



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Peter Alexander and I first met in the mid-1990s when Ken Price made the astute decision to introduce us.

Over the past twenty-odd years, as the global perception of Peter's work — and the work of many of his Los Angeles peers — has evolved, the one constant has been the enduring nature of our relationship, and it continues with this remarkable show and catalogue that I'm honored to be a part of. In 2005, when Peter was commissioned to remake a vintage resin work the gallery had loaned to the Centre Pompidou that had broken during installation, he reengaged with the palette and forms he had been compelled to abandon (due to toxicity of materials) in 1972. The research process and experimentation of that shared experience launched the beginning of a new chapter in Peter's career, and reignited his commitment to his earlier sculpture and wall-mounted resin works.

Curt Klebaum, leading his intrepid team at Puce, Inc., Ryder Bach and Abraham Delgado, has been of enormous assistance to the gallery over the years, working seamlessly with my colleagues Chris Heijnen, Hilary Fagadau, Claudine Elysee, and, in particular, Katharine Overgaard, whose design and research for this publication were both stellar and essential.

Claudia Parducci: let's just say none of this would happen without your limitless energy and involvement. Your and Peter's friendship over the years has made the time fly — with pleasure!

— Franklin Parrasch



EAST OF THE SUN

Peter Alexander began making sculpture, tight chunks of tinted polyester, in the mid-1960s. It was the time of plastics, and he was swept up in the winds of Light and Space. Derived from surfboard resin, the works look like bewitched windshields, laced pink, green, and blue. Other artists, including Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, James Turrell, and Helen Pashgian, investigated similar materials nearby. Circling around them was a culture of Jet Propulsion Laboratories, surfers, and car freaks. Doing their thing in California, near the beach, these artists looked west, over the ocean, somewhere out toward the sublime, in the direction of transcendence.

But in 1972 Alexander abruptly stopped making work. The times had changed, and his medium, it turned out, was toxic. Alexander wound up in the hospital. The art that came after took different forms. It was as if the artist turned around from the Pacific and peered back toward land. There's a strange set of prints from 1972 that look like TV screens, one featuring McDonald's golden arches. Afterwards came paintings on black velvet with fluorescent hues that evoked the depths of the sea. Collaged abstractions like *Gulper* (1982) sported pink splatters and forms in the shape of sale stickers. (Titles, too, surfaced after a decade of *Untitleds* and *No Titles*.) A lot of this work has the air of jazz lounges and makes one think about taste and class, about the difference between the kind of painting that decorates a club and the type that hangs on museum walls. Was there always a bit of seediness, or darkness, hovering over that California Sublime?

In 2005, history made its demands. A big exhibition, *Los Angeles 1955-1985: The Birth of An Art Capital*, opened at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the curators included two early polyester sculptures by Alexander. During installation they shattered one (these vintage works are more fragile than they appear), and that break brought Alexander back to the possibility of reengaging his earliest work. Instead of repairing the sculpture, the Pompidou commissioned Alexander to make it again, and the artist went on to make more work in a similar vein. Using urethane, he figured out a new, healthier way to fashion his ersatz philosopher's stones. These new works turn back to the artist's beginnings, but with a twist. On the one hand you can see right through them (almost). On the other hand, they thicken transparency. They color the atmosphere. Looking at them I can't help but see all the things Alexander was up to in the interim. They make one aware of the history and culture that informs our vision, but which more often than not is kept out of focus.

— Alex Kitnick

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PETER ALEXANDER

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Designed by Katharine Overgaard

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franklin parrasch gallery, inc.

53 east 64th st. new york, ny 10065

www.franklinparrasch.com

t 212 246 5360 f 646 429 8770

