



Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (ICA LA) Announces Spring Exhibitions

Ree Morton: The Plant That Heals May Also Poison
Project Room: Ann Greene Kelly

February 16–June 14, 2020

Press Preview: Friday, February 14, 10am
RSVP to communications@theicala.org

Los Angeles, CA (January 29, 2020)—The Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (ICA LA) announced today two new exhibitions opening next month: *The Plant That Heals May Also Poison*, the first major United States retrospective of artist Ree Morton in four decades and *Ann Greene Kelly* in the Elsa Longhauser Project Room, featuring drawing and sculpture in the artist’s first solo institutional presentation.

“ICA LA has a history of illuminating the untold stories and emerging voices in contemporary art and culture, presenting in-depth surveys of important yet under-recognized artists. We’re proud to shine a light on these vital voices through both historical and contemporary exhibitions that feel relevant and essential,” said Anne Ellegood, Executive Director of ICA LA. “The work of Ree Morton and Ann Greene Kelly will be new to many in Los Angeles, and we’re thrilled to introduce their work to a wider audience. With shared interests in subjects such as domesticity and experimentation with materials, this thoughtful pairing of exhibitions for our Spring season reflects ICA LA’s commitment and enthusiasm to support and showcase work that challenges the way we see and experience the world.”

Ree Morton: The Plant That Heals May Also Poison
February 16–June 14, 2020



The Plant That Heals May Also Poison is the first major retrospective of artist Ree Morton (1936–1977) in the United States in forty years. The show features several rarely seen works, including a selection of sculptures, drawings, paintings, and archival materials that span a single decade of artistic production before Morton’s untimely

death in 1977. The presentation at ICA LA will be the artist's first solo museum presentation in Southern California and the exhibition's final appearance after originating at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and traveling to The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York.

Throughout her career, Morton produced a philosophically sophisticated body of work rich in emotion. Though celebrated by peers and younger artists, Morton's influence on contemporary art remains considerable yet underrecognized. Morton's eclectic practice was rooted in Postminimalism and incorporated personal narrative through literary, theoretical, and autobiographical references. Her use of bold color, theatrical imagery, and embrace of the decorative infused her objects with sly humor, generating a feminist legacy that radically asserts sentiment as a legitimate subject of artmaking. Reimagining tropes of love, friendship, and motherhood, Morton's conceptually rigorous yet accessible work demonstrates generosity towards the viewer, its spirit of exuberance and joy inflecting all aspects of the exhibition.

The Plant That Heals May Also Poison features 38 works spanning Morton's brief yet prolific artistic career from 1971–1977. Preferring direct sculptural materials that were easily manipulated, she primarily created tableaus as opposed to stand-alone objects. Bows, ribbons, text, plants, animals, drapery, and maps which reappear across her body of work change the ways in which an audience interacts with space. Her works often span across walls or drape to the floor and are, on occasion, mounted on patterned wallpaper. Morton's use of celastic (a textile embedded with plastic that is malleable once wet with acetone) transformed her practice and allowed her the freedom to introduce playful material tension—combining hard and soft textures in a single work. Location also deeply influenced her output; at various times throughout her career, she lived or spent significant time in Philadelphia; New York; Newfoundland, Canada, and held teaching positions in Chicago; Bozeman, Montana; and San Diego.

ICA LA's presentation includes additional works that highlight Morton's time in Southern California as visiting faculty at the University of California, San Diego in 1975. Morton collected postcards of beach sunsets, and her notebooks from that time include references to the various tropical fish that appear in her "Regional Pieces" series (1975–76). The theatrical seascapes of these diptychs, each of which features a below- and above-water scene framed by a celastic curtain, are immersions in the landscape of the California coastline. In late 1975, Morton was an artist-in-residence at the Woman's Building, a recently established independent feminist art school, exhibition space, and studio program, located at North Spring Street in Chinatown, Los Angeles. There, she staged an exhibition in 1976 entitled *Five Columns and Joan's Lines*, featuring *Let Us Celebrate While Youth Lingers and Ideas Flow* (1975) and elements from *For Kate* (1976); both works are included in ICA LA's presentation.

Morton cultivated a reputation as both a leading practitioner and teacher. Her practice is celebrated for refracting instead of reflecting the work of her contemporaries, her unorthodox and enigmatic approach to making art anticipating the shift towards installation, narrative, and performance that grew to define the 1970s. Morton's novel experimentation with textures, man-made and natural materials, signs, and symbols resists categorization.

Organized by The Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, the exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue co-published with Dancing Foxes Press with texts by Kate Kraczon, the exhibition's curator; artist Nayland Blake; Kathryn Gile; and scholars Roksana Filipowska and Abi Shapiro.

Ree Morton received her BFA from the University of Rhode Island in 1968 and an MFA from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in 1970. Originally trained as a nurse, she had three children before deciding to pursue art and returning to school. During her lifetime, her work was exhibited at Artists Space, New York (1973); the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1974); and the South Street Seaport Museum, New York (1975). She was twice included in the Whitney Biennial, once in 1973 and again in 1977. She has since had retrospectives at The New Museum, New York (1980); the Generali Foundation, Vienna, Austria (2008); The Drawing Center, New York (2009); and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (2015).

Ree Morton: The Plant That Heals May Also Poison is organized by The Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, and curated by Kate Kraczon, Curator, David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University. The ICA LA presentation is organized by Jamillah James, Curator.

Support for *Ree Morton: The Plant That Heals May Also Poison* has been provided by the Inchworm Fund. ICA Philadelphia was recognized as part of the inaugural Sotheby's Prize (2017) with a commendation that applauds the breadth and depth of ambitious exhibition research for *Ree Morton: The Plant That Heals May Also Poison*. Additional support has been provided by the Edna W. Andrade Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation, Nancy and Leonard Amoroso, Amanda and Andrew Megibow, and Norma and Lawrence Reichlin.

The ICA LA presentation is made possible thanks to the DEW Foundation, Leslie and Bill McMorrow, and Michael Asher Foundation. Additional support is provided by Karen Hillenburg, Jill and Peter Kraus, the Wilhelm Family Foundation, and Friends of Ree Morton.

ICA LA is supported by Curator's Council, Fieldwork, and 1717 Collective.

Image: Ree Morton, *The Plant That Heals May Also Poison*, 1974, Five lightbulbs, enamel and glitter on wood and celastic, 46 × 64 in. (116.9 × 162.6 cm), FWA – Lieve Van Gorp Foundation for Women Artists. © Estate of Ree Morton; courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York.

Ann Greene Kelly
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The Project Room—recently named in honor of Elsa Longhauser, the museum's director from 2000–2019—features an exhibition of new sculpture and drawings by Los Angeles-based artist Ann Greene Kelly (b. 1988), marking her first solo institutional presentation. Kelly looks to the tradition of the readymade (common objects displayed as works of art), combining everyday items, such as mattresses and tires, with plaster, stone, and other sculptural materials. These unique combinations invest the objects with a sense of affection and understanding that is both distinctive and familiar, while simultaneously opening up new and engaging modes of sculpture. Likewise, her drawing practice explores the relationship between domestic, interior space; the urban, industrial landscape; and personal experience.

The exhibition includes surreal sculptural references to familiar private and public objects: a bench, tires, and a mattress. The specificity of materials combined with residue of use points to Kelly's interest in both formal and human concerns. She often uses gestures of patching or mending, supplementing everyday objects with deliberately constructed incisions or grooves. In this world, man-made objects designed to assist with daily activities like transportation and sleep begin to resemble the human body and are dissected and augmented. In *Untitled* (2019), a small, circular mattress has an onyx drain embedded at its center. In another untitled sculpture from 2019, tires are

sawed in half and stacked, their insides revealed to show a bedsheet inlay pressed into the grooves of the surface and hand-drawn with colored pencil.

Kelly's drawings also reflect this urgent dissection of physical experience. *Still Life with Drink and Banana Bread* (2017) shows wispy forms drawn in colored pencil indicating a mundane and highly specific domestic moment with a cherry in a glass, a loaf of banana bread, a green chair, and barred windows. *Shirt with Smokestack* (2019) portrays a more surreal universe; mundane objects including a roll of paper towels and a tabletop remain, but at the back of a seated figure is the titular shirt with smokestack. Kelly's work is intimate and idiosyncratic, often anthropomorphizing and adding pathos to everyday objects.

Ann Greene Kelly lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. She received her BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, MD in 2010. Solo exhibitions include gallery presentations at AND NOW, Dallas; Michael Benevento, Los Angeles; White Columns, New York; and Chapter NY, New York. She has participated in group shows at White Flag Projects, St. Louis; David Zwirner, New York; Maisterravalbuena, Madrid; Stems Gallery, Brussels; and Galleria ZERO in Milan. Her work will be included in the forthcoming 2020 edition of *Made in LA* at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Kelly is represented by Michael Benevento, Los Angeles and Chapter NY, New York.

Ann Greene Kelly is organized by Jamillah James, Curator.

The exhibition is made possible thanks to the DEW Foundation and Michael Asher Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Wilhelm Family Foundation.

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Image: Ann Green Kelly, *Untitled* (2019), Tire, plaster, fence, colored pencil, comforter, 21 × 35 × 17 in. (53.34 × 88.9 × 43.2 cm). Courtesy the artist and Michael Benevento, Los Angeles

Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (ICA LA)

The Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (ICA LA) is an epicenter of artistic experimentation and incubator of new ideas.

Founded in 1984 as the Santa Monica Museum of Art (SMMoA) and reestablished in 2017 with a new identity and home in Downtown Los Angeles, ICA LA builds upon a distinguished history of bold curatorial vision and innovative programming to illuminate the important untold stories and emerging voices in contemporary art and culture. The museum's 12,700 square-foot renovated industrial building—designed by WHY Architecture under the leadership of Kulapat Yantrasast—features ample space for exhibitions, public programs, retail pop-ups, integrated offices, and special projects.

ICA LA's mission is to support art that sparks the pleasure of discovery and challenges the way we see and experience the world, ourselves, and each other. ICA LA is committed to upending hierarchies of race, class, gender, and culture. Through exhibitions, education programs, and community partnerships, ICA LA fosters critique of the familiar and empathy with the different.

ICA LA is committed to making contemporary art relevant and accessible for all. Admission is free. For more information, visit theicala.org. Join the conversation, follow on social media at [@theicala](https://twitter.com/theicala) and [#icala](https://www.instagram.com/theicala)

Exhibition Hours: Wednesday–Friday 11am to 7pm; Saturday and Sunday 11am to 6pm

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