

# MICHIGAN AVENUE

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## 'State of Mind' Examines California Art

Thomas Connors



When Damien Hirst's net worth and the art-buying power of newly minted billionaires grab as much attention as what artists are actually up to, it's tonic to consider a time when doing, not selling, was paramount. Now on view at the Smart Museum of Art, "State of Mind: New California Art Circa 1970" is a sharp examination of Conceptual art in the Golden State, where its practitioners (many of whom came from elsewhere) pursued its aims with a relish peculiar to that Pacific-kissed world. "The fact that there was virtually no institutional support for this work gave the artists a lot of freedom," observes the show's cocurator, Constance M. Lewallen of the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. "California represented the future; it was where change was taking place. New York was more steeped in tradition."

<http://michiganavemag.com/the-latest/pursuits/postings/state-of-mind-smart-museum-of-art - 01etvKibbf1KVL60.99>

Often market-averse and sometimes immaterial, the art of the California Conceptualists (a roster that includes John Baldessari, Chris Burden, Lynn Hershman, and Bruce Nauman) embraced humor, emphasized the body, and often operated outside the confines of galleries. Burden took a bullet in the arm and had himself nailed to a VW in two performance pieces. Eleanor Antin used the US mail to distribute postcards depicting 100 pairs of boots she'd arranged in various locations across the country. Robert Kinmont executed a series of handstands, beginning with one on the edge of a precipice in the Sierra Nevada mountains, snapping a picture of each. "It wasn't about the photograph itself," notes Lewallen. "These artists didn't care about fine photography in the traditional sense. Images were simply a way to communicate the things they had done." *October 3 through January 12, 2014, at Smart Museum of Art, 5550 S. Greenwood Ave., 773-702-0200*