

West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965ndash;1977

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WEST OF CENTER ART AND THE COUNTERCULTURE EXPERIMENT IN AMERICA, 1965-1977

ELISSA AUTHER AND ADAM LERNER, EDITORS FOREWORD BY LUCY R. LIPPARD



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From Univ Of Minnesota Press : West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965ndash;1977 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965ndash;1977:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An Era of Creativity and FreedomBy Dr. Debra Jan BibelFilling in some gaps and overturning some complacent ideas and misconceptions, this collection of essays broadens the appreciation of art and life during the cultural upheaval of the decade of the mid 1960s to mid 1970s. The condensation of "sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll" misses the greater change in cognitive and environmental awareness and in artistic freedom, such that willfully altered lifestyles themselves are now viewed as holistic artforms. Music,

too, is art, but that subject has been already well covered and its history and effect are readily accessible; thus it is not included in the book, although the neo-Art Nouveau and psychedelic concert posters are the subject of the concluding chapter. Instead the respective authors of this edited retrospective focus on both pioneers and representatives who epitomize the era. As expected, the quality of the essays vary with author, but the editors accomplished a comparative evenness in tone and scholarship. The book encompasses architectural philosophy; the elevation of craft; rural and urbane art communes; art within the rise of the Black Panther and La Raza movements, gay liberation, and the anti-Vietnam War movement. We read about how dance and landscape design interacted with the Halprins, how clothing design was part of the daily life of the outrageous troupe the Cockettes; and that nature photographer Ansel Adams and Esalen Institute are linked through spiritual development. We learn about experimental film and video collectives and the development of light shows that became part of rock concerts. Of course, there is mention of Buddhism, of the artistic and poetic effects of LSD and other entheogens, and of the WholeEarth Catalogue and rise of Environmentalism. The reader will soon appreciate the excitement and creativity of the era. While particular experiments were short-lived, most movements developed and blossomed into mainstream life. How many now senior scientists, computer and internet geeks, environmental engineers, cinematographers and multi-media artists began their informal investigations in the crucible of the counterculture? The editors desired to provide evidence that art history is not only what New York museums and East Coast academics of the formal avant-garde determined. The roots of today's art may also be found in this book.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. It's about Time the Counterculture Came into View! By Xan Hart I can't say how enthusiastic I am about this treatise. For an academic book, it's a really great read. If you were there, you WILL remember it! The art that is so hard to define has been hard because it was like the forest and the trees - during those times we were too close to it. What Counterculture artistic expression really does is redefine art itself! It makes it a living, breathing, changing thing, a lifestyle, a conjunction of colliding influences into an explosion of creative freedom across interest areas and disciplines, pulling together our lives into a rich tapestry that finally made sense. Even the not-making-sense fit! And "West of Center" gets those excited little synapses firing again. Of course, I'm biased. I was there. I was one of the moving creators from, I'd say, 1963 on. One aspect of my work is mentioned in some detail in the Handmade Genders section by Julia Bryan-Wilson, while the larger part of it is intermingled in the very informative and well-presented "Introduction ... Consciousness and Encounters at the Edge of Art" by editors Auther and Lerner. Inspired by this book and my own frustration with the misunderstanding of those times, I am beginning work on a blog which will connect those times to these, heavily dependent on imagery and stories. This will probably be located sometime by July, 2012 in a website for Native Funk Flash, which is being put together as a student project in Seattle, not at my suggestion. Turns out young people are finally interested in what really happened!--Alexandra (Jacopetti) Hart

In the heady and hallucinogenic days of the 1960s and '70s, a diverse range of artists and creative individuals based in the American West--from the Pacific coast to the Rocky Mountains and the Southwest--broke the barriers between art and lifestyle and embraced the new, hybrid sensibilities of the countercultural movement. Often created through radically collaborative artistic practices, such works as Paolo Soleri's earth homes, the hand-built architecture of the Drop City and Libre communes, Yolanda Loacate's political posters, the multisensory movement workshops of Anna and Lawrence Halprin, and the immersive light shows and video-based work by the Ant Farm and Optic Nerve collectives were intended to generate new life patterns that pointed toward social and political emancipation. In *West of Center*, Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner bring together a prominent group of scholars to elaborate the historical and artistic significance of these counterculture projects within the broader narrative of postwar American art, which skews heavily toward New York's avant-garde art scene. This west of center countercultural movement has typically been associated with psychedelic art, but the contributors to this book understand this as only one dimension of the larger, artistically oriented, socially based phenomenon. At the same time, they reveal the disciplinary, geographic, and theoretical biases and assumptions that have led to the dismissal of countercultural practices in the history of art and visual culture, and they detail how this form of cultural and political activity found its place in the West. A companion to an exhibition originating at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, this book illuminates how, in the western United States, the counterculture's unique integration of art practices, political action, and collaborative life activities serves as a linchpin connecting postwar and contemporary artistic endeavors.

"West of Center is an overview of the rich and complicated countercultural moment when different artistic practices shared a belief in and dedication to alternative methods and materials. From Drop City to Anna and Lawrence Halprin's workshops, from Paolo Soleri to Newton and Helen Harrison's ecological projects, this volume makes connections across disciplines and describes multi-faceted influences on the art of today." --Chip Lord, Founder and partner with Ant Farm, 1968 - 1978