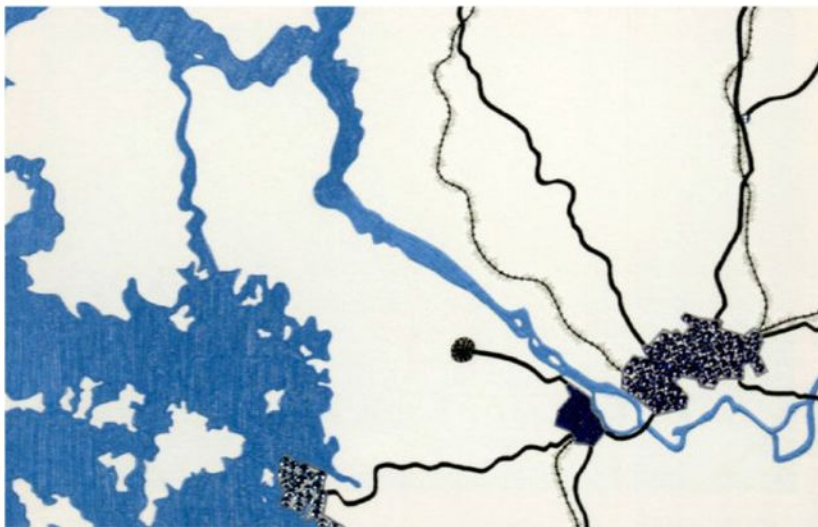




CULTURE MONSTER ALL ARTS, ALL THE TIME

California-Pacific Triennial finds that Pacific Rim can be fluid



Tiffany Chung, "Kaesong Armistice Conference Site 1951" (detail), 2010; embroidery, beads, metal grommets, buttons, canvas (Orange County Museum of Art / July 9, 2013)

By Christopher Knight, Los Angeles Times Art Critic
July 9, 2013 | 12:30 p.m.

When the Orange County Museum of Art decided to change its biennial survey of California art to a triennial survey of art made around the Pacific Rim -- including California -- it took on a huge task. The Pacific Ocean is vast, lapping the shore in parts of Asia, Australia, South and Central America and more.

The change also raised a question: For art, is there really such a meaningful entity as "the Pacific Rim"?

As I noted in [my review](#) of the debut 2013 California-Pacific Triennial, the answer is pretty much no. The majority of the 32 artists in the OCMA show have gone to art school or lived in the U.S. and Europe, so artistically they speak an intelligible common language.

Nomadism is today a norm, for artists as for many others. And geographically, Los Angeles is closer to Berlin than to Buenos Aires, nearer to New York than to Tokyo and in as much proximity to London as to Seoul. From LAX, Sydney, Australia is about the same distance as Cairo.

What makes OCMA's new triennial format distinctive is not so much that it looks at art made around the Pacific Rim; instead, it's that it looks at international art from a position located there. "California-Pacific" emphasizes the vantage point or perspective.

Curiosity about Pacific Rim culture came into vogue 25 years ago, with the rise of Los Angeles as a major art production center. The return to international prominence of new European art and the accompanying loss of New York's singular dominance, which had been firmly in place for a generation following World War II, helped catapult global art.

Eventually the focus on a possible Pacific Rim culture petered out. But its nominal comeback now in the California-Pacific Triennial is different. This time, to know where you're going, it's helpful to know where you're coming from.