



THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST: PETER ZUMTHOR RECONSIDERS LACMA

JUNE 9–SEPTEMBER 15, 2013

RESNICK PAVILION, CENTER GALLERY



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 4)

As part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A. initiative, *The Presence of the Past: Peter Zumthor Reconsiders LACMA* marks the first time the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has explored its own history in the context of an exhibition. The culmination of the exhibition is a proposed design for the future of the eastern side of the museum's campus as envisioned by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Peter Zumthor introduced to the public for the first time, a project. The exhibition also offers an overview of nine other projects by the acclaimed architect, who has previously built only in Europe.

Exhibition Overview

The Presence of the Past contains approximately 116 objects, including architectural models, plans, photographs, drawings, fossils, film, and ephemera. Many of the historical materials are drawn from LACMA's archive and have not been on public view in several decades, if ever. The exhibition's chronology spans some 50,000 years, starting with actual Pleistocene fossils excavated from Hancock Park.

Peter Zumthor designed the exhibition space for *The Presence of the Past*, which is meant to evoke the architect's studio, emphasizing the process of design and research that continue to shape his evolving thoughts for LACMA's campus.

Exhibition Organization

The exhibition is divided into three sections, the first of which examines the museum's buildings within the complicated history of its Hancock Park site. This section explores the development of LACMA's campus and explains how financial restrictions, political compromises, and unrealized plans have prevented the museum from achieving both a unified aesthetic and an optimal art-viewing experience. In order to demonstrate the long engagement of artists with Hancock Park, *The Presence of the Past* includes the work of two scientific illustrators, Charles R. Knight and John L. Ridgway, who documented Pleistocene-era species at Rancho La Brea. These works are on loan from the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. *The Presence of the Past* marks the exhibition debut of Ridgway's evocative watercolors of paleontological specimens which have only been illustrated in books to date. Knight's renowned fifty-foot mural of the La Brea Tar Pits was installed at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County for decades but has been in storage for several years.

The first section also examines the museum's more recent history, including the work of five prominent architects and firms that have either built on LACMA's campus or have contributed unrealized plans that nevertheless influenced its architectural evolution: William L. Pereira; Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates; Bruce Goff; Rem Koolhaas's Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA); and Renzo Piano. Among other stories, the exhibition details how Pereira's original vision for the museum was dramatically compromised within a few years of the original buildings' completion, when surrounding fountains—the driving concept of his "floating museum"—were paved over due to tar seepage.

This section also documents, with photographs, how artists have responded to LACMA's architecture over the years, including Ed Ruscha, John Baldessari, and Asco; as well as seven artists (among them Chris Burden, Michael Heizer, Robert Irwin, and Barbara Kruger) whose architectonic artworks have shaped the campus in recent years.

The middle section of *The Presence of the Past* highlights aspects of Peter Zumthor's architectural career most relevant to his plans for LACMA. Nine Zumthor projects have been selected to elucidate key aspects of the architect's proposed design for LACMA: his interest in the geologic

history of the site, his passion for materials, craftsmanship and the effects of light, and his commitment to an architecture of total integration. These convictions are examined in two films that discuss Zumthor's architectural approach and methodology: a short documentary by German filmmaker Wim Wenders and a presentation of Zumthor's past work narrated by actor Julian Sands.

The third and final section of the exhibition presents Zumthor's preliminary plans to re-envision LACMA's campus and his ideas for the possibilities of the museum in the twenty-first century. More specifically, Zumthor's proposed design would replace LACMA's 1965 William L. Pereira and Associates buildings and the 1986 addition by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates while retaining and highlighting the Bruce Goff-designed Pavilion for Japanese Art, completed in 1988. The centerpiece of this section is an over thirty-foot concrete model designed by Zumthor and produced by Atelier Zumthor, positioned at a height intended to simulate looking into the building at street level. The model is complemented by a short film by Lucy Walker featuring a conversation between Zumthor and LACMA's CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director, Michael Govan, about their plans for transforming the museum-going experience.

Public Programming

The Director's Series: Conversation with Michael Govan and Peter Zumthor

Monday, June 3, 2013 | 7:30 pm | Bing Theater | \$20; \$15 LACMA members, seniors 62+, and students with ID | Tickets: 323 857-6010 or [purchase online](#)

Discussion with Michael Govan and Philippe de Montebello, The Encyclopedic Museum of the Future

Wednesday, June 5, 2013 | 7:30 pm | Bing Theater | Free, tickets required | Tickets: 323 857-6010 or [reserve online](#)

An Eclectic History and Tour of Hancock Park with Cathy McNassor, Collections Manager of the Museum Archives, The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Saturday, July 20, 2013 | 2 pm | Brown Auditorium | Free; tickets required | Tickets: 323 857-6010 or [reserve online](#)

Exhibition Film Series

Envisioning Los Angeles: Past, Present, Future

In conjunction with the exhibition *The Presence of the Past: Peter Zumthor Reconsiders LACMA*, this film series traces the cinematic depiction of Los Angeles over the course of nearly a century. July 2013, dates and times to be announced | Bing Theater

Credit

The Presence of the Past: Peter Zumthor Reconsiders LACMA is part of Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A. This collaboration, initiated by the Getty, brings together seventeen cultural institutions from April through July for a wide-ranging look at the postwar built environment of the city as a whole, from its famous residential architecture to its vast freeway network, revealing the city's development and ongoing impact in new ways.

Pacific Standard Time Presents is an initiative of the Getty. *The Presence of the Past: Peter Zumthor Reconsiders LACMA* is organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and major support for the exhibition has been provided by the Getty Foundation and Hyundai Motor America. This exhibition was also made possible in part by LACMA's Wallis Annenberg Director's Endowment Fund.



Support provided by



About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography—and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, and innovative collaborations with artists, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

Location and Contact: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 11 am-5 pm; Friday: 11 am-8 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 10 am-7 pm; closed Wednesday

General Admission: Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 3 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

Image captions:

(Left) Installation of a Columbian mammoth sculpture, Hancock Park, 1968, Howard Ball, sculptor, Photo © 2013 Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Museum Archives

(Center) Aerial view Los Angeles County Museum of Art, c. 1965, William L. Pereira and Associates, architects, Photo © 2013 Museum Associates/LACMA, photographic archives

(Right) Shin'enkan (later Pavilion for Japanese Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, completed 1988), 1980, Bruce A. Goff, architect, Bruce A. Goff Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Archive, The Art Institute of Chicago, Digital file © 2013 The Art Institute of Chicago

Press Contact: For additional information, contact LACMA Communications at press@lacma.org or 323 857-6522.

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