



## **West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977**

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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 López'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.

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