IMCA's Interim Museum Location Reopens Saturday, May 15.
Please visit our newly refreshed website for all the information you will need to plan your trip.

Message from the Director
Welcome to Monthly Muse—a short digest of reads, links, videos, ideas, and musings about the cultural sphere, with an emphasis on our home, California. If you are new to Monthly Muse, welcome! IMCA launched this e-newsletter one year ago this month and as a subscriber you also have access to all of the past issues. Whether you have been with us from the start or subscribed recently, thank you for your continued interest and support as we work towards building a new museum on campus at University of California, Irvine.

After a long and challenging year, we are pleased to reopen our doors on May 15, 2021 and welcome you back to our interim museum location at 18881 Von Karman Avenue in Irvine. Please stop by to view our newest exhibition, Radiant Impressions, curated by Jean Stern.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Kim Kanatani
Museum Director, IMCA
In Conversation:
Jean Stern and Erin Stout

A recorded conversation about selected works in the Spring – Summer 2021 exhibition Radiant Impressions.

Watch: In Conversation: Jean Stern and Erin Stout
Jean Stern, former senior curator of California Impressionism at IMCA, joined Erin Stout, curatorial and research associate at IMCA, for a virtual curator’s look at four paintings included in the Spring – Summer 2021 exhibition, Radiant Impressions. The works discussed include Laguna Eucalyptus (Guy Rose), Bathing Baby (Elanor Colburn), The Johnson Girl (Belle Baranceanu), and Sunday Breakfast (George Brandriff).
Featured Work: *Mid-Winter, Coronado Beach*

The California sun is its own character in Louis Betts’ (1873 – 1961) *Mid-Winter, Coronado Beach* (circa 1907). It gleams from the sand, reflects off clothing and skin, and frolics amongst the shadows like visitors to the beach. In the painting’s foreground, two children—one in summer whites and the other in a blue dress with matching bow—appear unsullied by their play in the golden sand.

In her book, *Coronado*, author Leslie Hubbard Crawford attributes the golden sparkle of the Coronado beach sand to naturally occurring mica deposits found in the mountains across the border in Mexico. The mica is washed down the mountains by the Tijuana River, emptied into the Pacific Ocean, and deposited onto the beach by the *Silver Strand littoral current*. It doesn’t take much mica to make a beach sparkle, according to *Coastal Care*. Due to its sheet-like atomic
arrangement, specks of mica are lightweight and flat, easily washed away by waves. The shiny flat flakes act like millions of tiny mirrors thrown into the sand and are so reflective in the sunlight that they are visible even when mica accounts for less than one percent of the sand grains on a beach.

*Mid-Winter, Coronado Beach* is an idyllic scene that conveys many sensory delights: sand in the toes, the spray of the ocean, and warm sun beating on skin. Indeed, the painting’s “mid-winter” title conveys a sense that these beachgoers are to be envied. Betts’ watercolor painting, however, is a highly romanticized one. It was produced as part of a railroad company’s marketing campaign. Each year, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad invited popular painters on three- or four-week painting expeditions through New Mexico, Arizona, and California to make art used by the company’s advertising department. The resulting paintings were reproduced on train folders, calendars, travel brochures, and dining menus, and the originals displayed in train stations or ticket windows. In exchange, the artists traveled for free.

Images by Betts and others not only shaped the tourist industry but also contributed to the economic boom of the 1880s and the rapid expansion of Southern California’s population. Taken as a whole, they formed the basis for some of the earliest conceptions of California and the “West” in the minds of Americans. Viewed by those on the East Coast, this scene would have presented a very attractive vision of what a railway ticket to California could buy.

IMCA is pleased to include *Mid-Winter, Coronado Beach* (circa 1907) in its collection and feature the painting in the Spring – Summer 2021 exhibition, *Radiant Impressions*. 
Robert Irwin (b. 1928), artist and pioneer of Southern California’s Light and Space movement, was born in Long Beach, CA and has lived and worked in San Diego since the 1980s. He studied at the Otis Art Institute (now Otis College of Art and Design) from 1948 to 1950 and the Chouinard Art Institute (now California Institute of the Arts) from 1953 to 1954. Irwin received a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship in 1976 and a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship in 1984.

Beginning with painting, then creating light sculptures, large-scale installations, landscape projects, and expanding to what he terms a “conditional art” practice, Irwin has explored the phenomenology of light, color, and space across a range of mediums over his nearly seven-decade career. The term “Light and Space” derives from a 1971 exhibition at the UCLA University
Art Gallery, titled *Transparency, Reflection, Light, Space: Four Artists* that included works by Peter Alexander, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, and Craig Kauffman. Their works, as described in the exhibition catalogue, “served as liaison between the artists and the spaces they chose to animate.”

“Developing an Abstract Expressionist approach to painting by the late 1950s, Irwin had his first monographic exhibition at Felix Landau Gallery (Los Angeles) in 1957, then moved to the newly founded Ferus Gallery (Los Angeles), where he began exhibiting the following year. By the early 1960s, Irwin shifted to creating more restrained works with his line paintings, guided principally by questions of structure, color, and perception, and his dot paintings, works on gently bowed supports composed with small dots of near-complementary colors (*pacegallery.com*).” In 1966, he initiated a series of curved aluminum and acrylic discs (like *Untitled*, 1968, pictured above) that are displayed with an armature extending out from the wall. Under specific lighting conditions the edges of these works disappear, creating an environment for viewers to explore the nature of light and perceptual psychology. Irwin shifts the emphasis on materiality to the viewer’s attention to perception by inviting them to simply see.

Art critic Jonathan Griffin wrote, “Robert Irwin has shaped the history of art in Southern California more significantly, over a longer period, than any other living artist. The influence of his thinking is pervasive—through his years as a teacher to artists including Chris Burden, Vija Celmins, Joe Goode, and Ed Ruscha.” In a wide-ranging conversation with writer Lawrence Weschler in 2007, Irwin spoke about his years teaching at UCI between 1968 and 1972 (excerpt below.)

Weschler: I had pointed out that one of the things that’s fascinating about you as a teacher is that you had an incredible group of students at a particular point in your life: Ed Ruscha and Vija Celmins and Chris Burden and Joe Goode. And one of the things that’s interesting to me is they’ve all gone in completely different directions. . . . I was asking you, did they seem amazing at the time, and what was it like to be teaching them?

Irwin: Well, I formally taught for a very short period of time: three years at Chouinard, where I got fired, and two years at UCLA, where I got fired, and . . . then I set up the graduate department in the University of California at Irvine, where I stayed for about two and a half years and didn’t get fired. These were the only times I taught formally. The reason I stopped teaching, first of all, is because it’s really a complicated thing to do. . . . You have people who are in the process of developing. They are spectacular in and of themselves. None of these students were recruited, but each one of them was a pure potential, and to try and teach, to me, is to ultimately impose on them (while they may think it’s information) your limitations. . . . I don’t really spend any time looking at the work. Instead I talk and spend time with them, because their development is always way ahead of the work. The work comes after not only the development, but when it begins to coalesce, it begins to, in a sense, refine itself, and then it’s able to make the transition from just knowing something to actually putting that into some kind of inter-subjective form.

To learn more about Robert Irwin, read Lawrence Weschler’s *Seeing is forgetting the name of the*
thing one sees—a compilation of over 30 years of conversations with Robert Irwin and listen to
Irwin’s marvelous 2016 artist talk at Stanford University.

IMCA is pleased to include Irwin’s Untitled (1968) in its collection.

UCI Alumni Spotlight
Andrea Welton (b. 1988) is a painter currently based in Orange County, CA. She received a BFA from Art Center College of Design (Pasadena, CA) in 2016 and an MFA from UC Irvine in 2019. She has participated in residencies at Picture Berlin (Germany), PLAYA (Summer Lake, OR), and Salmon Creek Farm (Mendocino, CA) and her work has been exhibited at Cal State University Los Angeles Fine Arts Gallery, Irvine Fine Arts Center, Meinblau Projektraum (Berlin), and the University Art Gallery, UC Irvine, among others.

In a profile for She Explores, Welton shared, “I grew up in Half Moon Bay, California about two blocks away from the ocean. The outdoors has always had a huge impact on my art practice. At the age of four my mother enrolled me into art classes, and I’ve loved creating ever since. My family has always been one for adventures and I would come back to art class with photographs of places I wished to replicate. The same goes for my practice now, except instead of representation I use abstraction.”

For Welton, the landscape is both medium and subject. In the studio she produces paintings that incorporate natural elements while outside she interacts with and investigates the landscape through photographs and drawings. “I have collected bark of Douglas Fir, Mountain Mahogany and Birch seed pods, quartz, granite, soil, volcanic rock, Coyote Sage Brush to use for natural dye stuffs, and pine cones from the Tamarac Pine. Sketches are then produced on site experimenting with the boundaries of each material (voyagela.com).”

In Welton’s MFA Thesis, she writes that her “paintings are made in response to the
lived experience of the body in nature. I consider them scores of the landscape, choreographed compositions of the landscape in painted notation. In both the landscape and the studio, I consider the use of my body, materials, and paint. The work is an investigation of both natural and synthetic materials and pushing the limitations of historical materials to initiate new boundaries. Through a highly utopic lens, I sincerely ask: How does one construct a relationship with the land? As an extension of myself, my paintings express my values and adoration of the outdoors, relaying both a physical landscape, as well as an inner landscape."

Follow @awelton

Mary Corse (b. 1945) earned a BFA in 1968 from Chouinard Art Institute and developed her early work during the emergence of the Light and Space movement in Southern California. "Throughout the 1960s, she experimented with unconventional media and supports, producing shaped canvases, works with plexiglass, and illuminated boxes. In 1968, Corse discovered glass microspheres, an industrial safety material used in street signs and dividing lines on highways. Combining these tiny refractive beads with acrylic paint, she creates paintings that appear to radiate light from within and produce shifts in appearance contingent on their surroundings and
the viewer’s position (pacegallery.com).”

In 2018, the Whitney Museum of American Art organized the first solo exhibition of Corse’s work, *Mary Corse: A Survey in Light*, in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. “[Mary Corse] shared with her contemporaries a deep fascination with perception and with the possibility that light itself could serve as both a subject and material of art. Yet while others largely migrated away from painting into sculptural and environmental projects, Corse approached the question of light through painting.”

In her doctoral dissertation, “Diffusion: Women Light Artists in Postwar California,” art historian Elizabeth Gollnick, PhD, “maps the evolution of Mary Corse’s experimental ‘light painting’ between 1964 and 1971, in which the artist experimented with new technology—including fluorescent bulbs and the reflective glass microspheres used in freeway lane dividers—to expand the perceptual boundaries of monochrome painting by manifesting an experience of pure white light.” Gollnick also wrote about Corse’s survey exhibition for *The Brooklyn Rail*: “For Corse, painting was not defined by the flatness of the canvas or the optical effects of paint on a surface. Rather, painting is experiential. A painting is a vehicle that generates a field of light that extends into three-dimensional space, and the viewer’s experience of this light is a fundamental component of the work.”

Corse’s paintings rely on the active participation of the viewer traversing the space in front of the work. Their perception is dependent on their position as well as the environmental lighting conditions in which the work is displayed. In *Untitled (Beveled White Inner Band)*, 2003 (pictured above), the surface of the painting is segmented into five vertical bands. The outer bands are painted white, while the interior consists of three vertical bands of white and gray paint inset with glass microspheres. The microspheres produce a shimmering quality and sometimes radiate color or rainbows depending on the lighting conditions. The contrast between the bands becomes more visible when viewed from a particular distance. As the viewer moves closer the boundary between the bands becomes imperceptible. While Corse’s paintings are nearly impossible to reproduce in still or moving images, this video of *Untitled (White Inner Band, Beveled)*, 2011 captures some of the optical effects in her white paintings.

Join Corse in her studio where she discusses her materials and process. For a deeper dive into her art and practice, watch *Mary Corse: A Symposium* presented by the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2018 or read a transcript of Corse’s interview with journalist and art critic Hunter Drohojowska-Philp conducted August 10 – December 14, 2013 for the Archives of American Art, at the artist’s studio in Topanga, California.

IMCA is pleased to include Corse’s *Untitled (Beveled White Inner Band)*, 2003 in its collection.
**Last Chance**

There are only two weeks left to visit Desert X 2021 in Southern California’s Coachella Valley. “Curated by Artistic Director Neville Wakefield and Co-curator César García-Alvarez, Desert X 2021 explores the desert as both a place and idea, acknowledging the realities of people who reside there and the political, social, and cultural contexts that shape their stories. Free and open to all, Desert X includes newly commissioned works that collectively pose urgent questions about our pasts while imagining the possibilities of a shared future.” García-Alvarez is founder and executive and artistic director of The Mistake Room, a Los Angeles-based independent space and platform for contemporary art, culture, and ideas. During your visit be sure to check out the work of two participating artists with strong ties to California: Edoardo Sarabia (b. 1976, Los Angeles) and Kim Stringfellow (b. 1963, San Mateo).

**Eduardo Sarabia** who lives and works in Guadalajara, Mexico, explores the complex cultural exchanges between Mexico and the United States and the multiple economies, formal and informal, that emerge from the encounters between two nations. Using materials that bridge tradition and popular culture, his works tell stories about the past and future of people with two homelands. His work has been exhibited in numerous museums including Arizona State University Art Museum, Centro Cultural Cabañas (Guadalajara), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo (Oaxaca), Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and Tamayo Museum (Mexico City). Follow @eduardosarabia

**Kim Stringfellow** is an artist, educator, writer, curator, environmentalist, and desert anthropologist based in Joshua Tree, CA. For the past 20 years, her practice has focused on the human-driven transformation of some of the American West’s most arid regions through multi-year, research-based projects merging cultural geography, public practice, and experimental documentary into socially engaged transmedia experiences. A professor at San Diego State University’s School of Art+Design, Stringfellow is a 2016 Andy Warhol for the Visual Arts Curatorial Fellow and a 2015 Guggenheim Fellow in Photography. In 2012, she became the second recipient of the Theo Westenberger Award for Artistic Excellence that honors the achievements of contemporary women whose work in photography, film, and new media transforms how we see the American West. Follow @kimstringfellowartist

Make a plan to visit before the exhibition closes on May 16, 2021. Download a map. Learn more about the installations in the Desert X 21 flipbook.
Staff Pick

In the summer of 2020, I began researching the Latinx and Chicanx artists in IMCA's collection. I
had very limited education in Latinx/Chicanx art and art history before embarking on this project. This work has emboldened me to continue to pursue a career in art historical education focusing on the Latinx experience. The transcendent feminine connection in Cosmic Cruise by Ester Hernandez has remained with me since I first saw it—that moment when you notice something and then all of a sudden you see it everywhere. A few months later I randomly bought a book on Chicana spiritual art. To my surprise, Cosmic Cruise was featured, and I was able to gain a deeper insight into this print. The inspiration for the work comes from the artist’s mother being the first woman to drive a car in the small agricultural town where she was raised. The theme of motherhood and feminine resilience, and the month of May in which I am writing this, has made me think of my own mother. This month we celebrate Mother’s Day and I also celebrate my mom’s birthday. She is a woman who also embarked on many “firsts”—the first woman in her family to migrate to the US, the first to drive, and the first to hold a job.

Endria Suarez
Intern and UCI Student Museum Educator, IMCA

MAKING TOGETHER: Drawing Light & Shadow
An art-making activity designed for ages 5+, or younger with assistance.

Be inspired by artists Mary Corse and Robert Irwin who used light as a primary material and engaged with light as a subject through the use of materials such as glass and plastics, and the creation of immersive environments.

Gather Your Materials
You will need a pencil, white or colored paper (any size), and objects for creating shadows. You will also need a light source. This can be the Sun, a lamp, or flashlight.

Step x Step
Robert Irwin said, “Beauty is all around you. You open your eyes in the morning, the world is
totally formed. You haven't done anything other than be. It's all around you. The whole idea is being able to recognize it, and pay attention to it, articulate it."

Join Yidan Cao, UCI student and IMCA Museum Educator, for Making Together where she demonstrates the activity below.

Choose a time of day to do this activity. If you are using the Sun as your light source, early morning or late afternoon is best—the angle of the Sun during these times will cast the strongest shadows.

- Look for and pay attention to shadows cast by the Sun and dancing on surfaces in your environment (the floor, ground, walls, or other objects).
- Place your paper on a flat surface.
- Use your pencil to draw the outline of the shadow.
- If you see shadows cast on the ground outside, you can also use sidewalk chalk to draw them directly on the ground (no paper needed).
- You can also use small objects to create shadows. Place an object on paper in the path of a light source (e.g., Sun or lamp). The light that reaches the object will be blocked, while the rest of the light spills around it. The blocked part becomes a shadow on another object—in this case, your paper.
- Use your pencil to draw the outline of the shadows created by your object.
- **Optional: Use colored pencils, pens, or paint to add color to your light and shadow drawings.**

For more inspiration, check out these California-based artists who also made work about light: Maria Nordman, Phillip K. Smith (revisit July 2020 issue), James Turrell, (revisit November 2020 issue) and Doug Wheeler.

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**Image credits**

Still from IMCA program *In Conversation: Jean Stern and Erin Stout*

Robert Irwin, *Untitled*, 1968, Sprayed acrylic lacquer on shaped aluminum, 49 x 49 in. The Buck Collection at UCI Institute and Museum of California Art

Louis Betts, *Mid-Winter, Coronado Beach*, circa 1907, Oil on canvas, 29 x 24 in. The Irvine Museum Collection at University of California, Irvine

Mary Corse, *Untitled (Beveled White Inner Band)*, 2003, Glass microspheres in acrylic on canvas, 84 x 84 in. The Buck Collection at UCI Institute and Museum of California Art © Mary Corse

Andrea Welton in the studio. Photo by Stephanie Klotz Photography. Courtesy of the artist.

Andrea Welton, *Slow Burn*, 2020, Ink and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60 in. Photo documentation of the work by Kayla Kee. Courtesy of the artist.


Still from Making Together: Drawing Light & Shadow video created by Yidan Cao.