A Decorated Chronology is the first solo exhibition of Los Angeles-based artist Lari Pittman in an American museum in nearly twenty years. Over the past three decades, Pittman’s work has been internationally celebrated for its visual exuberance, virtuosic skill, and a sophisticated formal logic that resists straightforward interpretation. As multilayered tableaux, Pittman’s work reflects a wide range of influences, including feminism, Pop Art, and American consumerism, as well as Latin American and eastern European folk sensibilities. This cultural and temporal melange reflects what Pittman calls the “bittersweet,” or the simultaneous experience of richness and sadness in everyday life.

Primarily comprising paintings and works on paper from the mid-2000s to the present, A Decorated Chronology also includes older works essential for understanding Pittman’s practice today. The exhibition takes its name from A Decorated Chronology of Insistence and Resignation (1992–94), a series in which the artist significantly expanded his approach to address cultural and temporal mélange reflects what Pittman calls the “bittersweet,” or the simultaneous experience of richness and sadness in everyday life.

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A Decorated Chronology opens to the public May 24 through August 11, 2013, and is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Kelly Shindler, Assistant Curator. This exhibition is generously supported by Gladstone Gallery, New York; Regen Projects, Los Angeles; Anonymous; The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica; Steven F. Roth; and Ellen and Durb Curlee. Support for CAM’s exhibition program is provided by Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield; William E. Weiss Foundation; and the Crawford Taylor Foundation.

**Related Programs**

**Free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For a complete list of programs, please visit camstl.org.**

**Opening Night**
Friday, May 24, 7:00–9:00 PM

**Artist Talk: Lari Pittman**
Saturday, May 25, 10:00 AM

Lari Pittman is joined by Assistant Curator Kelly Shindler for a conversation about his work.

**Friday Evening Tours**
Fridays, May 31–August 9, 6:00 PM

Enjoy a 30-minute guided tour of the exhibitions every Friday this summer. Presented by Wells Fargo Advisors.

**Concrete Cinema: Blue (1993)**
Thursday, June 13 8:10 PM

Join CAM and the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts for a collaborative summer series featuring film and discussion by select contemporary artists that activates the courtyard shared between the institutions. On June 13, Blue (1993), directed by Derek Jarman, presents a portrait of the filmmaker months before his death from AIDS-related complications and explores the literal and allegorical meanings of the color blue.

**Breakfast with the Curators**
Friday, June 14, 8:30 AM

Complimentary coffee and baked goods provided by Companion Bakehouse. Register at camstl.org/breakfast. CAM members are invited for breakfast and a private tour of the exhibitions. Learn more about the artwork and talk directly with the curators.

**Curatorial Tours**
Saturday, June 15, 11:00 AM
Thursday, July 25, 6:00 PM; with Tom Reed
Saturday, August 10, 11:00 AM

Join Assistant Curator Kelly Shindler for a unique walkthrough of the current exhibitions. On July 25, Shindler will be joined by artist and master printer Tom Reed of Island Press, who will provide an additional perspective on the work of Lari Pittman.

**First Fridays**
Friday, June 7, 5:00–9:00 PM
Friday, July 5, 5:00–9:00 PM
Friday, August 2, 5:00–9:00 PM

Enjoy an evening of art, music, and culture the first Friday of every month. In partnership with KOXO, DJs and musicians will present music responding to the exhibitions. Museum staff will lead tours, and the bar and café will be open. Arts organizations throughout Grand Center are free and open the entire evening.

**Panel Discussion: Culture Wars of Yesterday and Today**
Thursday, June 27, 7:00 PM

Join us for a panel discussion on the culture wars of the 1990s and how art has played a role in gay rights awareness and advocacy. Moderated by Assistant Curator Kelly Shindler, the panel will include PROMO Executive Director Anton J. Booksman, Pride St. Louis, Inc. President Staci Swift, and Washington University Assistant Professor of Art History Ilia Nicole Sheren.

**Member Book Club: The Flamethrowers**
Thursday, August 1, 6:00 PM

Members only. Complimentary refreshments. Register at camstl.org/bookclub. Chosen by exhibiting artist Lari Pittman, The Flamethrowers is Rachel Kushner’s second novel, called by the New Yorker, “scintillatingly alive, and also alive to artifice… [rippling] with stories, anecdotes, set-piece monologues, crafty egotistical tall tales, and hapless adventures.”

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**Website:** camstl.org

**Twitter:** @contemporaryart

**Facebook:** facebook.com/contemporaryartmuseumstl

**E-News Sign-Up:** camstl.org/news

**Download the CAM App:** camstl.org/app

**Audio Tour:** Download the CAM app at camstl.org/app or ask for an iPod at the front desk to hear directly from the artist and curator as well as critics on the audio tour.
Oil and acrylic on panel
Purchase, with funds from The Lauder Foundation, Leonard and Evelyn Lauder Fund

Thanksgiving is the earliest painting in the exhibition and one of a series of works from 1985–86 that marked the first major shift in Pittman’s practice from opaque abstraction to figurative and overtly socio-political subject matter. The series’ meditation on the founding of America is evoked by the documentary ideals of “Life,” “Liberty,” and “Pursuit of Happiness” on the left side of the painting. Pittman’s quotation of what Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) described as “certain unalienable rights,” that “all men are created equal,” takes on added significance, as the work was made during the intensifying AIDS crisis in 1980s America. Thanksgiving poignantly yet urgently insists that these rights apply to all Americans regardless of race, creed, or sexual orientation.

Untitled #16, 2003
Matte oil, aerosol lacquer, and Cel-Vinyl on gessoed canvas over wood panel
Philip Scharpn Collection of Contemporary Art

Untitled #16 is one in a series of works from 2003 in which Pittman moved further away from his signature use of flat, commercial imagery toward tableaux that present darker subject matter with a stronger sense of pictorial depth and texture. The images in this nighttime scene set against a backdrop of mountain-rimmed lakes—including a white sword sticking through the canvas, an arrangement of roses that resemble wounds, and a disembodied medieval helmet—suggest a setting that is both mystical and violent. This evocation of war recalls the aestheticization of violence in western European religious paintings and evokes a sense of anxiety and alienation brought about by more recent events, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Great Recession of 2008–09, and the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“thought-form of the waning and of the waxing of the self,” 2012
Cel-Vinyl and spray enamel on canvas over wood panel
Private Collection

This painting is part of a larger series of “thought-form” works that Pittman created in 2012. The thought-form is a concept drawn from both Tibetan mysticism and early twentieth-century esotericism that considers the question of how to visualize one’s interior thoughts. Pittman once again “maps” the picture plane into various architectural elements, here to frame a grouping of polygonal shapes. Each sphere contains a small portrait of either a human figure or a bird, save for the central one, which features a grouping of smaller orbs and red forms resembling primordial insects. These nine spheres—as well as title’s reference to “waning” and “waxing”—echo the nine lunar phases of the moon. Pittman explores the notion of the thought-form in his presentation of the birth of the self as it enters a purely visual world without the aid of language.