



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

**THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA), PRESENTS
*PETER SHIRE: NAKED IS THE BEST DISGUISE***

**April 22–July 2, 2017
MOCA Pacific Design Center**



LOS ANGELES—The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), presents *Peter Shire: Naked Is the Best Disguise*, a survey of Los Angeles–based artist Peter Shire’s work in design from the 1970s to today. For more than four decades, Shire has positioned himself at the intersection of craft, industrial design, and fine art. A key figure in Southern California’s postwar “post-pottery” ceramics movement, he rose to prominence as the only American founding member of Memphis, the Milan-based design collective, and has since experimented with metal, glass, painting, and large-scale outdoor public art. Shire is perhaps best known for the brightly colored splatter-painted mugs and handcrafted earthenware he has produced under the name Echo Park Pottery since 1972.

Shire’s first design survey in a Los Angeles museum, *Peter Shire: Naked Is the Best Disguise* includes ceramics and some of Shire’s most recognized furniture pieces, such as his celebrated *Bel Air Chair* of 1981, produced by Memphis. Memphis designs, produced and exhibited in annual collections from 1981 to 1988, challenged the protocols of good taste and the modernist dictum “form follows function,” and Shire’s furniture from that period and beyond provocatively embraces humor and whimsy in its exaggerated proportions, wild color combinations, nonsensical shapes, asymmetrical compositions, and lowly materials. Shire’s signature aesthetic comes from an irreverent cross-pollination of references, from midcentury

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modernist architecture to California surfing and hot rod culture, Bauhaus and Constructivist designs, and the vibrant color palette of the Echo Park neighborhood where he was born and continues to live. The artist's furniture—tables, lamps, and chairs—will be displayed alongside a selection of his works on paper, ranging from fantastical sketches to engineering plans, which provide insight into his design process.

The exhibition premieres a third iteration of Shire's *Bel Air Chair* (1981), specially commissioned by MOCA. This 2017 chair will be exhibited alongside the original 1981 version and a later 2010 version (*Belle Aire Chair*). This new iteration, titled *Brentwood Chair*, sees Shire returning to the fundamental building blocks of cubes, cylinders, cones, and spheres, and bold primary colors. Walking the razor's edge between function and functionlessness, practical use and pure aesthetics, and furniture and sculpture, *Brentwood Chair* cleverly toys with the hierarchy of the applied and fine arts.

The exhibition includes more than twenty examples of the artist's touchstone form, the teapot. Since the early 1970s, Shire has returned time and again to producing ceramic teapots which he characterizes as "referentially functional." Arranged in teetering, vertiginous compositions and outfitted with outlandish appendages, Shire's teapots—with their absurd proportions, improbable angles, and exuberant colors—stretch and squeeze the requirements of utility. Through clay, his most tried-and-true medium, Shire has sustained a decades-long manipulation of the categories of art and craft. While he brings ceramics to the brink of sculpture, Shire remains committed to ceramics' promise of egalitarianism and even political progressivism. Therein lies the significance of the teapot, a humble, domestically scaled object conceived for daily, shared use. Indeed, in occupying the roles of craftsman, designer, and artist, Shire insists that everyday experience is worthy of aesthetic consideration.

Peter Shire: Naked Is the Best Disguise is Shire's second solo show at MOCA. In 1985, *Peter Shire: Olympic Village/UCLA Entertainment Center with Animals* reinstalled Shire's environmental architectural structures, originally commissioned for the 1984 Olympic Village, on the plaza in front of The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (then The Temporary Contemporary).

Peter Shire (b. 1947, Los Angeles) lives and works in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. He received his BFA from Chouinard Art Institute in 1970. Shire's work is in a number of public collections including The Art Institute of Chicago; The Brooklyn Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Seattle Museum of Art; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. In 2016 he mounted solo exhibitions at Derek Ellery Gallery, New York; The Jewish Museum, New York; Les Gens Heureux, Copenhagen; New Galerie, Paris; and Peres Projects, Berlin. He has recently been featured in exhibitions at A + D Museum, Los Angeles; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; Instituto Italiano di Cultura, Los Angeles; LSU Museum of Art, Baton Rouge; Office Baroque, Brussels; and Venus Over Los Angeles.

Peter Shire: Naked Is the Best Disguise is organized by Anna Katz, Wendy Stark Curatorial Fellow, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.



Lead support for MOCA Pacific Design Center is provided by Charles S. Cohen.

Exhibitions at MOCA are supported by the MOCA Fund for Exhibitions with lead annual support provided by Delta Air Lines and Sydney Holland, founder of the Sydney D. Holland Foundation. Generous funding is also provided by Allison and Larry Berg, and Jerri and Dr. Steven Nagelberg.

Image credit: Peter Shire, *Bel Air Chair*, 1981, 48 ½ x 43 x 48 ½ in. (123.19 × 109.22 × 123.19 cm), wood, steel, enamel, and upholstery fabric, courtesy of the artist, photo by Joshua White

RELATED PROGRAMS

MEMBERS' OPENING: *PETER SHIRE: NAKED IS THE BEST DISGUISE*

Friday, April 21

MOCA Pacific Design Center

INFO 213/621-1794 or membership@moca.org

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PETER SHIRE AND ANNA KATZ IN CONVERSATION

Sunday, June 25, 3pm

West Hollywood Council Chambers

625 North San Vicente Blvd.

West Hollywood, CA 90069

INFO 213/621-1741 or visitorservices@moca.org

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THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA)

About MOCA: Founded in 1979, MOCA's vision is to be the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth with three Los Angeles locations of architectural renown; a world-class permanent collection of more than 6,800 objects, international in scope and among the finest in the world; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

Hours: MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue in Downtown Los Angeles) is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11am to 6pm; Thursday from 11am to 8pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 5pm; and closed on Tuesday. The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (located at 152 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012) has the same hours as MOCA Grand Avenue during exhibitions. Please call ahead or go to moca.org for the exhibition schedule for The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. MOCA Pacific Design Center (located at 8687 Melrose Avenue, West Hollywood, CA 90069) is open Tuesday through Friday from 11am to 5pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 6pm; and closed on Monday. The MOCA Store at MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue) is open Monday through Wednesday and Friday from 10:30am to 5:30pm; Thursday from 10:30am to 8:30pm; and Saturday and Sunday from 10:30am to 6:30pm.

Museum Admission: General admission is free for all MOCA members. General admission is also free for everyone at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm, courtesy of Wells Fargo. General admission is always free at MOCA Pacific Design Center. General admission at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA is \$15 for adults; \$8 for students with I.D.; \$10 for seniors (65+); and free for children under 12 and jurors with I.D.

More Information: For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.

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