

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

War Babies & The Studs

12 February - 26 March 2022

Opening reception: Saturday 12 February, from 6 to 8 pm

Librairie Marian Goodman is pleased to present an exhibition investigating the Los Angeles art scene in the 1960s and 1970s. With works from a variety of media including paintings, collages, prints, and sculptures, as well as archival material, posters and rare publications, the show highlights the artistic practices of a generation of artists born in the 1930s, who knew each other as art students in Los Angeles: Larry Bell, Billy Al Bengston, Ed Boreal, Vija Celmins, Joe Goode, Robert Irwin, Ed Kienholz, Ron Miyashiro, Ed Moses, Ken Price and Ed Ruscha. The title of the show, *War Babies and the Studs* refers to the names of two major and provocative exhibitions organized in Los Angeles in the early 1960s in which most of the artists took part.

In 1961 the *War Babies* exhibition was mounted at the Huysman Gallery, founded in 1960 by the curator Henry Hopkins. The four artists in the show, Ed Boreal, Joe Goode, Ron Miyashiro and Larry Bell all grew up under the shadow of World War II. Joe Goode, who titled the exhibition and masterminded its poster, intended to establish a point in time with the name, and to indicate a "sense of post-war internationalism". *War Babies* was one of the earliest racially integrated exhibitions and challenged the stereotypical attitudes of postwar America. The exhibition's poster, on view at the Librairie, created a furor because of its exaggerated ethnic and religious clichés. It depicts the four friends seated at a table covered with an American flag littered with crumbs and cigarettes. Each of the artists posed with a stereotypical prop: Ed Boreal (African American) holds a watermelon, Larry Bell (Jewish) is eating a bagel, Joe Goode (Catholic) holds a mackerel, and Ron Miyashiro (Hawaiian-Japanese American) is using chopsticks. A selection of works and prints by these four artists will be on view including Ed Boreal's mixed media painting, *Untitled*, 1966, and three early graphite on paper self-portraits, an early abstract silkscreen by Larry Bell entitled *Lux III* (silkscreen, mirror and canvas on board, 1971), lithographs by Joe Goode and several rare paintings from the 1960s by Ron Miyashiro.

In 1964, the other notorious exhibition of the 1960s in Los Angeles, called *The Studs*, took place at the Ferus Gallery, the epicenter of Los Angeles "cool," which had been open since 1957. The show presented works by the four prominent artists of the gallery: Ed Moses, Billy Al Bengston, Ken Price and Robert Irwin who was an influential teacher at Chouinard Art Institute and a mentor to several of the artists in this exhibition. In contrast to the politically involved *War Babies*, the ultra-masculine attitude of the Ferus Gallery artists was proclaimed in this group show they brazenly called *The Studs*. The exhibition poster, on display at the bookshop, includes an illustration of a pioneer unloading lumber from a horse-drawn cart, associating the four artists with frontiersmen. The "macho" attitude and the cultural dominance of this group of artists created a critical backlash in the 1980s, prompting a reevaluation of the L.A. art scene. Several works by each of the artists who took part in *The Studs* show will be shown at the bookstore such as *The Alamo* (yellow lacquer on aluminum, 1969), a "Dento" by Billy Al Bengston and *Western Sunset* (7-color screen-print, 1993) by Ken Price.

The exhibition also includes a selection of artworks by Ed Kienholz, Ed Ruscha and Vija Celmins. These three artists, although they did not participate in the *War Babies* or *The Studs* exhibitions, were working in Los Angeles at the same time and were well acquainted with the artists associated with the Huysman and Ferus Galleries. On view in the show at the Librairie, *Crucifix* (graphite and gold paint on paper, 1991) by Ed Ruscha, *Untitled (Web 3)*, (1 color aquatint/drypoint, 2002) by Vija Celmins, and two "Barter" watercolors by Ed Kienholz, among other prints.

Several printed ephemera and rare artists' books will be also displayed in vitrines, such as *Heat Wave* by Ken Price and Charles Bukowski, *Billy* by Ed Ruscha & Billy Al Bengston, *Business Cards* by Ed Ruscha & Billy Al Bengston, *Robert Irwin: Pasadena Art Museum* by John Coplans, Irwin's first exhibition catalogue, and *Babycakes* by Ed Ruscha.

Larry Bell (born 1939)

Bell's early work explored spatial ambiguity with silkscreen and mirror works, which evolved into sculptural constructions made of wood and glass, and later into glass cubes and standing glass-panel wall sculptures. In 1978, Bell began making "Vapor Drawings," experimenting with depositing metallic coatings on paper, which reflected or absorbed light.

Billy Al Bengston (born 1934)

Bengston began showing with the Ferus Gallery in 1957, until the gallery closed in 1966. In the late 1950s, Bengston began using a motif of sergeant's stripes, painted with industrial materials and techniques associated with the motorcycle and surfing culture with which he identified. He is best known for spray painting dented sheets of square aluminum with lacquer, featuring car and motorcycle motifs, Sergeant's stripes, abstracted images of hearts and iris flowers placed at the center of his works.

Ed Boreal (born 1937)

In the 1960s, Ed Boreal was producing three-dimensional wall-mounted works with references to the Third Reich. Boreal could also draw realistically, with great finesse, and feels that the issues of working in an abstract way are the same as working realistically: space, composition, color. The Watts riots in 1965 were a turning point for Boreal, causing a change in focus to political activism.

Vija Celmins (born 1938)

Born in Latvia, Vija Celmins was living in Los Angeles in the 1960s and at the same age as the "War Babies," she endured attacks from Germany throughout her childhood. As with Boreal and Miyashiro, her images of conflict and destruction, painted during the Vietnam War, are based on images from library books about World War I and World War II. Her interest in scientific imagery and photographs of outer space led her to make drawings and prints of seas, spiderwebs, night skies and deserts.

Joe Goode (born 1937)

Goode was a student at Chouinard in 1959, along with Ed Ruscha, Larry Bell, Ron Miyashiro and Ed Boreal. Famous for his "milk bottle" paintings and cloud imagery, Goode explores images that question the nature of perception by reproducing everyday objects: Polaroids, houses, spoons, glasses, milk bottles.

Robert Irwin (born 1928)

Irwin grew up in Los Angeles and later taught at Chouinard Art Institute as well as the University of California, Los Angeles. Over the course of decades, he taught and mentored a generation of artists that included Larry Bell, Ed Ruscha, Joe Goode, Ed Boreal, Chris Burden, Vija Celmins and many others. During the early decades of the '50s and '60s, Irwin refused to have his works photographed.

Ed Kienholz (born 1927, died 1994)

In 1969, realizing he did not own a specific tool he needed, Kienholz created paintings to trade for what he needed. He stamped the names of objects, experiences, and sums of money onto watercolor washes, which collectors could acquire by bartering whatever Kienholz had stamped. By creating radically different prices for essentially the same work of art, Kienholz was commenting on the state of the art market.

Ron Miyashiro (born 1938, died 2016)

Born in wartime Hawaii, occupied territory where Asians were prohibited from free movement after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Miyashiro moved to Los Angeles in 1957. He studied with Robert Irwin at Chouinard Art Institute, making assemblages of found objects and dark, thick paint, referencing weaponry and body parts.

Ed Moses (born 1926, died 2018)

Moses developed decades-long friendships with Billy Al Bengston, Robert Irwin, Ed Kienholz, Ken Price, Ed Ruscha, Larry Bell, Joe Goode, Vija Celmins and the artists of the L.A. art scene. A Buddhist, he was interested in the metaphysical power of painting, and created works that embraced temporality, process and presence.

Ken Price (born 1935, died 2012)

Price is best known for his abstract shapes constructed from fired clay, intricately painted with multiple layers of acrylic paint and then sanded down to reveal the colors beneath. He was also an extraordinary draftsman, making drawings that are as inventive as his sculpture. Los Angeles, complete with palm-studded skylines and smog-filled skies, was often the subject of his drawings.

Ed Ruscha (born 1937)

Ed Ruscha studied photography at the Chouinard Art Institute from 1956 to 1960. According to Henry Hopkins, the reason Ed Ruscha was not in the *War Babies* show was because he had gone off on his first trip to Europe. Hopkins remarked that Ruscha "has always been more adventuresome than some of the artists of that particular group."

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