

another obscure painter from the 1960s: The works' interest lies mainly in the fact that "Blosum" was the pseudonym of a second-generation Abstract Expressionist whose identity is still a secret. The elusive story behind these works began its slow reveal when a TV producer in Southern California discovered a Blosum painting by chance and Cardwell Jimmerson Contemporary Art subsequently included it in their 2011 "Sub-Pop" show; this fall, Tom Jimmerson opened his own enterprise, Tomwork (hosted by Assembly), with a show of thirteen Blosum canvases. The AbExer's *nom de pinceau*, taken from "vernal blossom," was chosen in 1961 to complement the series of botanical illustration paintings with which Vern Blosum invented himself. (A selection from that group was recently on view at Essex Street gallery in New York.) Blosum's work was initially brought to market by his girlfriend, the soon-to-be love interest of Leo Castelli Gallery's Ivan Karp, who himself apparently wasn't in on the hoax. In 1963, Blosum's *Time*

artist to make the (more passé) work he genuinely wanted to make. It is not by chance that Vern Blosum repeatedly chose to paint the machines by which modern men and women mark and literally pay for their time.

—Natilee Harren

NEWPORT BEACH, CA

2013 California-Pacific Triennial ORANGE COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

Curators of recurring contemporary survey exhibitions face a perpetual dilemma: How does one fend off biennial ennui? This was clearly the impetus for Dan Cameron's retooling of the Orange County Museum of Art's former California Biennial, which had been a state-bound overview with an emphasis on emerging artists. Working in a crowded field that now includes the Hammer Museum's "Made in L.A." biennial, as well as the J. Paul Getty Museum's "Pacific Standard Time" initiative, Cameron carved out a new mandate for OCMA, mounting a show that argues for California as a place embedded along the Pacific Rim. The inaugural edition of the show, redefined and renamed the California-Pacific Triennial, encompassed an impressive number of countries lining the world's largest ocean, with Japan, South Korea, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Australia, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, the United States, and Canada all represented.

In its new guise, the exhibition could easily have been yet another free-ranging international survey. But Cameron makes a strong case in his catalogue essay for California's particular local-global identity in relation to Asia and Latin America. As he points out, the trading of goods and culture across the Pacific has a history tracing back several centuries, and California's demographics alone bear witness to the interrelation of these regions. (According to the 2010 census, Asians and Latinos together now account for more than half of California's population.) The test, of course, is whether the art in the exhibition coheres according to this geographic logic. And indeed, the triennial did possess a consistent tenor, one marked by earnest statements, both poetic and assertive—a double-edged tone that could well be the result of gathering artworks from territories still in global ascendance. In the maps drawn by Vietnamese artist Tiffany Chung, for example, the careful delicacy of her mark-making is countered by the sharp commentary implicit in the scenarios depicted,

Araya Rasdjarmreansook, *Two Planets: Millet's The Gleaners and the Thai Farmers*, 2008, video, color, sound, 15 minutes. Production still. From the 2013 California-Pacific Triennial.



Vern Blosum, *Zip Code*, 1964, oil on canvas, 60 3/4 x 41 3/4".

Expired, 1962, one of many parking-meter paintings, was purchased from Castelli by Alfred H. Barr Jr. for the Museum of Modern Art, an act of legitimation that was accompanied by a flurry of others. Blosums were included in three Pop exhibitions that year and entered the collections of Betty Asher and Robert and Ethel Scull. But in September 1964, Barr, spurred by rumors that the canvases had been painted on a bet by a Pratt student, began pressing Castelli for more information on the artist, and the story slowly began to unravel. Blosum's parking meter would seem to have been a prescient icon, counting down, as it were, the remaining minutes of his short-lived charade. His final two paintings, fittingly, were both giant stop signs, captioned STOP.

As William E. Jones's riveting catalogue essay elaborates, a disillusioning experience mounting a show at Tibor de Nagy Gallery in 1961 dissuaded Blosum's mastermind from trying to live off his artwork, and so for the two days a week when he was not concentrating on the abstract work he believed in, he executed canny imitations of the new, popular aesthetic in order to capitalize on it. At the moment of Pop's emergence, Blosum took advantage of the conflation of art object and commercial object proposed by the genre's main protagonists, effectively turning the logic of Pop back on itself. It didn't matter that Blosum didn't exist. His ruse succeeded thanks to the institutional acceptance of neo-dada aesthetics and a rapacious art market and culture of criticism desperate for novel products and movements to name. And yet the pictures also fit in with their milieu, succeeding, in some ironic way, as aesthetic objects: "Hoax or no hoax," Barr wrote to Castelli while *Time Expired* hung on MOMA's wall, "I like the painting which is now on view." The present revival of Blosum's production is similarly a petition for the works' inherent allure as images, not just as pranks.

as in *Iraqi State Railways After Anglo-Iraqi Treaty 1903 & Current Pipelines*, 2010. If the triennial had one dominant theme, however, it was what one might call the emotional intelligence of objects. Stand-outs in this regard were Gabriel de la Mora's *Altamirano 20 I* and *Altamirano 20 III*, both 2012, large-scale works consisting of the cracked and peeling canvas-backed ceilings removed from two Mexico City apartment buildings. The works' tenuous beauty, born of time and deterioration, serves as a reminder of the everyday lives in which their materials played a part.

Appropriately for a show predicated on cultural exchange, a number of pieces dealt with themes of translation and interpretation, such as Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's 2008 video of Thai farmers discussing Jean-François Millet's 1857 *The Gleaners*. The most humorous work in this vein, Kim Beom's *Yellow Scream*, 2012, offered the Korean artist's take on the touchy-feely painting instruction of TV-show host Bob Ross. Like Ross, the painter in Kim's video (played by an actor) calmly talks the viewer through the steps of making an artwork. But when applying each brushstroke, he unleashes a ferocious scream, as if releasing a wellspring of pent-up aggression.

If a single work from the triennial might be said to have been representative of the whole, it would be Australian-born Shaun Gladwell's *Broken Dance (Beatboxed)*, 2012. In this video installation, two projections face each other from opposite sides of the room, one screen showing a person beat-boxing into a microphone in an empty studio, and the other showing a person freestyle dancing to that beat in a vacant urban space. On the one hand, each performer (in all, two beat boxers and three dancers) gives a solo performance, which spotlights the individual nature of improvisation. Yet in Gladwell's installation, the videos play off each other in a two-way conversation, and the result is surprisingly harmonic. One could say the same about the works in the exhibition: Though made at different points across the Pacific, they engage in subtle dialogues that come to light only when brought together.

—Jennifer King

AUCKLAND

5th Auckland Triennial

VARIOUS VENUES

For this edition of the Auckland Triennial, titled "If you were to live here . . .," the French-Chinese curator Hou Hanru, a veteran of the biennial/triennial circuit with more than a dozen such megashows under his belt—Venice, Shanghai, Lyon, Istanbul, etc.—decided to disperse the presentation throughout the city. But the Auckland Art Gallery, newly refurbished and hugely expanded, remained a major hub, where Hou cleverly integrated the triennial's contemporary works into the collection. His thoughtful curation both foregrounded high points of the institution's holdings—the nineteenth-century Photorealist portraits of Maori leaders by the Austro-Hungarian painter Gottfried Lindauer re worth a trip to New Zealand on their own—and produced provocative juxtapositions of the historical and the contemporary. One

the space, forcing visitors to engage with the artworks on the walls—and with one another—at often uncomfortably close range.

While participants such as Yto Barrada, Anri Sala, or Allora & Calzadilla might be familiar to the avid biennial/triennial visitor, the most striking pieces were by New Zealand-based artists with less of an international profile. Many of these addressed the central question of how to reimagine the relationship between local and global after the extensive discussions of postcolonialism in the 1990s. Maddie Leach's video *The Most Difficult Problem*, 2013, for example, takes its title from the memoirs of the cytologist James Brontë Gatenby, who studied a specific type of New Zealand glowworm. *Right of Way*, 2013, by the Samoan-born, New Zealand-based artist Janet Lilo examines the concept of community by looking at a particular Auckland neighborhood. Luke Willis Thompson's *Untitled*, 2012, speaks to the city's gentrification and accompanying racial tensions, but, unlike Lilo, Thompson takes a negative view of multiculturalism, a term only recently introduced in New Zealand, where until lately ethnic conversations were centered on Māori (indigenous) versus pakeha (white). Thompson's piece is a set of three roller doors and a security camera extracted from a local house. The residence had been tagged by a young Maori boy, who was then stabbed to death by its middle-aged pakeha owner. But indigenous/white conflicts are no longer the only ones at issue. Auckland's rapid population growth is in large part due to a big influx of immigrants from northern and Southeast Asia. Hou's curatorial strategy involved inserting, sensitively and with local conditions in mind, a strong dose of an international artistic and intellectual discourse that touched on this and other issues relevant to Auckland.

The title "If you were to live here . . ." resonated most strongly in the portion of the exhibition housed in the primarily Polynesian suburb of Otara. The experience of visiting the Fresh Gallery there turned most triennial visitors into voyeurs, since most white locals had likely never visited the space; it was precisely this strategy of drawing people out of their cultural habits and comfort zones that elevated the entire exhibition from simply an accumulation of artworks at a given site into a truly meaningful undertaking, crystallizing the most pressing local issues of the day. Here, the large-scale, collaborative mural by San Francisco-based artists Emory Douglas and Rigo 23 and New Zealander Wayne Youle spoke of the complexities of public space, community identity, and gentrification, probing the challenges of representing local



View of 5th Auckland Triennial: "If you were to live here . . .," 2013. Center: Michael Lin, *Atelier Bow-Wow*, and Andrew Barrie, *Model Home*, 2013. Auckland Art Gallery.