

PRESS RELEASE

WEISMAN ART MUSEUM
333 EAST RIVER ROAD
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55455

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WEST! FRANK GEHRY AND THE ARTISTS OF VENICE BEACH, 1962–1978

EXHIBITION DATES: MAY 14 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 11, 2005

PREVIEW PARTY: FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2005

WEST! FRANK GEHRY AND THE ARTISTS OF VENICE BEACH, 1962–1978 FEATURES THE WORK OF 16 ARTISTS WHOSE WORK IN VENICE, CALIFORNIA, INFLUENCED THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF FRANK GEHRY'S ARCHITECTURAL CAREER. THESE ARTISTS ALL WORKED IN OR AROUND VENICE BEACH, BETWEEN 1962, WHEN GEHRY OPENED HIS STUDIO, AND 1978, WHEN HE COMPLETED HIS RESIDENCE IN SANTA MONICA AND EMBARKED ON THE MORE PUBLIC, SIGNATURE PHASE OF HIS CAREER. **WEST!** IS ON VIEW UNTIL SEPTEMBER 11, 2005.

THE GROUP THAT CLUSTERED AROUND GEHRY INCLUDED PETER ALEXANDER, JOHN ALTOON, CHARLES ARNOLDI, LARRY BELL, TONY BERLANT, BILLY AL BENGSTON, VIJA CELMINS, RONALD DAVIS, GUY DILL, LADDIE JOHN DILL, ROBERT GRAHAM, ROBERT IRWIN, ED MOSES, KEN PRICE, ED RUSCHA, AND DEWAIN VALENTINE. OFTEN CITED BY GEHRY AS HIS SUPPORTIVE AND INSPIRATIONAL COMMUNITY, THESE 16 ARTISTS WERE WORKING WITH THEMES AND FORMAL ELEMENTS THAT PUSHED THE BOUNDARIES OF BOTH SCULPTURE AND PAINTING. SPECIFICALLY, THE VENICE BEACH ARTISTS EXPLORED LIGHT, SPACE, AND THE USE OF NEW, MORE INDUSTRIAL MATERIALS IN THEIR WORK---- ALL ELEMENTS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN GEHRY'S ARCHITECTURE.

IN THE 1960S, VENICE, CALIFORNIA, WAS A FREETHINKING, LOW-RENT DISTRICT ON

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THE OCEAN THAT ATTRACTED ARTISTS AND YOUNG RADICALS FROM ACROSS THE NATION. FRANK GEHRY OPENED HIS STUDIO IN NEARBY SANTA MONICA IN 1962 IN THE MIDST OF THIS BUDDING ARTISTIC SCENE. ALWAYS SLIGHTLY ON THE MARGIN, THE ARTISTS WHO GRAVITATED THERE WERE EXPERIMENTAL AND A BIT IRREVERENT. FOCUSED ON BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN DIFFERENT MEDIA – SUCH AS PAINTING AND SCULPTURE OR SCULPTURE AND ARCHITECTURE –AND PLAYING WITH NON-TRADITIONAL MATERIALS SUCH AS INDUSTRIAL METALS, PLASTICS, AND JUNK, THIS COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS PROVIDED THE INSPIRATION AND SUPPORT THAT GEHRY WAS NOT ABLE TO GARNER FROM THE LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL ESTABLISHMENT.

GEHRY'S CONTACT WITH THE VENICE BEACH ART SCENE INSPIRED A SENSE OF EXPERIMENTATION THAT WOULD DEVELOP INTO A MAJOR COMPONENT OF HIS MATURE ARCHITECTURAL VOICE. MOST OF THE ARCHITECTURAL WORK GEHRY WAS WORKING ON IN THE YEARS BETWEEN 1962 AND 1978 WAS COMMERCIAL IN NATURE. THE RESTRICTIONS OF SUCH WORK---STRICT PRODUCTION DEADLINES AND TIGHT BUDGETS---DID NOT ALLOW FOR THE PLAY AND EXPERIMENTATION THAT EVENTUALLY WOULD DISTINGUISH HIS TRADEMARK STYLE. GEHRY CHOSE AT THIS POINT TO WORK IN THE TWO VEINS SIMULTANEOUSLY TAKING ON SEPARATE, MORE CREATIVELY CHALLENGING PROJECTS, SUCH AS THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO/RESIDENCE HE DESIGNED FOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER LOU DANZIGER IN 1964.

THE WEISMAN'S EXHIBITION **WEST!** WILL FEATURE THE WORK OF THE LOOSELY KNIT, BUT CLEARLY RELATED, GROUP OF ARTISTS WHO EMERGED ON THE SCENE IN VENICE, CALIFORNIA, IN THE EARLY 1960S AND CONSTITUTED THE ARTISTIC COMMUNITY IN WHICH FRANK GEHRY MATURED AND HONED HIS NOW WORLD-RENOUNDED STYLE. THE PIECES IN THE EXHIBITION REPRESENT EXAMPLES OF EARLY WORK BY THE ARTISTS AND SERVE TO DEMONSTRATE THE MANNER IN WHICH EACH ARTISTS BROKE NEW GROUND IN THE AREAS OF MATERIALS, FORM, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THE VIEWER WOULD INTERACT WITH THE ARTWORK. FOCUSED ON EXPERIENCE ITSELF, THE SEEMINGLY SIMPLE WORKS PUSHED BOUNDARIES AND ATTEMPTED TO PERPLEX VIEWERS BY QUESTIONING THE NATURE OF EACH VIEWER'S REALITY. WHETHER IT WAS CREATING SOLID FORM FROM LIGHT, AS IN IRWIN'S CANVASES AND SCRIM PIECES, OR THE CREATION OF HYPER-REALISTIC ILLUSIONISTIC SPACE AS IN CELMIN'S ALMOST METAPHYSICAL DRAWINGS, EACH ARTIST OFFERED A NEW MANNER IN WHICH TO CONSIDER THE PHYSICAL WORLD INSPIRING GEHRY'S MOST PHYSICAL AND INTERACTIVE ARTISTIC PRACTICE--- ARCHITECTURE.

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WEST! OPENING CELEBRATION

THE WEISMAN ART MUSEUM INVITES YOU TO THE OPENING RECEPTION FOR **WEST! FRANK GEHRY AND THE ARTISTS OF VENICE BEACH, 1962-1978**. MIX AND MINGLE WITH FRANK GEHRY AND SOME OF THE ARTISTS WHO INSPIRED HIS INNOVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNS.

FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2005

DESSERT BUFFET 8:00-11:00 P.M.

\$50 PER PERSON/GENERAL ADMISSION

NON-MEMBERS PURCHASE TWO TICKETS AND RECEIVE A FREE, ONE-YEAR, SUSTAINER LEVEL MEMBERSHIP TO THE WEISMAN WITH ONGOING BENEFITS (\$100 VALUE).

\$30 PER PERSON/WEISMAN DUAL OR INDIVIDUAL LEVEL MEMBER

WEISMAN MEMBERS MAY UPGRADE TO THE \$100 SUSTAINER LEVEL OR ABOVE TO RECEIVE TWO FREE TICKETS. TO UPGRADE, CALL 612-626-5302.

FREE/WEISMAN SUSTAINER LEVEL MEMBERS AND ABOVE

LIMIT OF 2 TICKETS PER MEMBERSHIP.

FOR INFORMATION/RESERVATIONS, PLEASE CALL 612-626-5302.

THE WEISMAN ART MUSEUM IS LOCATED AT 333 EAST RIVER ROAD IN MINNEAPOLIS. MUSEUM HOURS ARE TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.; THURSDAY 10 A.M. TO 8 P.M.; WEEKENDS 11 A.M. TO 5 P.M.; CLOSED MONDAYS. PUBLIC PARKING IS AVAILABLE IN THE MUSEUM RAMP AT A RATE OF \$2.50 PER HOUR OR A FLAT RATE OF \$5.00 ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. THERE IS NO ADMISSION FEE TO THE WEISMAN. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 612-625-9494.

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