chen. I thought this might be a good fit. I called the number for the chapel, and Father Samuel answered. We talked about the idea of Keeping It Modern. I said: “We will have grant funds available.

What are the preservation needs of the chapel?” And he said, “Is this a call from heaven?” The chapel eventually became the first piece of modern architecture added to Taiwan’s list of national historic monuments.

There was another equally rewarding moment at the conclusion of Keeping It Modern. Each year, we had been reaching out to communities in the field with a call for grant proposals, but I struggled to connect with the modern architecture legacy by Black architects. That is until last year, when we were able to give a large grant for Conserving Black Modernism, which is a program managed by the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, DC. Through this program, the National Trust has now awarded eight grants for preservation planning and emergency repairs for buildings with great architectural, cultural, and social significance. These grants are among the first to draw attention to the important, but often not mentioned, Black architects who were an integral part of the modern movement in America.

**Favorite spot at the Getty Center:** Architecture-wise, one of my favorite spots is the exterior of the Exhibition Pavilion, which looks like a cube on long slender posts. It overlooks the Central Garden, and it’s just very beautiful.

**Woodworking at home:** I have always kept an interest in woodworking and, over the years, have made things for my wife. She does contemporary Chinese ink painting. Years ago, there was an exhibition at LACMA from the National Museum of Korea. It had this fine wooden frame, with a few pins in there, meant to hang brushes. I thought, “That’s so beautiful.” So I sketched it in the gallery, and then I made two of the frames in my workshop for my wife’s studio. She loved it. Right now I have some antique woodworking tools I’m restoring and getting in good working order. I value objects that are already made. I always have, even before the sustainability debate came to the fore. If you can use an older chisel that’s already been made and is good quality, why would you have to buy something new? A good quality tool can last for generations. ■



Wilmering in his woodworking workshop with the antique tools he’s restoring. In his palm: Dutch woodworking planes used to shape and smooth curved surfaces. Photo courtesy Antoine Wilmering

*The Getty Center show Play and Pastimes in the Middle Ages explores the importance of entertainment in medieval society. Staff photographer Cassia Davis asked a sampling of young visitors, “What would you have liked and not liked about living in the Middle Ages?”*



Kaia Henderson

**Helena Rudensky, 16**

Looking at everything here, I really like the elegance, and I really like the care with everything. People spent their entire lives making this one manuscript, and that’s someone’s complete dedication—spending a day making sure the gold leaf around the “B” is perfect. That’s really nice, the idea that something is worth your whole life to make. What I wouldn’t have liked? The Black Plague. I saw *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* when I was very young with my grandfather, since that’s his favorite humor. And it looked kind of miserable. I think if you were everyone but the very top, it was pretty bleak.



Above: Helena Rudensky admires a manuscript that shows Alexander the Great judging a sporting contest.

**Kaia Henderson, 12**

I’m really into mythology, so I would probably enjoy looking at different myths or something like that. I’m not sure if there would have been a way to read books during that age, though. I wouldn’t have liked all the weaponry and pain in that era. Torture was a big part of it, and I don’t really like that type of thing.

**Faith Phillips, 18**

I think I would’ve liked living in a simpler time. Just the fact there’s no social media, there’s no technology. It would be such a different space, where small things don’t matter as much, or where going outside is the highlight of your day. I don’t know. It just seems like that would be such a nicer way to live sometimes. I guess a downside could be that the lack of technology would make you feel kind of stuck. You couldn’t really travel very far, or you’d have to take a horse and a carriage to get two miles away from your house. That seems kind of depressing to me, to be totally honest. If I had to stay in one little village my whole life, that’s kind of scary. So I guess that would be what I’d hate the most. ■



Right: Faith Phillips plays checkers, one of several games and activities visitors can try in the gallery.





## Silhouette Sleuthing

### How a curator unlocked the secrets in an arsenic-laced portrait album

By Carly Pippin  
Communications Specialist  
Getty Foundation

**IT'S 1804** and your wedding day.

But the camera has yet to be invented, so no photographer documents your first kiss, and no photo booth captures your guests in goofy props. How can you commemorate the occasion? Everyone in your hometown of New Orleans seems to be talking about a newcomer, traveling silhouette artist William Bache. You corral your wedding party to his studio, where for the small price of 25 cents he uses a machine called a physiognotrace to capture your silhouette profiles in striking detail, down to wisps of hair. After marveling at the accuracy of each visage, your guests take home their copies,

perhaps the first physical image of themselves they've ever seen. Later, you and your spouse hang your framed profiles on the wall, facing each other.

Imagined moments like these have come alive for Robyn Asleson, curator of prints and drawings at the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery, who used a Getty grant to research the ledger book of William Bache. This unparalleled volume (about 1803–12) contains over 1,800 of Bache's hand-cut paper silhouettes, nearly half of which are identified by name, depicting a vast swath of early 19th-century individuals, from former First Lady Martha Washington

and President Thomas Jefferson to everyday folk such as a tavern keeper, comedian, and young bride.

"Silhouettes tell us so much about portraiture before photography, and not just about the wealthiest people in society," says Asleson. "Silhouettes were inexpensive and portable, worn in lockets, kept in a personal album, and altogether much more intimate than any other portrait. The whole idea of making an image of or for a loved one is fundamental to their very nature."

Asleson has been immersing herself in the album for years—picturing the lives of sitters, such as traveling actors or young military men (who sat imposing and commanding in their bicorn hats). Bache would also be visited by several members of the same family. A mother and daughter might stop by on a Monday and a few days later send over the father and son. "You can almost imagine the behind-the-scenes conversations that kept people rotating through the doors."

To learn more about the ledger and identify its many unnamed sitters, Asleson and Getty-funded research assistant Elizabeth Isaacson have drawn on libraries and archives up and down the Eastern Seaboard and delved into the depths of Ancestry.com. The result of their labor: the newly launched microsite William Bache's Silhouettes Album, which offers public access to the album for the very first time and features high-resolution images of the silhouettes, a biography, an interactive timeline of Bache's life, conservation reports, copies of the artist's many newspaper advertisements promoting his services, and more.

#### Poisoned portraits

After the Smithsonian acquired the Bache album in 2002, conservation scientists discovered that the entire album was laced with arsenic (the origins of which are still unknown), making it hazardous to the touch and imprudent to share with visitors.

At that time, digital access to museums and archives was in its nascent stages, forcing researchers to rely on analog approaches, such as analyzing newspaper microfilm, historical books, and physical marriage and probate records to try and identify the silhouettes. It was long and often fruitless work. Given the album's toxicity and arduous research requirements, the National Portrait Gallery shelved the project until a more opportune time came along.

In 2021 Asleson learned about Getty's Paper Project initiative, which awards grants to institutions around the world to bring attention to works on paper and help curators of prints and drawings engage new audiences. She knew that advance-

ments in online access to historical documents now enabled in-depth research that could lead to fresh discoveries about the ledger. Many museums and archives were also still closed due to COVID-19, a reality that pushed many researchers toward digital methods. She applied and received a grant in 2021. "This was a project whose time had come," she notes.

With Getty support, a Smithsonian paper conservator and museum specialist donned hazmat suits to perform an up-close examination of the poison-laden pages, using the opportunity to document the entire album with high-resolution photography, now available on the microsite.

#### Rethinking Bache's whereabouts

After two decades of waiting, the new discoveries came quickly. Asleson and other scholars had long assumed that, outside of the ledger's first 100 silhouettes from Northern Virginia, the majority were cut in New Orleans, where Bache was known to have been in 1804. At the time, the city contained a wide array of cultures—French, Spanish, German, Native American, English, and more—so on observing the wide variety of individuals represented in the album, nothing seemed outside the norm.

That said, Asleson was curious about an immigration record that indicated Bache had turned up in Philadelphia after traveling there from Havana, when his last known location had been New Orleans. By using "the magic of the Internet" and conducting searches in Spanish rather than English, she learned that the artist had spent only a month in New Orleans and then over a year in Cuba and possibly surrounding islands. Many of the supposed New Orleans silhouettes (approximately 1,000) were from the Caribbean.

"There was back-and-forth movement between the Caribbean, with its sugar plantations, and New Orleans, where sugar was refined, so it makes sense that Bache would go there next," says Asleson, who marvels at the migratory history revealed by the ledger. "He likely had letters of recommendation from people in New Orleans who had friends or family in Havana, and he used his album as a calling card. Like many people of his time, he was incredibly mobile."

While in Cuba, Bache went door-to-door, his physiognotrace strapped to his back, crafting silhouettes of whomever he came across, including numerous Afro-Caribbean individuals. While it remains unknown whether these sitters were enslaved, their portraits contribute to the wide diversity reflected in the ledger, something that Bache appears to have been proud to promote.

Opposite page: *Ledger Book of William Bache*, 1803–12. Black paper coated silhouettes mounted on paper. Digitized by Mark Gulezian/NPG. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; partial gift of Sarah Bache Bloise



Pair of unidentified men, 1804–6, William Bache. Cut coated paper mounted on paper. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; partial gift of Sarah Bache Bloise

#### A new resource for genealogy enthusiasts

The categorization of the Caribbean silhouettes helped Asleson confirm that the approximately 770 others in the album were from Bache’s time in Northern Virginia and New Orleans. This section of the ledger is the most thoroughly labeled with dates and names. Asleson has ambitions that this newly public data will lead people to discover images they never knew existed of their ancestors.

“We can easily guess that there are tens of thousands of people living in the United States today who are connected to this album, and the second they Google that ancestor’s name, it will show up on the Bache microsite,” notes Asleson. “Once the site is made public, we expect more information will come to light and fill gaps in the histories we have compiled so far.”

The album offers an unprecedented opportunity for people of mixed heritage, especially, to access never-before-seen ancestral portraits. Asleson notes that in the 1800s New Orleans was a racially diverse city, and multiracial relationships were common. However, as some descendants of multiracial families started “passing” as white, their Black ancestors may have been written out of family histories. The

Bache silhouettes might be the only existing portraits of Black ancestors whose images were otherwise destroyed. “As I was learning more and more about this history, I really began to hope that some of the people who are trying to find their heritage today, who realize it might have been deliberately eradicated to protect their ancestors from oppression, might have the chance to discover an image of a great-great-grandfather or grandmother.”

Portraits in any form from over 200 years ago are rare, and the project to digitize the Bache album has resulted in many more being identified, cataloged, and made public. Not only has this work led to a deeper understanding of the social fabric of early American and Caribbean life, it has also provided visual identification of individuals whose lives might otherwise have been lost to history.

For Bache, his ledger might have been a practical way to market his services and provide what are essentially silhouette “negatives” should a sitter ever want future copies. But for scholars and the public today, it’s a treasure trove, one that will continue to evolve as further information emerges and more and more of its secrets unfold. ■

A museum specialist in protective gear at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery helps with the digitization of the *Ledger Book of William Bache* (1803–12), which contains arsenic-laced pages.



By Erin Migdol  
Associate Editor  
J. Paul Getty Trust

# BRINGING OCEAN TO LAND

***Mercedes Dorame's  
new Getty Center  
installation invites  
visitors to imagine  
Catalina Island from  
the Tongva people's  
perspective***

Mercedes Dorame stands next to the second-smallest shell from her installation. Her shells range from 4 to 12 feet tall.

Tucked among a row of truck repair shops, steel fabricators, and the Union Pacific railyard in Commerce, you'll find an unexpected workspace: artist Mercedes Dorame's studio, with art supplies piled on tables and photos of loved ones tacked to the walls. Though miles from the coast, this past spring the space also brimmed with sea life: specifically, a six-foot-tall interpretation of an abalone shell suspended from the ceiling.

The dimpled texture of the outside and the gleaming purples, pinks, and greens inside mimic the real abalone shells Dorame displays on a table. Abalones hold a cherished place in her Tongva culture. The Gabrielino-Tongva tribe has inhabited the Los Angeles Basin and Channel Islands since time immemorial, and abalones served as a source of food, fish-hooks, and ceremonial regalia. Ever since she saw live abalones for the first time in the tide pools off Catalina Island last year, Dorame has been fascinated by these "important little beings."

"Seeing them alive and flourishing was so exciting," Dorame says, eagerly sifting through a stack of photos she took of abalones clinging to rocks under the clear Pacific waters.



Dorame snapped these photos of abalones in Catalina Island's tide pools.

This mural wraps around the walls of the Getty Center Entrance Hall and represents the view of Southern California from Catalina Island.

The giant abalone interpretation is part of Dorame's installation *Woshaa'axre Yaang'aro* (Tongva for "looking back"), on view in the Getty Museum Entrance Hall through July 28, 2024. Five shells ranging from 4 to 12 feet tall hang from the ceiling, and murals that represent the view of the Southern California coastline from Catalina wrap around the walls. Iridescent film covering the windows changes the colors of the shells depending on how the sunlight filters in, evoking the feeling of being underwater.

Dorame's piece is the inaugural installation of Getty's new Rotunda Commission series, which will highlight new work by contemporary artists. Dorame hopes the installation gives visitors a new respect for the ecology of Southern California and encourages them to consider the Tongva people's point of view and their connection to this land.

"That's what inspired the title—this return gaze," Dorame says. "How do we get outside of ourselves and see from a different perspective?"

### Documenting Tongva presence

Woven into Dorame's childhood were connections to her Tongva culture: visits to Kuruvungna Village Springs in West Los Angeles with her father, when the local Tongva community lobbied to restore and protect the sacred site; memories revealed by her paternal grandparents, who, like many Indigenous people, were quiet about their heritage for years because "there's so much shame," she recalls; weekends spent exploring her non-Native maternal grandparents' backyard in Malibu, which Tongva people once inhabited.

As a student at UCLA, she began working as a cultural resource monitor, which meant that she observed while human remains and her ancestors' belongings were exhumed (usually to make way for new development projects) and offered recommendations for maintaining cultural sensitivity and respect.

"It's a really heavy responsibility, especially when it comes to caring for ancestors," Dorame says. "And it was probably the

first experience where I felt like if I didn't process it in a way that felt healing, it could be really debilitating."

Dorame began using photography to explore her Tongva heritage soon after that experience, when her great-uncle gave her an old medium-format, twin-lens Rolleiflex film camera. She felt herself drawn to the land, wanting to document signs of Tongva visibility, such as a boulder with a bowl ground out of it, or freshwater springs once maintained by Tongva people.

She also began adding her own "ceremonial interventions" into the landscape to claim her own presence, like draping an animal pelt over bushes or wrapping red yarn around trees (drawing viewers' attention to moments in nature and urging them to follow the string back to the land). Her photographs and installations have been featured at LACMA and the Autry, Hammer, and Fowler museums.

"Los Angeles has been so paved over with concrete, which has deeply affected our ancestral homelands," Dorame says. "I

feel like I'm always pointing my camera towards these moments of Native presence. Photography has a connection with ideas of evidence, and so I am highlighting the presence of Tongva people in Los Angeles and creating a permanent record of it."

### Building the abalones

After Dorame's work was featured in the Getty Museum's *Photo Flux: Unshuttering LA* exhibition in 2021, Getty curators approached her with the opportunity to produce an installation for the Entrance Hall. The huge scope of the project required her to enlist two assistants, Anais Franco and Nick Lee, and the design studio Machine Histories. They 3D-scanned real abalone shells and used the scans to fabricate large-scale versions out of high-density foam.

Dorame and her team painted the outer shells with shades of pink acrylic to emulate the color of wet abalone. Then they sprayed the inner shells with automotive paint to give them

shine and iridescence. In the installation, each shell is affixed to a motor, which turns them gently at different speeds to evoke a sense of floating.

When visitors walk into the Entrance Hall, Dorame hopes the installation challenges their perspective. The larger-than-life abalones compel viewers to relate to them as equals, she says, while the accompanying murals represent how Tongva people might view Los Angeles, looking out from their ancestral home of Pimunga (Catalina). Dorame didn't try to create perfect replicas of the abalones or a perfect depiction of the coast in her murals—"I'm looking at the source, but it's a translation through my memory."

Displaying her work in the Getty Museum on a scale of this magnitude is "a big deal," Dorame says, and represents a societal shift toward acknowledging First Peoples and their deep knowledge of the land. Native issues can be complicated, she adds, and there are a lot of misconceptions. (How can she forget hearing in school that "there are no Tongva people left anymore"?) Rather than shy away from the topic or rest on assumptions, Dorame urges people to make real relationships with Native people and ask questions. Her installation may give visitors a starting point.

"No matter where you're from, there are First Peoples of that place and they are still there," Dorame says. "How do we acknowledge and learn from them?" ■

Dorame was inspired by the abalone shells in her collection.



## Museums and Exhibitions in Southern California Featuring Indigenous Art

**The Chapter House**, an Indigenous women-led arts organization that celebrates Indigenous art, empowerment, and community, held its first event in 2021 on Tongva land in downtown Los Angeles. It has hosted artist lectures, film screenings, and community arts nights, among other events, and hopes to open a permanent space downtown in the near future.

**Kuruvungna Village Springs** is a cultural center in West Los Angeles on the site of a historic Gabrielino-Tongva village. On the first Saturday of every month, visitors can tour a reconstructed thatched *kiiy* (a traditional Tongva house), as well as several springs sacred to the Gabrielino-Tongva people.

**The Autry Museum's Resources Center**, which opened in 2022, hosts an extensive Indigenous collection formerly housed at the Southwest Museum (the two institutions merged in 2003). Local Native communities, researchers, students, teachers, and artists can access over 600,000 artifacts, artworks, and cultural and library materials.

**"Borderlands," a new permanent collections installation at the Huntington**, features artworks from the 19th to the early 20th century focused on themes of migration and place. Visitors will also find new artworks and acquisitions by Enrique Martínez Celaya, Thomas Cole, Mercedes Dorame, Sandy Rodriguez, and Cara Romero, among others.

**The Benton Museum of Art** at Pomona College offers tribal members access to more than 4,000 Native American items. (Members of the public may also view the items in curated exhibitions.) The collections are particularly rich in Californian and Southwestern basketry, Southwestern ceramics, and beadwork of the Plains and Great Lakes. A 2024 exhibition will feature Cahuilla basketry; curators are currently collaborating with Cahuilla tribal members, the Nex'wetem Basketry group, and neighboring Native community members to gather stories related to the baskets.

—Unita Ahdifard, Graduate Intern, Getty Museum Communications



From top to bottom:

Community members pose for a 2022 Chapter House event in Hollywood.

Kuruvungna Village Springs

Mercedes Dorame's *Well of Moon and Sky* (2013), part of the first rotation of artworks on display in "Borderlands."

Cahuilla baskets housed at the Benton Museum of Art



*The challenges of protecting neon art have plagued conservators for years. The Getty Conservation Institute aims to change that*

# Shining a Light on Neon

The neon Santa Monica Pier sign is a designated historic landmark in the city. Photo: Citizen of the Planet / Alamy Stock Photo

**By Lilibeth Garcia**  
Digital Content Editor  
Getty Conservation Institute

Imagine Los Angeles at night, illuminated by a neon glow: a smiling bluish-white Buddha perched atop a vintage gift shop; green art deco lettering above the entrance to a Jewish deli; a vibrant electric mural inside Grand Central Market; the iconic arched sign that welcomes guests to the Santa Monica Pier.

From the 1920s to the 1960s, Americans discovered the advertising power of neon. Putting high voltage to gases inside glass tubes sparked bold, hypnotic hues that could be seen at night and from a distance. Flashing signs soon decorated cafes, car repair shops, liquor stores, nightclubs, dive bars, theaters, and restaurants. Flickering letters throughout LA pay homage to a city that came of age in the early 20th century.

As neon peaked in commercial utility, the signs also caught the gaze of artists, who saw that they could use the fluorescent words to advertise art itself. One such figure was Bruce Nauman, a leading experimentalist who was drawn to making “art that was supposed to not quite look like art.” Surrounded by neon signage in his San Francisco neighborhood, Nauman decided to work with a neon fabricator to make a sign for his studio’s display window. A red-and-blue spiral of words proclaimed, “The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths” (1967).

Nauman became one of the country’s most prolific neon artists, producing over 50 works in a span of five years. Alongside Dan Flavin, Joseph Kosuth, Chrysta, and others, Nauman formed part of a generation of artists who transformed the nature of neon forever, tilting it from ad to art.

Meanwhile, neon signage, once universally considered pure advertisement, became a heritage worth protecting as advocates saved historic signs

slated for demolition. Some of those lights are now housed in galleries and museums, including LA’s own Museum of Neon Art (MONA).

That said, the medium poses challenges for collection stewards, who find neon art difficult to install, pack, repair, and document. Most conservation professionals don’t have a background in neon, let alone light-based art, explains Ellen Moody, an associate project specialist at the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI). To make matters more complicated, there are currently no agreed-upon guidelines for how to safely oversee neon.

Moody’s goal is to help produce the first-ever published recommendations for neon art conservation. “They’re not meant to replace the expertise of the neon fabricator, which is necessary, in most cases, to care for neon art,” she says. But she hopes the guidelines, expected to be available in 2024, will reinforce the skills of both technicians and conservators and facilitate communication between them.

Neon is a longstanding tradition at Grand Central Market, where each vendor is encouraged to hang an electric sign. Some of the market’s original signage can be found at MONA. Bruno Coelho / Alamy Stock Photo



Neon fabricator and artist Michael Flechtner tests a transformer, used to deliver the high voltage needed to make neon glow.



### Neon’s unique challenges

Before joining the GCI in 2020, Moody served as a conservator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York for seven years, which gave her a firsthand look into the issues contemporary art conservators commonly face. “I felt totally out of my depth when I was working with neon,” she says. “I would go into storage to figure out if something was ready for display and realize, ‘I don’t even know how to wire this thing.’”

The always-handmade neon tubes are made of fragile glass that must withstand an especially high (think lethal) voltage, and the wire connections are sometimes damaged. There may be cracks in the glass, problems with a transformer, or contaminants inside the tubes. Tending to neon requires highly specialized knowledge, and although Moody was trained in objects conservation (she earned an MS in objects and preventive conservation from the Wintherthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation), she still felt lost. Light-based art is rarely covered in conservation programs, where it falls in between specialties, so most museum employees entrusted with protecting neon artworks learn everything on the job.

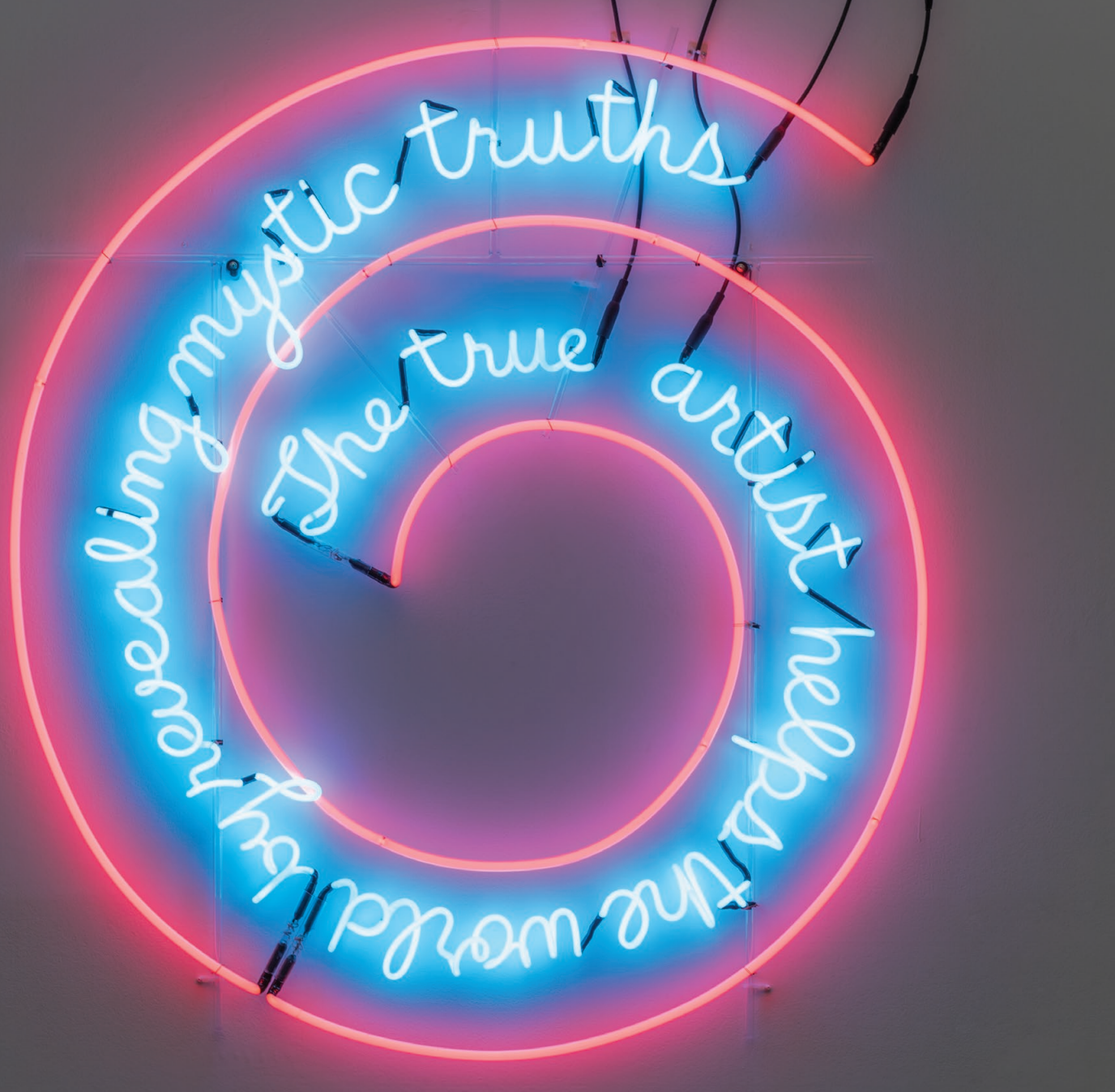
To install neon, Moody reached out to experts in the medium. But despite their technical expertise, sometimes a new challenge arose. “Specialists

are great at what they do, but they’re not necessarily trained in the ethics of conservation,” she says. “They may not be thinking about artist intent, which is the conservator’s job to bring into the conversation. But if the conservator doesn’t know the basics of the technology, it’s hard for them to take part in that conversation and advocate for the work or even know what the options are.”

### Building the guidelines

Some of the questions Moody and her team grapple with when thinking about neon are: If a light that was only produced in the 1970s goes out, how do we replicate it in 2023 so it produces the same look? How do we re-create its color and brightness? How do we measure color in neon? How do we photograph it in a reliable way? How do we document neon artworks when written descriptions are too subjective? What questions should we ask neon artists and fabricators to capture the essential qualities of their work? If a tube is broken, how can we deduce the color and brightness it originally had?

To develop the guidelines, the first step was to initiate a conversation between neon experts who know the technology inside and out and conservators familiar with the challenges of its long-term care. Moody worked with Taylor Healy, a time-



based media conservator at the Art Institute of Chicago, who has focused her recent research on neon, to organize a focus meeting. This spring, a cohort of approximately 20 professionals, including experts from Getty and MONA, gathered to discuss the future of neon. They arrived from various parts of the country and even from locales outside North America, such as Sweden and Hong Kong. A meeting held at the Getty Center consisted of brief presentations and discussion sessions. At MONA, the group engaged firsthand with neon

artworks and demonstrations on how to bend glass tubes.

One participant, Jacob Fishman, brought a unique perspective to the group as both a neon conservator and fabricator, as well as an artist. Based in Chicago, he owns Lightwriters Neon with his wife, Petrie, and has been fabricating and conserving artworks for museums and collections around the globe for almost 50 years.

Fishman's career in neon began as a love of playing with light in his photography, which led to an interest in making

*The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths (Window or Wall Sign), 1967, Bruce Nauman. Neon. Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with the generous support of The Annenberg Fund for Major Acquisitions, the Henry P. McIlhenny Fund, the bequest (by exchange) of Henrietta Meyers Miller, the gift (by exchange) of Philip L. Goodwin, and funds contributed by Edna Andrade, 2007, 2007-44-1 © Bruce Nauman / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York*

neon sculptures that would exist in real space rather than the virtual plane of camerawork. But he quickly realized that learning neon meant seeking a mentor, lest he burn down his apartment.

“At this time, it was very difficult to find anybody who would talk to you,” he recalls. It was 1977, when glassblowing (both for neon sculptures and glassmaking in general) was still a tightly guarded trade. “I’d walk into shops and talk to the glass people and say, ‘Hey, I’m interested in learning...,’ and they’d start hiding their tools. I had to look all over to find somebody who would even talk to me, and finally, I did.”

The nearest shop that would teach him was on the opposite side of town on the South Side of Chicago. He studied and worked there until the owner retired. Although it took Fishman a long time to get the results he wanted (and to make more than a few bucks an hour), he eventually found full-time employment in the neon signage industry. He saw his products as a kind of art. A sign advertising “corned beef” was more than just block letters—it had to be well designed. This eye for quality drew the attention of the fine arts world.

One day in 1983, a man visited Fishman’s shop and showed him some “very strange drawings.” “Can you make this?” the person asked, to which Fishman replied, “I don’t understand it, but sure, I could make this for you.” The man turned out to be the Chicago representative for Bruce Nauman. Fishman has been Nauman’s main fabricator ever since.

As neon transcended its association with advertising, Fishman went from making mostly signs to making mostly art. The culture surrounding neon also shifted in another significant way. The neon-making technique, once fiercely gatekept, is now widely circulated through in-person and online groups. Art programs with neon workshops also allow mentors like Fishman to pass on their skills to a younger generation of artists. As more people learn about neon, they go on to push the boundaries set by their predecessors.

### Neon’s bright future

Zoelle Nagib, a neon artist and Fishman’s daughter, was also one of the participants at the focus meeting. She designs and sculpts all her own work, often from scraps left behind from previous projects, sometimes decades old, and she’s interested in working with neon that is sustainable.

Unlike most neon artists, Nagib avoids using mercury, which at least half of neon works contain. This substance creates UV radiation that helps produce a vast array of brilliant colors, but she doesn’t think it’s worth the health risks. With a mercury ban underway in Europe, artists like Nagib are looking for safer alternatives.

“I’m just trying to be a little more caring towards the people who are going to handle my pieces in the future,” Nagib says. “It’s important to me to be able to acknowledge that if my pieces break, the breakage may be hazardous to another person.”

A significant component of the guidelines is ensuring that the risks posed while handling neon are kept to a minimum. To write the recommendations, Moody and Healy, along with GCI researchers such as Art Kaplan, Flavia Perugini, Anna Flavin, Giulia Rioda, Stavroula Golfomitsou, and Vincent Beltran, are drawing from experiences shared at the focus meeting, as well as Getty’s pioneering research in

the conservation of light-based art. The guidelines are part of the GCI’s Modern and Contemporary Art Research Initiative, founded in 2007 to address the critical need to devote research, workshops, education guidance, and information dissemination to art involving new materials and technologies.

“The amazing community that has coalesced around this art form makes me feel very hopeful about its future,” Moody says. “I’ve learned that neon is a field that has been cloaked in secrecy, so I was worried that people would not want to share their expertise during the focus meeting. But they all went above and beyond with their generosity.”

To people like Fishman, sharing how neon is fabricated is precisely what makes the art form feel special. “For me, it’s sort of mundane and second nature, but when I do it as a demonstration and students are around, they get so excited,” he says, adding that he would show how to make a simple letter A and garner applause. “You’re playing with all these different elements from the earth to create something that comes to life—and it’s kind of magical. The glass is exciting enough, but when you start to light it up and get all these colors, it’s probably the same feeling people got when they first discovered fire.” ■



Associate Project Specialist Ellen Moody hopes the guidelines will help secure neon’s future.



At MONA, Tommy Gustafsschiöld demonstrates a European-style 90-degree glass bend.



Alfredo Boulton documented Venezuela's landscapes, art, and multiracial people, creating his homeland's first images and examinations of its art and history

By Idurre Alonso  
Curator  
Getty Research Institute

# An Extraordinary LIFE

The art world considers Alfredo Boulton one of the most important champions of modern art in Venezuela and a key intellectual of the 20th century. He was a pioneer of modern photography, an art critic, a scholar of Venezuelan art, and a patron and friend to many of the great artists and architects of his time.

Still, he is shockingly underrecognized, or else completely unknown, outside his home country.

To remedy this, Getty has organized *Alfredo Boulton: Looking at Venezuela, 1928–1978*, an exhibition that celebrates Boulton's many dimensions and accomplishments. The show explores his photographic production, close relationships with key modern artists of the period, and influence on the

formalization and development of Venezuelan art history and criticism.

The exhibition draws extensively from the trove of papers and photographs in the Alfredo Boulton archive, which the Getty Research Institute acquired in 2020 thanks to a partial gift and purchase from the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. It also includes significant loans—primarily works by prominent artists that Boulton acquired for his private collection. The show offers a glimpse into Boulton's private life as well, his days filled with loyal friends associated with the world of arts and culture, a strong pride for his country, and numerous trips and adventures enabled by his privileged social status.



Clockwise from top:

*Gallinero de Chachopo, n.º 13* (Chicken Coop in Chachopo, No. 13), about 1930s, Alfredo Boulton. Gelatin silver print. Partial donation of the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)

*Faenas del mar, n.º 111* (Chores of the Sea, No. 111), about 1943, Alfredo Boulton. Gelatin silver print. Partial donation of the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)

*Eladio Montiel jugando bolas criollas, Los Guayabitos* (Eladio Montiel Playing Bolas Criollas, Los Guayabitos), 1944, Alfredo Boulton. Gelatin silver print. Partial donation of the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)

*Llaneras, San Juan de Payara, n.º 18* (Plainswomen, San Juan de Payara, No. 18), about 1940s, Alfredo Boulton. Gelatin silver print. Partial donation of the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)

Alfredo Boulton (right) and Oscar Ascanio at *Chefs d'oeuvre inconnus du Venezuela* exhibition, 1978. Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)



*Ojos (Eyes)*, about 1930s, Alfredo Boulton. Gelatin silver print. Partial donation of the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)



### “The exuberant beauty of our race”

Boulton was born in 1908 to a wealthy family in Caracas, Venezuela’s capital. In 1925 his parents sent him to study in Lausanne and London, and while there he frequently visited Paris and became acquainted with the artists of the avant-garde. In 1928 he returned to a changing Venezuela—a new generation was engaged in discussions about modernizing the country, which meant taking a stand against Juan Vicente Gómez’s dictatorship. Boulton and his young peers wanted to transform their country by rejecting outmoded styles and embracing the languages of the avant-garde. Over the next four decades Venezuela would become one of the main centers of modernity in Latin America, forming a vibrant artistic scene in which Boulton actively participated.

Boulton’s first photographs from the early 1930s were inspired by European and American examples, particularly works by Man Ray and of Surrealism. Boulton produced close shots, generally of objects, with many musical, artistic, and literary references, as in *Essays for a “Braque,”* in which he paid homage to the French Cubist Georges Braque. By the mid-1930s



*Flora, la belle romaine* (Flora, the Beautiful Roman), about 1940, printed in 1990s, Alfredo Boulton. Gelatin silver print. Partial donation of the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)

Boulton had begun making portraits of local people, such as the models Luis León and Ramón, who posed for artist Francisco Narváez in his studio, and men playing *bolas criollas* (a Venezuelan version of bocce or pétanque). Through these images Boulton fashioned an idealized Venezuelan archetype based on the concept of *belleza criolla*, the term he coined to describe, in his own words, “the exuberant beauty of our race”—the result of the mix of the three races present in Venezuela’s population, white, Indigenous, and Black.

Boulton also proved instrumental in creating an integrated visual image of his country; he photographed many Venezuelan landscapes and regions that had never before been documented, feeling compelled to capture what was rapidly modernizing and changing. He moved to Maracaibo in 1937 to oversee the family business and started to photograph Venezuela’s geography. In 1939, for instance, he traveled through the Andean territory with his camera, creating images of landscapes that would compose the first photobook published in Venezuela, *Images of Western Venezuela* (1940). He consolidated his poetic national vision in 1944 when he launched a new series centered on Venezuela’s Margarita Island and fishermen at work (photographs published in 1952 in *La Margarita*). And for *The Plains of Páez* (1950), Boulton traced the footsteps of José Antonio Páez, one of the leaders of independence in Venezuela, documenting important locations in his life. Those photographs show the rural areas of the Venezuelan plains and the *llaneros* (cowboys) who lived there.

### From artist to art historian, but always the devoted friend and patron

By around 1956 Boulton had abandoned his photography practice to focus on his work as a researcher, art historian, and curator. He then dedicated 40 years of his life to building a comprehensive analysis of the history of art in his country, from the colonial period onward. At the time, there was no prior literature for him to cite or organized archives and catalogues to research. Still, Boulton published more than 60 books, including his groundbreaking three-volume *Historia de la pintura en Venezuela* (History of Painting in Venezuela), published from 1964 to 1972.

One of his first art historical publications, *Los retratos de Bolívar* (The Portraits of Bolívar; 1956), studied the iconography of Simón Bolívar, the liberator of Venezuela, who for Boulton represented the country’s highest ideal. The public acclaim for Boulton’s first books earned him admission to the National Academy of History. In 1968 he picked up his camera again to record the pre-Hispanic pottery of Venezuela and in 1978 published a volume about this neglected subject.

Boulton’s circle of friends included some of the most significant artists, writers, and intellectuals of the period. He was particularly close to Los Disidentes, a group of young Venezuelan artists living in Paris who had broken with traditional academic painting in the 1940s and worked in abstract art. Boulton also maintained lifelong friendships with Alejandro Otero, Jesús Soto, and Carlos Cruz-Diez. He considered it especially important that for the first time in Venezuelan history, these

artists actively participated in the birth of an international art movement: kinetic art. Boulton saw them as an integral part of the development of Western art, and he supported them by giving them grants, buying their pieces, organizing exhibitions of their work in Venezuela and abroad, and writing articles and books about them.

A great example of Boulton’s vision of Venezuela’s ideal modernity was his house on Margarita Island in the city of Pampatar. Purchased in 1952, it was a colonial construction that he remodeled and decorated with art and furniture by Alexander Calder, Alejandro Otero, and other major artists of his time, creating a fusion of modern art and the country’s history and traditions. Correspondence and photographs in Boulton’s archive portray a man who relished entertaining. When guests arrived, they would receive two small books written by Boulton: *La casa*, which provided a history of the house using a fictional story, and *Copas y platos*, a compilation of recipes, with humorous descriptions, for the signature drinks and dishes Boulton and his wife served to their guests.

In some of his last projects Boulton decided to review his photographic oeuvre. In 1981 he reissued *La Margarita* and one year later published *Imágenes*, a retrospective publication on his photographs. As he pointed out in the new prologue for *La Margarita*, his images “strived to safeguard and preserve something of what still remains of the landscape and of its people.” In this way, Boulton captured the essence of a country about to change drastically, formulating through his photographs a nostalgic image of Venezuela. Boulton died in Caracas in 1995. ■

### From Boulton’s book of cocktail recipes: the Macanao

For six people:

- 4 cups of aged rum
- 1 cup of lime juice
- 1 cup of jarabe de goma Garlin (if not found use simple syrup)
- A few drops of Angostura bitters

The shaker needs to be big and made from silver or glass. The ice needs to be served using your fingers. This has a special effect, which is a secret that I cannot reveal. Alcohol purifies everything. You need to shake the shaker vigorously with the same rhythm, until the sound that comes out resembles the music of an oboe. This influences the musical sense of the drinker. If this is not achieved, you will lose the effect and the flavor will suffer. To succeed in this very important requirement, I suggest you do not talk about difficult topics during the process such as abstract art, flying saucers, family, etc.



*Interior de la casa de Boulton en Pampatar, isla Margarita* (Interior of Boulton’s Pampatar House, Margarita Island), about 1950s, Fotografía Maxim (photography studio, dir. by Petre Maxim). Gelatin silver print. Partial donation of the Alberto Vollmer Foundation. Getty Research Institute (2021.M.1)

By Carly Pippin  
Communications Specialist  
Getty Foundation

# PST ART: ART & SCIENCE COLLIDE



Concept drawing by Syd Mead for *Blade Runner* (US, 1982). Part of a PST ART exhibition at the Academy Museum.  
© Syd Mead, Inc.

Get a sneak peek at three of the more than 60 exhibitions soon to debut in Getty's groundbreaking 2024 cultural collaboration

Tiny cameras that hide in the palm of the hand, letter-opening machines that prevent damage to sensitive contents, a covert listening device planted inside the US ambassador's house in the Soviet Union: these real-life tools of spy craft, plus many more, will delight or unsettle visitors next fall at Culver City's Wende Museum as part of *Counter/Surveillance: Control, Privacy, Agency*, an in-depth look at the development of surveillance technologies from the Cold War period to today.

*Counter/Surveillance* is one of more than 60 exhibitions with related publications and public programming to debut in September 2024 as part of PST ART: *Art & Science Collide*, the widely anticipated Southern California collaboration of dozens of cultural, educational, and scientific institutions, all of which will come together to investigate how art and science interact.

Led by Getty and funded by \$17 million in Getty grants, *Art & Science Collide* will explore themes ranging from advancements in aerospace to the origins and mechanics of the universe, and from the health of the Pacific Ocean to the rise of artificial intelligence. Many exhibitions and programs will propose creative, real-world solutions to current challenges that include climate change and environmental justice.

"The exhibitions in this new edition of PST ART boldly go beyond the expected, sparking a fundamental shift in how we see the possibilities of both art and science," says Joan Weinstein, director of the Getty Foundation, who has stewarded every PST ART to date, including the first iteration in 2011, *PST: Art in L.A. 1945-1980* (a look at postwar art in Southern California), and another in 2017, *PST: LA/LA* (an exploration of Latin American and Latino art). "The questions that our partner organizations are posing in their exhibitions are crucial for our very future. What can artists and scientists do in collaboration to overcome ecological damage and imagine a more sustainable future? How have scientists visualized the natural world, and how do artists now envision once-unthinkable scientific developments? With *Art & Science Collide*, PST ART is again venturing into new territory and revealing the unexpected."



Briefcase with Forgery Equipment for Passports, 1980s, East Germany. Photo: The Wende Museum

lay additional elements onto the photographs to highlight facial measurements, foregrounding how racial classifications can communicate the dream of a universal mankind on the one hand, and reinforce systems of oppression and inequality on the other.

The second commission is by Israeli artist Liat Segal, who is known for her pioneering water sculpture installed in the International Space Station. She'll cover the museum's windows with computer-generated drawings that collate, code, and map real data about global movements in support of democracy. The drawings will be visible outside and in, and just like stained glass windows in a church, they'll interact with natural light and shadows. But unlike stained glass, which often tells a story, these counterveiled windows will be encrypted to keep their contents safe from prying eyes, reflecting how everyone, not just those in power, can leverage advanced technologies.

"Surveillance is everywhere, even in the most unexpected corners, and it's quite important to see where it came from and how you can deal with it," says Joes Segal (no relation to Liat), the exhibition's cocurator and chief curator and director of programming at the Wende, an art museum and archive of the Cold War. "For decades, artists have critically and subversively dealt with the loss of privacy and agency. They demonstrate you are never just a victim and can always respond creatively."

#### From Cold War espionage to the greening of Los Angeles

While the Wende may be looking globally at the future of privacy, the Broad is focusing locally on Los Angeles and the critical topics of climate change, ecological sustainability, and Indigenous knowledge. Next fall, visitors to spots across LA will notice fledgling new trees as part of the Broad's *Social Forest: Oaks of Tovaangar*, an exhibition that involves the planting of more than 100 trees as an act of restoration and reconciliation.

The reforestation action draws inspiration from *7000 Oaks*, a 1982–87 artwork by acclaimed conceptual artist Joseph Beuys, who planted 7,000 trees in Kassel, Germany, to help heal the country's numerous social and political traumas following nearly a century of war. Today, largely due to Beuys's efforts, Kassel is the second greenest city in Germany.

"We're transplanting Beuys's idea to the LA Basin and working to ensure it is environmentally, culturally, and ethically viable for our unique landscape and history," says Lazaro Arvizu Jr., an artist, educator, musician, and researcher dedicated to the culture of the First Peoples of Los Angeles and a member of the Broad's project team. "The oak is significant to our region and our Indigenous peoples as a source of food and shade, and

we want to be stewards of this heritage. We're not planting trees as decoration but as a reparative act that will benefit future generations."

In partnership with North East Trees, a Los Angeles nonprofit focused on healing environmental injustice through urban forestry, the Broad will plant native coast live oak, black walnut, Mexican elderberry, toyon, and laurel sumac at public sites in LA. Like *7000 Oaks* in Germany, each tree will be marked by a local stone.

To complement the tree plantings, an on-site exhibition at the Broad will feature material that emphasizes Beuys's environmental activism. The exhibition will also present some of Beuys's ecologically related artworks, including *Bog Action* (1971), a performance that drew attention to threatened wetlands along the Zuider Zee in the Netherlands and underlined how bogs promote healthy watersheds. The Broad will also showcase behind-the-scenes elements of *Social Forest* through documentation, maps, and materials developed to execute the tree plantings and stone markers.

"Beuys developed the idea of 'social sculpture'—the idea that every person is an artist and capable of a creative act," says Sarah Loyer, curator of *Social Forest* and exhibitions manager at the Broad. "Something as simple as planting a sapling can become art. This project is a provocation about healing the world. As the tree grows bigger, the stone will erode and ultimately disappear, reminding us that both nature and humanity are always evolving."



*7000 Oaks*, 1982–87, Joseph Beuys. Installation. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn © documenta archiv / Foto: Dieter Schwerdtle

## Imagining the future via cyberpunk cinema

From the natural world to fictional realities of the future, *Art & Science Collide* exhibitions will also activate our imaginations. *Cyberpunk: Envisioning Possible Futures*, one of two exhibitions at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, will examine the dystopian sci-fi subgenre. Unlike science fiction, which often explores stories of human beings in outer space, cyberpunk tales occur on Earth, albeit on a darker, more disturbing version of our planet as we know it.

Frequently set within urban wastelands of the near future, cyberpunk is epitomized by such films as *Blade Runner* (1982) and *The Matrix* (1999), in which antiheroes find their strength fighting forces like megacorporations or artificial intelligence run amok. The genre dominated cinema in the 1980s and '90s in response to rapid technological advancements, fusing elements of film noir and horror with philosophical ideas surrounding computer science, societal breakdown, and augmented reality.

"We're living in the middle of cyberpunk today, with AI and its implications being discussed at every level," says Doris Berger, curator of the exhibition and vice president of curatorial affairs at the Academy Museum. "Cyberpunk has addressed these themes for decades, and we can learn from its storytelling. When we look at Indigenous and Afrofuturist films, we can also envision possible futures—we can see how to reconcile with nature and find creative ways to stay alive and thrive."

The show will feature an immersive projection-mapped experience that will transport viewers from digital landscapes to often dystopian environments via a montage of cyberpunk, Indigenous, and Afrofuturist films.

Berger is particularly excited about how the exhibition will examine communities of cyberpunk filmmaking outside the US as well as Japan, a country where animation has embraced

cyberpunk tropes. In these films, cyberpunk often operates as a tool to envision futures where marginalized communities confront and combat climate change and colonialist legacies. "Film is such a wonderful medium to create and work with different consciousnesses, and to tell stories from different time zones and viewpoints," says Berger. "In a world that often needs a shake-up and redistributions of power, cyberpunk engages us in this thinking."

As September 2024 approaches, PST ART newcomers and enthusiasts are invited to follow along with their favorite LA institutions as they unveil future programming and get to know other museums and organizations further afield—from San Diego to Palm Springs. One of the best ways to keep up to date on all things PST ART is through the initiative's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram channels.

One significant PST ART announcement came in May of this year, when Getty shared that it would make the landmark regional collaboration a regularly scheduled series on a five-year cycle. "Getty is demonstrating a long-term commitment to PST ART, which means we'll continue to support substantive art historical research and innovative, meaningful exhibitions that reflect the Southern California art scene to a watching world," says Heather MacDonald, senior program officer at the Getty Foundation and part of the Getty team working on the initiative.

"It's such an honor to be living in a city and a region where you have so many research-based projects and activities coming out all at once, and to be learning from other exhibitions," says Berger. "PST ART sets Los Angeles apart from every other place in the country." ■

For a full list of *Art & Science Collide* participants, visit [pst.art](https://pst.art).



QSL Card HA5HM, about 1978. Paper. A QSL card is a written confirmation of a two-way communication between short-wave radio operators. Often featuring artistic designs, these cards coordinated wavelengths and times for radio communications, which provided a way to reach out globally without interference by state censorship in the socialist countries during the Cold War. Part of a PST ART exhibition at the Wende Museum. Photo: The Wende Museum

## Art & Science Collide at Getty

In addition to funding the exhibitions and programs of its collaborators throughout Southern California, Getty is also presenting nine PST ART exhibitions at the Getty Center. Subjects range from the interconnectedness of science, art, and religion in the Middle Ages to new discoveries about Van Gogh's materials and working methods.

### **Abstracted Light: Experimental Photography**

Abstract imagery made with experimental light exposures was of great interest to avant-garde photographers from the 1920s to the 1950s. This exhibition features photographs by international artists devoted to the practice, including Francis Bruguière, Jaromír Funke, Asahachi Kōno, Tōyō Miyatake, László Moholy-Nagy, and Man Ray.

### **Alta / a Human Atlas of Los Angeles**

British artist Marcus Lyon showcases 100 extraordinary people creating positive change across LA County. Each participant is photographed and interviewed by Lyon and also contributes a sample of their DNA. The three biographical aspects reveal how their lives intersect with LA history and preserve their narratives for future generations. Lyon's previous *Human Atlas* projects include *i.Detroit*, *WE: Deutschland*, and *Somos Brasil*.

### **Drawing with Light**

This exhibition of drawings charts some of the innovative ways artists have used paper and light together for centuries. Works include the Getty Museum's 12-foot-long transparency by Carmontelle, essentially an 18th-century motion picture; drawings by Vija Celmins and other contemporary artists; and sheets by Delacroix, Manet, Seurat, and Tiepolo.

### **Experiments in Art and Technology**

In the mid-20th century, Bell Telephone Laboratories produced much of the foundational technology for the digital age, inventing the transistor, the laser, information theory, and many computer programming languages. Bell Labs also launched transformative collaborations with avant-garde artists from nearby New York City. This exhibition tells the story of Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), the nonprofit organization founded in 1966 by Bell Labs engineers Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer and artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman.

### **Lumen: The Art & Science of Light**

Focusing on western European art, this major exhibition demonstrates how light, vision, and the movement of the heavens were explored by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim theologians during the "Long Middle Ages" (800–1600). Featuring glimmering



Consuela Francesca Barber-Lopez. *i.Detroit – A Human Atlas of an American City*, 2020, Marcus Lyon. Photograph. Marcus Lyon / *A Human Atlas*. © 2020 Marcus Lyon

golden reliquaries, illuminated manuscripts, rock crystal vessels, and scientific instruments, the exhibition reveals how optics, geometry, and astronomy impacted art and religious language of the time.

### **Magnified Wonders: An 18th-Century Microscope**

A spectacular French microscope from Getty's collection is a unique testament to scientific advances and Rococo design in the Age of Enlightenment. It allowed science enthusiasts to immerse themselves in the recently discovered world of the microscopically small. New study and conservation reveal the object's cultural context and technical complexity, and its display includes a lavish, bespoke tooled-leather case and specimen slides of natural curiosities.

### **Rising Signs: The Medieval Science of Astrology**

Medieval Europeans believed that the movements of the sun, moon, stars, and planets directly affected their lives on Earth. The position of these celestial bodies not only influenced individual personalities, it also created the seasonal conditions ideal for a variety of tasks, from planting crops to bloodletting. Exploring the 12 zodiac signs, this exhibition reveals the mysteries of medieval astrology as it intersected with medicine, divination, and daily life.

### **Sculpting with Light: Contemporary Artists and Holography**

Holograms, made possible by the invention of laser technology in the 1960s, create the illusion of three-dimensional objects floating in space. Many artists have experimented with holography—Louise Bourgeois and Ed Ruscha in the late 1990s, for example, and Deana Lawson around 2020—with the master technician for all three being Matthew Schreiber, whose artworks are also featured.

### **Ultra-Violet: New Light on Van Gogh's Irises**

This exhibition shows how Van Gogh's understanding of light and color informed his painting practice and allows visitors to explore how conservators and scientists can uncover the artist's materials and working methods. The exhibition also reveals how light has irrevocably changed some of the colors in Getty's much-loved *Irises*, a painting we thought we knew so well.

# Is Ancient Glass Unbreakable?

The first rule of moving ancient glass? Never pick it up unless you know where you're going to set it down.

Earlier this winter, glass vessels from the ancient Mediterranean traveled across the Getty Villa Museum from storage into display cases, safely guided by that very principle. The process required a team to gently lift each object out of a foam “bed” and cradle it as carefully as a newborn baby until affixed to its proper place in a case.

The fact that any ancient glass object remains intact enough to be displayed in a museum may seem remarkable—and it is, especially to anyone who has accidentally dropped a drinking glass and had to sweep up the shards. But many ancient glass vessels have survived thousands of years relatively undamaged.

Why many of these vessels are still intact, and how museums keep them safe, is tied to glass's cherished, highly protected place in both ancient homes and modern galleries.

## The origins of ancient glass

In Europe, Asia, and North Africa, glass production began around 1600 BCE. Creators from Egypt and Mesopotamia mixed sand with natron, a salt compound found in dry Egyptian lake beds, and heated it in a kiln for several days until it turned into glass.

Production was concentrated in just a few workshops in the Mediterranean. Craftspeople from around the region bought glass chunks, then melted them down and formed vessels out of this liquid by pressing it into or around molds and letting it harden.

Glass was valuable, on par with semiprecious stones. At first, the relative scarcity of glass and the laborious process required to make it meant it was reserved for only the highest-ranking members of society, such as the pharaoh and his entourage. They collected small glass flasks to hold substances they thought could protect them from evil spirits or disease, and sometimes the vessels served as offerings to gods and goddesses. Small flasks also held scented oils and perfumes. These special glass items were so treasured that they were often buried alongside their (privileged) owners.

“The ones that are preserved, in good condition, and in one piece were always found in a burial,” says Anastasios Antonaras, an archaeologist and curator at the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Greece and an expert on ancient glass. “So that preserved their integrity.”

The glass-blowing technique we know today—in which an artist shapes hot glass by blowing air at it through a metal tube, instead of manually forming it around molds—was invented in the first century BCE. This method greatly increased glass production, as it used less material and required less time to make each item. Glass objects became more affordable and spread far across the region. People from rich and poor social classes could now buy glass serving bowls, plates, vessels, wine jugs, and beads.

Excavations of ancient homes have unearthed evidence of how these items were used in daily life. But because the glass is usually broken into fragments—these items were seldom buried with their owners, and were thereby protected—it's nearly impossible to put the pieces back together and display them.

Elizabeth Soriano, former Getty mountmaker, places a glass vessel in a display case.



*How fragile glass vessels have survived for thousands of years*

By Erin Migdol  
Associate Editor  
J. Paul Getty Trust

### A “case” study of protecting glass in a museum

Last fall, the Greek and Roman glass displays at the Getty Villa Museum were almost completely deinstalled—that is, over a hundred ancient glass vases, cups, and flasks were taken out of their cases so that Antonaras could analyze them for the catalogue he is writing about Getty’s ancient glass collection.

Once he had weighed, measured, and examined each work, select objects were transported to the in-house photography studios for new imaging or to the conservation lab for additional scientific analysis. Eventually all the objects were returned to their display cases.

Of course, glass is fragile, and it needs support inside a case to remain upright. There are a few ways to display glass objects so they don’t topple over. The method chosen depends on the size and shape of the work and how likely it is to fall during an earthquake.

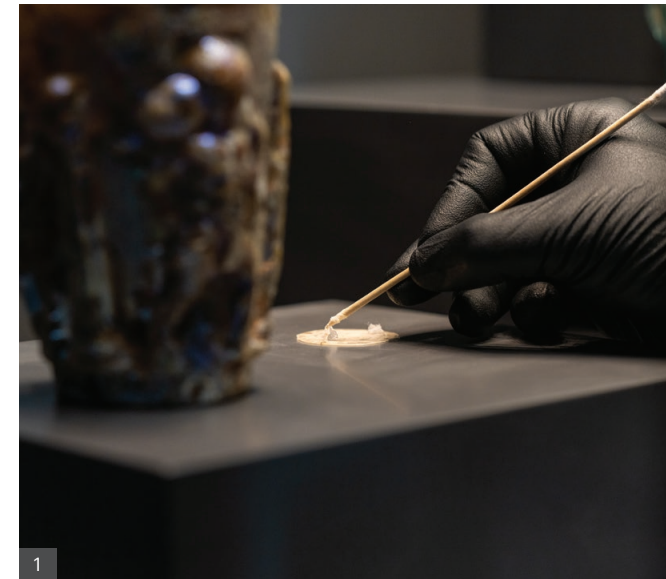
One way to secure an object is to press a few dabs of wax on the bottom of the vessel. This firmly sticks it to the surface of a display platform but can be easily removed later without leaving any residue. This method is appropriate for smaller objects that are in less danger of tipping over.

Another way to secure glass is with a mount. A mount is affixed to a supporting surface in a display case and attached to the object itself. It is barely visible in the gallery and perfectly conforms to the object’s curves, supporting and stabilizing it. Many of the glass vessels are secured to their mounts with SpiderWire, a high-performance fishing line. Some objects may be secured using both wax and a mount for extra stability.

When glass objects aren’t on display, they’re kept in safe storage facilities maintained at optimal temperature and humidity levels to prevent degradation. At Getty, they’re nestled in cushioned drawers lined with Tyvek, a lightweight, breathable material that protects objects from environmental hazards like water, mold, and bacteria. Together, the foam and Tyvek protect glass from breaking or decaying, allowing it to be safely stored well into the future.

Vases that radiate with golden light, delicate flasks adorned with colorful patterns, and cameo glass decorated with images of gods help us imagine daily life and sacred rituals in ancient civilizations, but remain safely tucked away—for now.

“They are in their little cradles,” says Antonaras, “waiting to be awakened and placed again in front of the eyes of admirers.” ■



Opposite: Ancient vessels displayed in the Greek and Roman Glass gallery at the Getty Villa

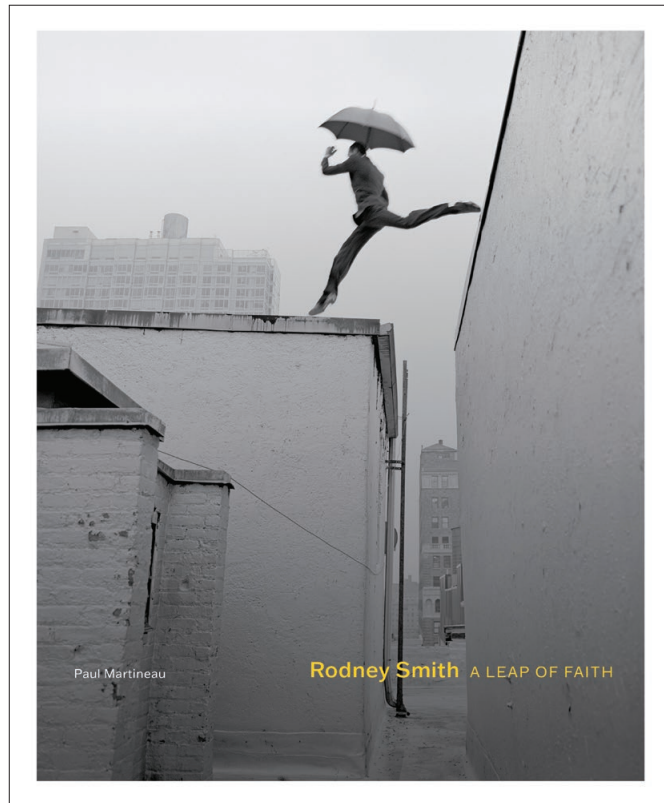
1. Preparator Cesar Santander applies wax to a vessel’s display surface, which will keep the vessel firmly in place.
2. Elizabeth Soriano ties a glass vessel to its mount using SpiderWire.
3. Lead Preparator Marcus Adams places glass objects back into a display case after affixing them to platforms using mounts and wax.
4. This drawer in the Getty vault stores ancient glass vessels. The tags provide information that identifies each item.

# Rodney Smith: A Leap of Faith

Paul Martineau, with contributions by Rebecca A. Senf and Leslie Smolan and an introduction by Graydon Carter

**MYSTERY AND MANNERS, ROMANCE AND FUN**—the sophisticated compositions and stylish characters in the extraordinary pictures of fashion photographer Rodney Smith (1947–2016) exist in a timeless world of his imagination. Born in New York City, Smith started out as a photo-essayist, turned to portrait photography, and found his niche, and greatest success, in fashion photography. This is an excerpt from Paul Martineau’s essay in the recent book on the photographer, *Rodney Smith: A Leap of Faith*.

Over the course of a successful career that lasted more than forty-five years, Smith, who was best known for his exceptional fashion photographs, developed a unique photographic vision, one that is beautiful, ordered, and inhabited by well-dressed ladies and gentlemen. In each of his carefully crafted compositions, he banished the chaos of modern life, offering an alternative grounded in a romantic view of the past. Like Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, his photographs lead us down the rabbit hole to a fantastical place that is just beyond our reach but one



intended to inspire us to be better versions of ourselves. For Smith, who, like many gifted creative people, suffered from bouts of depression and anxiety, photography was a means of staying engaged with the world around him. It was also a tool for spiritual exploration and self-understanding. “I put my life on the line for photography and it returned the effort with abundance,” he wrote in 2014. “Its gift back to me was a me devoid of most of my neuroses. One who is clear, sharp, and energetic.”

For Smith, who disliked shooting in a studio, finding the right location was one of the greatest challenges. And whether it was the hard geometry of New York City skyscrapers or the clipped greenery of formal gardens, the evocative mood of the place was integral to the creation of a masterly composition. “It’s the location that drives all the pictures,” Smith explained. “One of the things that is interesting, and I think people are always intrigued by this, is that though my pictures seem so composed, they are extremely spontaneous. 95% of the pictures I take, I didn’t even know I was going to take them a few minutes before.” He preferred to visualize his compositions and never used a Polaroid to establish his shots. His primary camera was a tripod-mounted Hasselblad loaded with film. He prized natural light, remarking that “light in all its glorious variation” was his inspiration, and all effects (fog, for example) were produced on-site and never added in postproduction. Smith collected a wide variety of books on architecture and gardens, which allowed him to learn about special places that could serve as locations for his photographs.



When everything was ready on a shoot, Smith would move, rhythmically, as if dancing with his camera, in search of the perfect composition. During these moments he was present in a way that he was unable to be at any other time, responding to what he was perceiving and aligning it with his vision. As Smith moved forward, his pictures began to express the freedom and joy that he experienced while making them, and his wry sense of humor became manifest in fanciful pictures such as *Twins in Tree*, *Snedens Landing, New York* (1999). Here Smith used body language to create a photograph that not only amuses but also points out the differences in personality between identical twins. Although these two men are connected by their appearance and gaze, without a ladder in sight, the physical distance between them is a problem that appears insuperable.

The eccentric photographs that Smith made capturing models on stilts or upside down with legs and feet protruding from high grass are enjoyable because they are puzzling and absurd. According to Sigmund Freud, jokes are defense mechanisms born out of the fear that human beings are destined to live in relative isolation in a meaningless and illogical world. As such, Smith’s whimsical images provide much-needed relief, helping us to rise above dejection and self-pity. Humor in artistic photography has rarely been the subject of serious scholarly inquiry. Yet, as the curator Joel Smith correctly pointed out, humor is an integral part of the human condition, and exploring it in photographs teaches us things about ourselves that are inaccessible in other types of photographs. ■

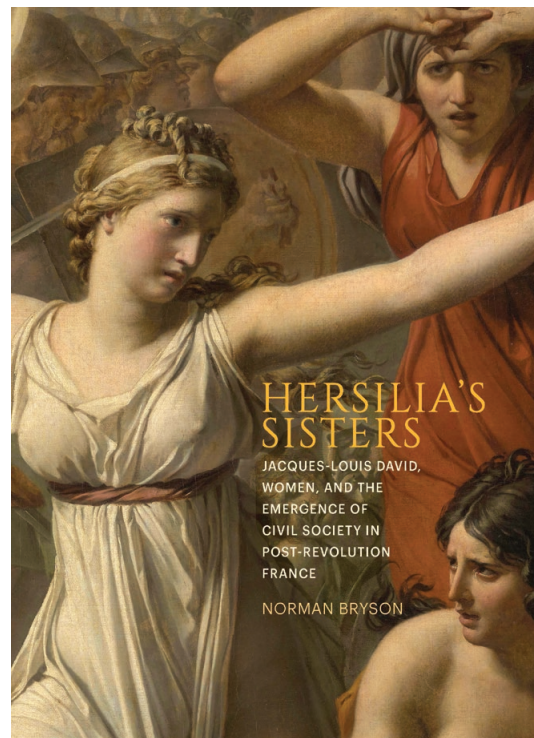
Opposite page: *Twins in Tree*, *Snedens Landing, New York*, 1999. © 2023 Rodney Smith Ltd., courtesy of the Estate of Rodney Smith

Right: *Three Men with Shears No. 1*, *Reims, France*, 1997. © 2023 Rodney Smith Ltd., courtesy of the Estate of Rodney Smith



Above: *Edythe and Andrew Kissing on Top of Taxis*, *New York, New York*, 2008. © 2023 Rodney Smith Ltd., courtesy of the Estate of Rodney Smith



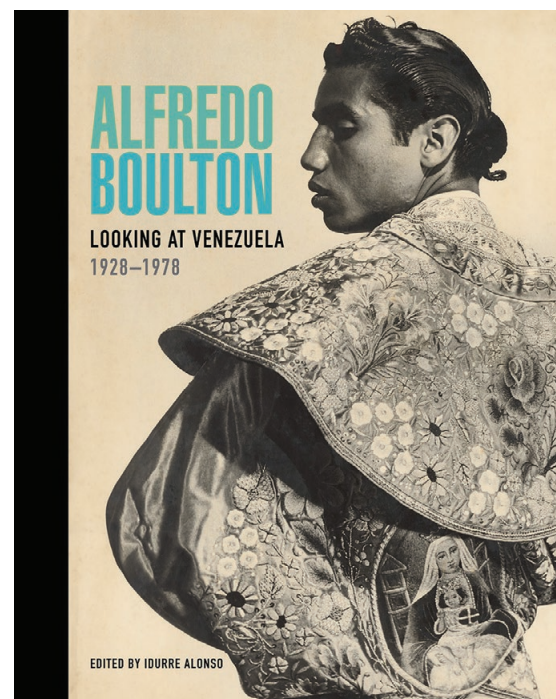


**Hersilia's Sisters: Jacques-Louis David, Women, and the Emergence of Civil Society in Post-Revolution France**

By Norman Bryson

During the Directoire, the five-year period between the vicious and near-dictatorial Reign of Terror (1793–94) and the coup in 1799 that brought Napoleon to power, France witnessed an extraordinary efflorescence of women pioneers in every cultural domain—literature, theater, opera, moral philosophy, political theory, painting, popular journalism, and fashion. Author Norman Bryson examines this flowering of women's culture through the lens of artist Jacques-Louis David's oeuvre, via a close examination of his work between *The Intervention of the Sabines* (begun in 1796) and *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps* (begun in 1800). With more than 150 illustrations, this book provides new and captivating insight into this period.

GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
352 pages, 7½ x 10½ inches  
168 color illustrations  
Hardcover  
US \$75

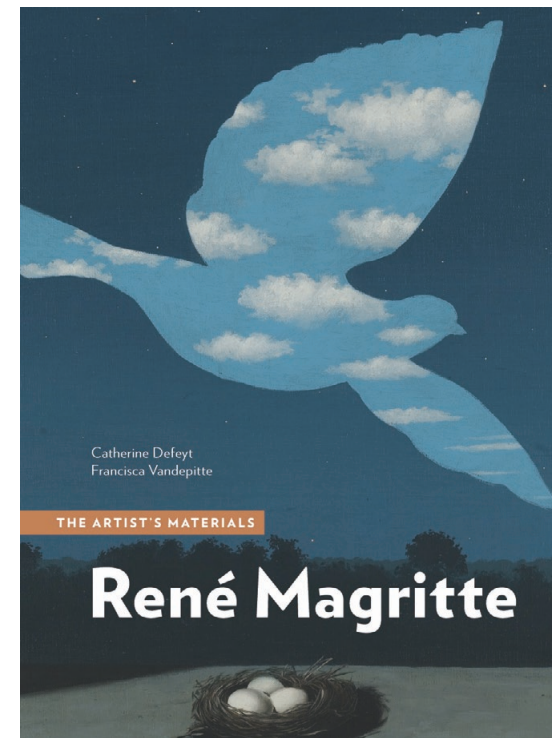


**Alfredo Boulton: Looking at Venezuela, 1928–1978**

Edited by Idurre Alonso

Alfredo Boulton (1908–1995) is considered one of the most important champions of modern art in Venezuela and a key intellectual of 20th-century modernism. He was a pioneer of modern photography, an art critic, a researcher and historian of Venezuelan art, a friend to many of the great artists and architects of the 20th century, and an expert on the imagery of the heroes of his country's independence. This volume explores and analyzes Boulton's groundbreaking photographic practice, his central role in the construction of a modern national artistic canon, and his influence in formalizing and developing art history and criticism in Venezuela. Based on the extensive materials held in Boulton's archive at the Getty Research Institute, *Alfredo Boulton* brings together essays by leading scholars in the field to offer a commanding, original perspective on his contributions to the formation of a distinctive modernity at home and beyond.

GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
288 pages, 8½ x 10¾ inches  
164 color and 19 b/w illustrations  
Hardcover  
US \$60

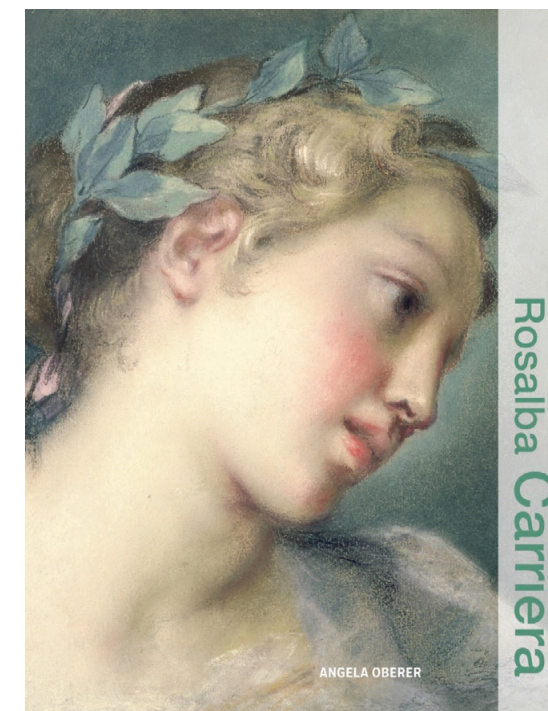


**René Magritte: The Artist's Materials**

By Catherine Defeyt and Francisca Vandepitte

René Magritte (1898–1967) is the most famous Belgian artist of the 20th century and a celebrated representative of the Surrealist movement. This volume examines 50 oil paintings made by Magritte between 1921 and 1967, now held at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. This technical study of his works using noninvasive scientific imaging and chemical analysis reveals the artist's painting materials, his habit of overpainting previous compositions, and the origins and mechanisms of surface and pigment degradation. Of interest to conservators, scientists, curators, and enthusiasts of 20th-century art, this book expands our understanding of Magritte the artist and provides new and useful findings that will inform strategies for the future care of his works.

GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE  
120 pages, 7½ x 10 inches  
85 color and 30 b/w illustrations, 1 table  
Paperback  
US \$40



**Rosalba Carriera**

By Angela Oberer

Born in Venice in 1673, Rosalba Carriera began her career painting decorative objects and rose to international renown as a portraitist in Europe, so much so that in the 1700s she was deemed “the most talented female artist of our century.” Today she is little known outside Venice, despite the attribution to her of hundreds of surviving artworks. In this accessibly written, well-illustrated biography, author Angela Oberer surveys Carriera's career, taking readers through the full arc of her life while also interpreting her oeuvre against the historical context of her experience as a single woman in Venice. This volume includes original iconographic analysis of Carriera's work, revealing that she was an erudite painter who drew on antiquity as well as Renaissance precedents such as Leonardo da Vinci and Paolo Veronese. Published in conjunction with the 350th anniversary of her birth, this book is a long overdue tribute to an important and prolific artist.

GETTY PUBLICATIONS  
144 pages, 7½ x 9⅞ inches  
65 color illustrations  
Hardcover  
US \$45

## Getty Museum Adds Early Medieval Manuscript and Annibale Carracci Painting

**TWO MAJOR ACQUISITIONS** joined the Getty Museum collection this spring: the Irmengard Codex, a manuscript made for the noblewoman Irmengard of Nellenburg; and *Madonna and Child with Saints Lucy, Dominic, and Louis of France* by the renowned and influential Italian painter Annibale Carracci.

The Irmengard Codex was created in Germany in the mid-11th century. A collection of readings for the Mass, the manuscript contains 15 full-page illuminations executed in the otherworldly pinks, blues, and lavenders that characterize painting of the so-called long Ottonian era. Irmengard of Nellenburg was a member of a powerful local ruling family, the House of Egisheim-Dagsburg. The manuscript will be showcased in an upcoming exhibition this fall.

In *Madonna and Child with Saints Lucy, Dominic, and Louis of France*, a small-scale painting on copper from about 1596–98, Carracci created a composition that is both intimate and monumental. The painting represents Carracci at the peak of his artistic maturity, when he moved to Rome to paint frescoes in the Palazzo Farnese. The painting is now on display at the Getty Center.

“These two exquisite acquisitions add key works to our representation of northern European medieval manuscript illumination and to our already strong holdings of 17th-century paintings,” says Timothy Potts, Maria Hummer-Tuttle and Robert Tuttle Director of the Getty Museum. “The Irmengard Codex, with its unusually rich body of imagery, is a spectacular example of early medieval manuscript illumination, the likes of which has not appeared on the market in over half a century. And together with Caravaggio, Carracci was one of the prime instigators of the baroque movement in Italian art.”



Above: *Irmengard and Her Husband Werner*, shortly after 1053, German. Tempera colors, gold, and ink. Getty Museum. Image courtesy of Dr. Guenther Rare Books AG, Basel

Opposite: *Madonna and Child with Saints Lucy, Dominic, and Louis of France*, about 1596–98, Annibale Carracci. Oil on copper. Getty Museum



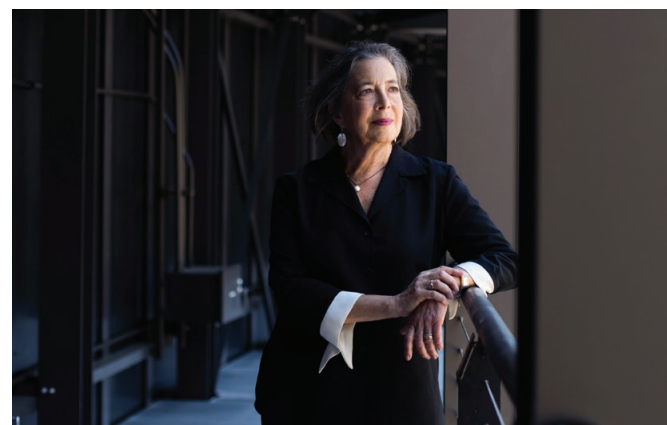
## Brenda A. Levin Archive Donated to Getty

**THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (GRI)** has acquired the work of architect and preservationist Brenda Levin and that of her firm, Levin & Associates. Founded in 1980, the firm became well known for its innovative work in preservation and restoration of important Los Angeles landmarks, as well as new projects for major institutional clients across the region.

The donation represents the full scope of Levin & Associates' professional activity, containing historical drawing sets, design studies and presentations, project drawings and specifications, correspondence, photographic material, and digital files. These materials represent each of the projects Levin worked on since founding the firm, including important renovation/restoration projects for the Bradbury Building, Los Angeles City Hall, Griffith Observatory, Wilshire Boulevard Temple, and Grand Central Market, among many others, as well as new projects for institutions such as the Huntington and LACMA.

“The story of the fundamental urban transformations of Los Angeles after 1980 is one that has been little attended to among historians, scholars, and critics,” says Gary Riichirō Fox, curatorial assistant at the GRI. “The acquisition of the Levin & Associates papers will begin to importantly correct for this erasure, allowing us to better account for how the city reorganized its sense of self around its major civic monuments, new and old, in the period.”

The collection will be cataloged over the course of several years and then made available to researchers at the GRI.



Above: Brenda Levin, 2017.  
Photo: Jenna Schoenfeld

Right: Griffith Observatory.  
Photo: Tim Griffith



# Getty



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# The Secret History of a Middle Eastern Photo Album

*Sometimes an acquisition has an air of mystery to it*

By Kirsten Lew  
Associate Digital  
Media Producer  
Getty Research  
Institute

**THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE** (GRI) recently purchased a photograph album of 45 albumen prints depicting what appear to be locales somewhere in the Levant. Leafing through it, one encounters a skyline punctuated by minarets and domes as well as studio portraits of Ottoman military officers, clerics, and people in Bedouin and other regional garb.

These types of photographs were common in the latter half of the 19th century, when hordes of European travelers, wanting to memorialize their journeys through the Holy Land, purchased images from large stocks available at local studios. But the photographs in this particular album didn't depict the usual must-see destinations like Jerusalem and Bethlehem. And unfortunately for the GRI's curators, there was nothing written in the album to help identify where the pictures were from.

But one monument stood out: the iconic Citadel of Aleppo, a 12th-century structure that still rises above the Syrian city today. And that's where Hans Pech, a research assistant at the GRI, came in.

With the help of a Baedeker travel guide from 1906 and Google Maps, Pech was able to identify other landmarks in the photos. He traced those sites not just to Aleppo but also to Diyarbakir, Turkey.

*Portrait of Woman Seated, about 1870–85, photographer unknown. Album of 45 albumen prints of Aleppo and Diyarbakir. Getty Research Institute*



Once he discovered where the photographs had been taken, Pech realized how valuable the album would be to researchers. “There aren't a lot of early photographs of Aleppo that are digitally available,” he explains. “Europeans didn't visit it as much because it was so far from the port of Beirut, where most people started their journey.”

But that didn't stop some from making the trek. And while Pech doesn't know who exactly compiled the Aleppo/Diyarbakir album or why, he believes that some of the photos contain clues that could point to espionage.

In the 1870s, French and British officials traveled throughout the Middle East to document “sites of interest” for their colonial empires, using photography to collect data for intelligence purposes. The album contains many panoramic shots of Aleppo's urban layout, possibly taken for surveillance. And whoever assembled it may have had privileged access to military police, given the images of officers carrying out various activities in a central courtyard. “It's not something you would sell commercially,” says Pech. “Potentially the photographer was a military officer or someone traveling in a military-related capacity.”



*Aleppo, Panoramic View of Citadel from South-Southeast, about 1870–85, photographer unknown. Album of 45 albumen prints of Aleppo and Diyarbakir. Getty Research Institute*



*Aleppo, Official Reading to Military in Courtyard of Prefecture, about 1870–85, photographer unknown. Album of 45 albumen prints of Aleppo and Diyarbakir. Getty Research Institute*

Fortunately for researchers today, these views of Aleppo provide important architectural reference points. Many of the buildings are no longer standing, having been destroyed by time, the Syrian civil war, or a recent earthquake that leveled a tower of the Aleppo Citadel. This loss of cultural heritage brings home the value of historical photographs, says Pech. “This album is really important for potential restoration efforts.”

The album, which the GRI will eventually digitize, joins a rich repository of 19th-century Middle Eastern photography—including the Pierre de Gigord collection of over 6,000 photographs from the Ottoman Empire and the MENA collection of 4,500 photographs of the Middle East and North Africa. The GRI archives will help researchers make cross-references and connections across different collections.

As for the true story behind the album, Pech hopes that more information will come to light as scholars conduct their own investigations. “It's forensic work in the end.” ■

## EXHIBITIONS

Make free, timed reservations for the Getty Center and Getty Villa Museum at [getty.edu](https://www.getty.edu).

### Getty Center

**Giacomo Ceruti: A Compassionate Eye**  
July 18 through October 29, 2023

**Eugène Atget: Highlights from the Mary & Dan Solomon Collection**  
August 1 through November 5, 2023

**Graphic Design in the Middle Ages**  
August 29, 2023, through January 28, 2024

**Alfredo Boulton: Looking at Venezuela (1928–1978)**  
August 29, 2023, through January 7, 2024

**Dawoud Bey and Carrie Mae Weems: In Dialogue**  
Through July 9, 2023

**Barbara T. Smith: The Way to Be**  
Through July 16, 2023

**Play and Pastimes in the Middle Ages**  
Through August 6, 2023

**Tim Walker: Wonderful Things**  
Through August 20, 2023

**Beyond the Light: Identity and Place in 19th-Century Danish Art**  
Through August 20, 2023

**Pastel Portraits: Drawn from Life?**  
Through September 17, 2023

**Porcelain from Versailles: Vases for a King and Queen**  
Through March 3, 2024

**Mercedes Dorame: Woshaa'axre Yaang'aro (Looking Back)**  
Through July 28, 2024



*Lil' Dragon*, 2018, Tim Walker. Model: Xie Chaoyu; Fashion: Roksanda, Footwear: Namilia x Kira Goodey, London. Chromogenic print. Courtesy of the artist. © Tim Walker Studio. On view in *Tim Walker: Wonderful Things*. A V & A Exhibition—Touring the World



*Boulevard de Strasbourg*, 1912, Eugène Atget. Gelatin silver chloride print. Getty Museum. On view in *Eugène Atget*



*Copenhagen Harbor by Moonlight*, 1846, Johan Christian Dahl. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Christen Sveaas, in celebration of the Museum's 150th Anniversary, 2019 (2019.167.2). On view in *Beyond the Light*

### Getty Villa

**The Gold Emperor from Aventicum**  
Through January 29, 2024

**The Horse and Rider from Albania**  
July 26, 2023, through January 29, 2024

### Online

**Mesopotamia**  
[mesopotamia.getty.edu](https://mesopotamia.getty.edu)

**Persepolis Reimagined**  
[persepolis.getty.edu](https://persepolis.getty.edu)

**Return to Palmyra**  
[getty.edu/palmyra](https://getty.edu/palmyra)

## FINAL FRAME



*Couple in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY*, 1990, Dawoud Bey. Gelatin silver print. Getty Museum. © Dawoud Bey. On view in *Dawoud Bey & Carrie Mae Weems: In Dialogue*, organized by the Grand Rapids Art Museum

Dawoud Bey forges community through his photography. For the *Street Portraits* series, begun in 1988, he used a 4x5-inch camera mounted on a tripod. This equipment required a slower and more deliberate way of working and offered the chance for greater engagement with the people he photographed. “All of those street portraits were about giving the Black subjects an affirmative space in which to present themselves to the camera and to the world,” he has said of this series.

What I find most engaging about this image is the casual yet intimate embrace of these two young people—which is at least in part a result of their comfort with the photographer and the gentle weight of New York’s humid summer days.

—Arpad Kovacs, Assistant Curator, Department of Photographs  
Getty Museum

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## Recording Artists Season 2: Intimate Addresses

***“Do you think you could find one or two  
(or more) buyers for this box among your  
friends?...The price is approximately  
\$200.”***

—Marcel Duchamp writing to Man Ray about the *Boîtes-en-valise*,  
leather carrying cases Duchamp filled with reproductions of  
his works

In the new season of our Recording Artists podcast, host Tess Taylor and actor Anna Deavere Smith bring to life deeply personal letters between artists and their family members, partners, friends, and colleagues. Marcel Duchamp ponders how he might support himself after fleeing Europe during WWII; Frida Kahlo writes to her New York gallerist (and rumored lover) Julien Levy about her health and struggles to work; and Méret Oppenheim explains her choice to remain child-free. Tune in this summer at <https://www.getty.edu/recordingartists/>.



*Boîte, series C, 1958, Marcel Duchamp. © Succession Marcel Duchamp ARS New York / ADAGP Paris*