

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM ON FIRE / WILLIAM POUNDSTONE

Claire Falkenstein at PMCA

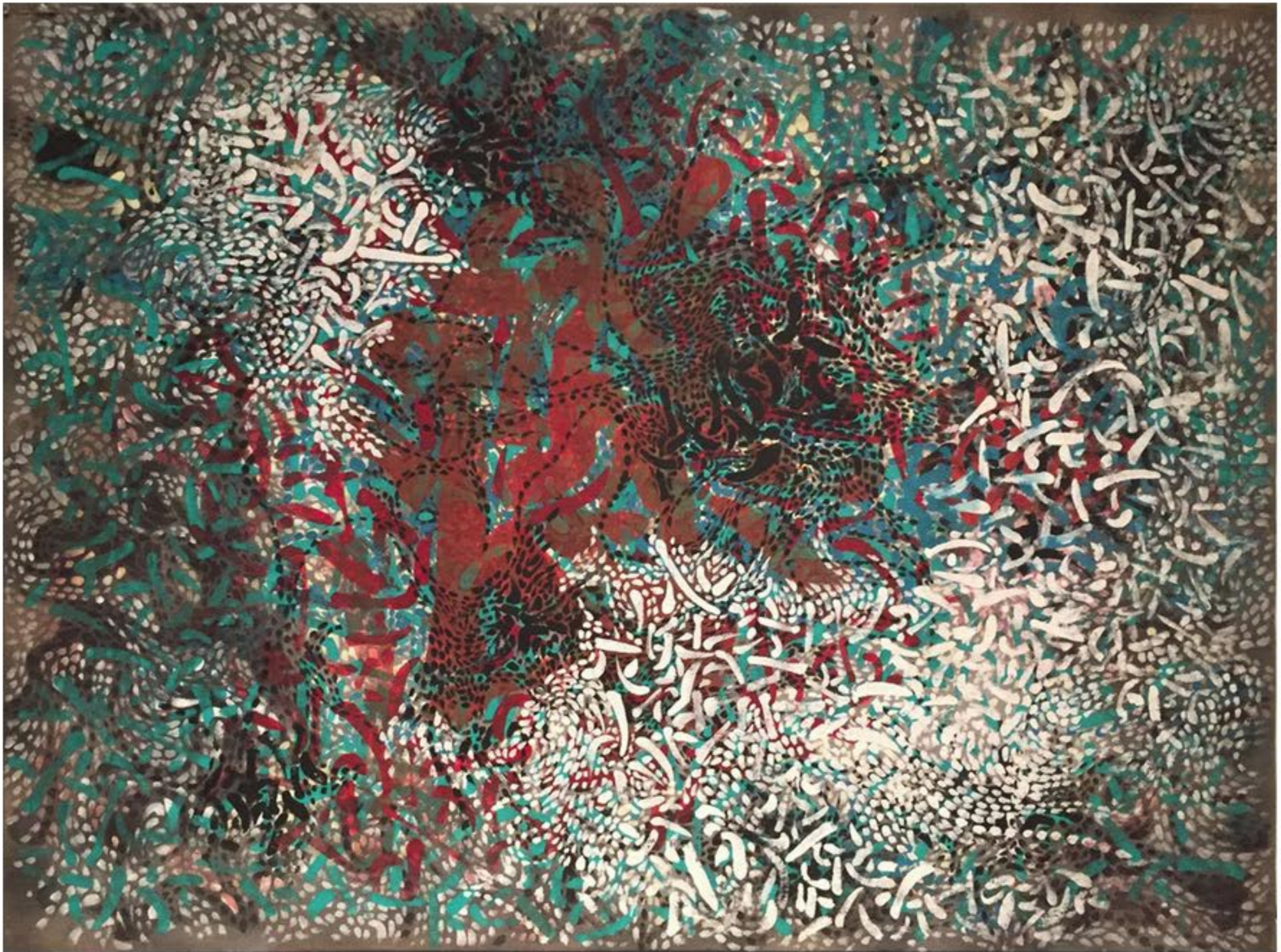
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Claire Falkenstein had brilliant careers in the Bay Area, New York, Paris, Italy, and Los Angeles. Her sculpture, or some of it, was once pegged as the 3D equivalent of [Jackson Pollock's](#) all-over compositions (above, *Point as a Set*, 1965). Falkenstein had a number of prestige commissions, above all the garden gates to Peggy Guggenheim's Venice Palazzo (now part of her museum). After Falkenstein moved to another Venice, in California, she did a profusion of public-art commissions. The best-known are *Structure and Flow*, the fountain at the Long Beach Museum of Art, and a set of stained-glass abstractions for St. Basil Catholic Church. Locally Falkenstein is almost as ubiquitous as Millard Sheets' Home Savings murals and perhaps suffers from a certain overexposure. She did sculptures for malls in Costa Mesa and Fresno; even for an L.A. DMV office.

After years of neglect, the art world is again taking notice. Falkenstein currently has two high-profile shows. She's prominently featured in "Revolution in the Making" at Hauser Wirth & Schimmel and has a retrospective (the first since her 1997 death) at the Pasadena Museum of California Art.

PMCA's "Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture" explores a long career with many surprises. One is the importance of painting in her output. Falkenstein was a friend of Clyfford Still, a fellow teacher at the California School of Fine Arts. It's said that Still influenced Falkenstein. Her "moving point" paintings have more obvious affinity to the numinous abstractions of Gordon Onslow-Ford and Lee Mullican. It's a world blown to atomic smithereens. A 1992 painting, *Vortex*, may be Falkenstein's take on Rodney King and civic uprising.



The show is full of intriguing one-offs like that. A small 1971 *Topological Form #1* is an Alexander Liberman "ziti" cooked by a superior chef.



Flora, a 1973 garden sculpture in bronze, was designed to move via a hidden motor. Unfortunately, it's not running here.



Falkenstein married painting, California assemblage, and L.A. plastic in an untitled c. 1980s object, described as resin on burlap.



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