



## Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture

April 17–September 11, 2016



*Corona (Fusion)*, 1971. Brazed copper and fused glass, 8 ¼ x 12 ¼ x 7 ½ inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David K. Anderson, Martha Jackson Memorial Collection, 1981.109.8

**Pasadena, CA** — The Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is proud to present *Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture*, the first comprehensive museum exhibition of international artist Claire Falkenstein (1908–1997). Though her enduring reputation rests on her sculpture, this prolific female artist began and ended her career as an inventive painter, and her body of work also includes printmaking, jewelry, glass, films, stage sets for dance, public murals, fountains, and monumental architectural commissions. The retrospective assembles preeminent examples from each medium, presenting the full range of one of America’s most experimental, productive, and peripatetic twentieth-century artists.

Although Falkenstein was respected among the burgeoning post-World-War-II art scene in the United States and Europe, her disregard for the commodification of art coupled with her movement from one international art metropolis to another made her an elusive figure. She spent her early years in San Francisco teaching at Mills College and California School of Fine Arts, where she gained entrée into the prominent artistic circle of Alexander Archipenko, who introduced her to key principles in abstract sculpture. Falkenstein was intellectually rigorous and relentless in her exploration of media, techniques, and processes, and her art was often ahead of her time. Her three-dimensional work broke from traditional boundaries as early as the late 1930s. In addition, some of her early paintings took the form of three-dimensional shapes years before these were common; her early-World-War-II murals were exceptionally modern for the time; and her jewelry, in its form and materials, was extremely venturesome.

In 1950, Falkenstein moved to Paris. There, French curator and critic Michel Tapié championed her exploration of theoretical concepts and associated her work with the radically experimental *art autre* group. In Paris, Falkenstein began to create based on the repetition of forms but without strict symmetry, an idea she outlined in *Structures Drawing*. Her most celebrated sculptures, including the gates to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, combine brilliantly-colored Venetian glass fused with numerous elements of welded metal joined into unified, repeating forms. Many Falkenstein paintings and drawings from the 1950s on—such as her *Moving Points* works—were also based on repetition, with profuse, small marks of the brush.

## PASADENA MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ART

*Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture*

Page 2/4

By 1963, offers of commissions and promised exhibitions drew Falkenstein to Los Angeles where she created a series of public works, including the celebrated stained glass window “sculptures” for St. Basil Church in Los Angeles and a fountain at the Long Beach Museum of Art in Long Beach, California. Falkenstein continued creating and exploring materials until her death in 1997. Throughout her career, Falkenstein’s abiding interest lay beyond the physical form; she was most interested in the transmutation of concepts, ideas, and theories, which were worked through both her materials and methodologies.

*Beyond Sculpture* is the artist’s first retrospective, and it, along with the accompanying catalogue, firmly contextualizes the varied oeuvre of this significant California and international vanguard within the art historical canon. The exhibition will include approximately 65 works by Falkenstein from the mid-1930s through the early 1990s, comprising sculptures, paintings, drawings, etchings, lithographs, jewelry, and watercolors, as well as large-scale photographs of her major public commissions. A video about her work by artist and filmmaker Jae Carmichael also will be included.

Curated by Jay Belloli, the exhibition is organized by the Pasadena Museum of California Art. Following its debut at the PMCA, the exhibition will travel to the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento. A catalogue accompanies the exhibition.



(Left to Right): *Yosemite, or Colorspace #3*, 1941. Oil on canvas, 22 x 18 inches. The Falkenstein Foundation, courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York; *Untitled III*, 1953. Etching, 18 x 15 inches. The Falkenstein Foundation, courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York; Installation view, photo © 2016 Don Milici

## **Related Programs**

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are free with admission and free for PMCA members. No reservations required.

### **Exhibition Walkthrough: A Varied Oeuvre**

**Sunday, April 17 • 3:00pm**

Join curator Jay Belloli and Claire Falkenstein’s former Venice Beach studio assistant Gordon Elkins for an exhibition walkthrough of *Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture*. Belloli and Elkins examine key artworks in a variety of media and offer special insights into the artist’s creative processes.

### **In Dialogue: Style-less Style**

**Saturday, May 21 • 1:00pm**

Jay Belloli, curator of *Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture*, moderates a panel discussion between Maren Henderson, Professor Emeritus at Cal Poly Pomona and exhibition catalogue contributor, and Michael Duncan, writer and independent curator. They consider Falkenstein’s prolific and experimental oeuvre—often characterized as “style-less style” because of its almost incomprehensible variability—in the context of the post-World-War-II world as well as the international vanguard’s role as a precursor for more contemporary art.

## PASADENA MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ART

*Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture*

Page 3/4

### Family Day

**Saturday, June 25 • 3:00–5:00pm**

Participate in fun art projects for the whole family based on our current exhibitions. All ages welcome!

### Exhibition Walkthrough: City to City

**Saturday, July 23 • 3:00pm**

Join curator Jay Belloli for an exhibition walkthrough of *Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture* with particular focus on how Falkenstein's peripatetic movement from San Francisco to Paris to Los Angeles influenced her artistic production.

### Family Day

**Saturday, August 13 • 3:00–5:00pm**

Participate in fun art projects for the whole family based on our current exhibitions. All ages welcome!

## PMCA 123 Monthly Programming

### Free First Friday (12:00–5:00pm)

May 6 • June 3 • July 1 • August 5 • September 2

### Second Saturday Docent Tour (2:00pm)

*Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture*

May 14 • June 11 • July 9 • August 13 • September 10

### Free Third Thursday Evening (5:00–8:00pm)

April 21 • May 19 • June 16 • July 21 • August 18

## Museum Information

### MISSION

The mission of the Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is to present the breadth of California art and design through exhibitions that explore the cultural dynamics and influences that are unique to California.

### HOURS

Open Wednesday–Sunday, 12:00–5:00pm; third Thursday of each month, 12:00–8:00pm; closed Monday, Tuesday, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

### ADMISSION

\$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors (62+); \$5 for students & educators; free for PMCA members and children (12 and under); free the first Friday of each month (12:00–5:00pm); free the third Thursday of each month (5:00–8:00pm). Access for people with disabilities is provided.

### PLAN YOUR VISIT

The museum is located at 490 East Union Street. From the 210 Freeway, take the Lake Avenue exit. Go south and take a right on Union Street. From the 110 Freeway/Downtown Los Angeles, follow the freeway until its end, then take Arroyo Parkway and turn right at Colorado, then left at Oakland to get to Union Street. Parking is available at the Museum.

### DOCENT TOURS AND GROUP RATES

The museum offers docent tours on the second Saturday of each month (2:00pm; free with admission). Docent tours are also available Wednesday–Friday, 12:00–5:00pm, to private groups for a fee of \$75. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is due two weeks prior to the scheduled date. Self-guided tours for K-12 students are offered for free. We regret that we

**PASADENA MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ART**

*Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture*

Page 4/4

are unable to accommodate docent tours for groups larger than 35 people. Before requesting a tour, please check the exhibition calendar to see which exhibitions will be available during your visit.

A discounted group rate of \$3 per person is available for groups of 20 or more (K-12 student groups are free). Please call to notify us at least one week in advance for these special admission rates. For any questions or to make reservations for a tour or group rate, call our Membership, Visitor Services & Bookstore Associate, Susan Wang, at 626.568.3665 x14 or email [swang@pmcaonline.org](mailto:swang@pmcaonline.org).

For more information, please call 626.568.3665 or visit [pmcaonline.org](http://pmcaonline.org).