

## Pat Lasch: Journeys of the Heart

*Journeys of the Heart* is the first major museum exhibition dedicated to the work of the American sculptor Pat Lasch. Surveying more than four decades of the artist's practice, the exhibition highlights the delicate cake and pastry sculptures for which Lasch is best known alongside stitched canvases, porcelain figures, and a stunning display of life-size dresses marking significant moments in a woman's life. Embedded with rich narratives culled from the artist's personal journey, Lasch's beautiful work is intensely biographical. Her art is rooted in spirituality, repetition, and the decorative—and always weighted with the pains and joys of heartbreak, age, and adventure.

Pat Lasch (born New York, 1944) emerged in the 1970s as a pioneering artist who was one of the first members of A.I.R., an important women's gallery collective in New York City. Lasch thrived in New York's burgeoning art scene, and was immersed in second-wave feminism amidst currents in pop art and minimalism. Since then, Lasch has maintained a distinct vision closely tied to her heart and her experiences, whether as the daughter of a baker, or as a lover, mother, and wife. Inspired by true events, her ambrosial artworks appear as though they've been pulled out of dreams. However, Lasch's art is anchored in sturdy materials and masterful hand-worked processes. From immaculate cakes studded with pins or coated in black icing, to figurative bronzes and lavish dresses, Lasch's sculptures compose a wondrous world filled with beauty, light, and darkness. These objects reference universal phenomena: body, love, sex, birth, and death. Lasch distinctively captures the experiential and resonant magic of these phenomena and transforms them into permanent, sculptural icons.

A part-time resident of the Coachella Valley for almost 15 years, the artist's spiritual and reverential perspective on everyday life continues a line of inquiry that desert denizens have long understood. Her ongoing creative engagement with decorative practices is prescient, as seen in renewed interest by a younger generation of artists working today. Lasch has always recognized that beautiful art which evokes emotion, or speaks to specters of past and present, is also a site of empowerment. To all those who have experienced life's heartbreaks, Lasch's work offers hopeful tribute for our collective memory.

Mara Gladstone, PhD  
Associate Curator

This exhibition is organized by Palm Springs Art Museum and supported by the Clinton Hill & Allen Tran Foundation, and Donna MacMillan.

Exhibition Season Sponsors: Carol & Jim Egan, David Kaplan & Glenn Ostergaard, Dorothy C. Meyerman, Marion & Bob Rosenthal, and the Herman and Faye Sarkowsky Charitable Foundation.

## PANEL ONE

### A LIFE BLESSED

This installation is the centerpiece of *Journeys of the Heart*. *A Life Blessed* is comprised of five artworks that commemorate significant moments in a life, from birth to puberty, wedding to anniversary, and finally, to death. At once a self-portrait of the artist and a tribute to shared memory and universal experience, the artworks that compose the installation aren't meant to prescribe an idealized blueprint for life. Indeed, Lasch's own life has not follow this course. These objects are vestiges of past experience that can speak to both personal love and loss, as well as to the people who have come before us. *A Life Blessed* demarcates a cycle of life with forms that are specific to Lasch's memory. These sculptures ask viewers to take a moment to consider the wholeness of our lives, and the unique ways in which we participate, celebrate, venerate, and mourn.

This wall:

Wedding Tower. 1978

paper, wood, acrylic paint, metallic thread and needles

Gift of Roger W. Barrett

28-2007

A Life Blessed: 50th Anniversary Golden Egg. 1985-1986

plaster, thorns, gold leaf

Collection of Jennifer Grausman

L2016.72

Central pedestal:

A Life Blessed: Wedding Dress. 2016

acrylic paint, baroque pearls, glass beads, crystals

Collection of the artist

L2016.63.16

A Life Blessed: Anna Reilly II. 2012

acrylic paint, baroque pearls, beads

Collection of the artist

L2016.63.19

A Life Blessed: Communion Dress. 2015  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.18

Opposite wall:

A Life Blessed: Shroud. 2017  
acrylic paint  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.20

## PANEL TWO

### BEGINNINGS

After marrying and having a child in her early 20s in New York, Pat Lasch's internal call to become an artist became impossible to ignore. She enrolled at Queens College from where she graduated in 1970, divorced her husband, and found friends and teachers in the city's energized downtown art scene. Her earliest influences included minimalist practitioners such as sculptor Richard Serra and musician Phillip Glass.

Reproduction is an essential narrative in Lasch's art, as is repetition. A fundamental component of her creative process, methodical and meditative gestures are the link between her varied bodies of work. Circular and rounded forms are also a recurring presence. The *Ancestral Patterning: Yab Yum* canvases in this room are emblematic of Lasch's early foray into minimalist practices. The circular canvases are marked with equally spaced stitches of thread radiating around. Each stitch stands for an ancestor, with the spacing representing time connecting one individual to the next. With their careful tracing of time, these canvases are essentially family trees transposed into minimal forms. The notion of a circle of life finds figurative narration in the porcelains from the artist's *Sacred Breeding* series. Created later in Lasch's career, these sculptures celebrate the youthful human figure, elevating them to quiet icons. The beautifully formed bodies and subtle gestures convey contentment, sensuality, and strength. *The Egg Handler* depicts a young woman dipping her arm into a reflective space filled with miniature eggs—with the egg an organic embodiment of a circle of life.

## PANEL THREE

### LOVE

By 1973 Lasch joined A.I.R., a women's artist collective which would play an important role in the art history of the period. A.I.R. offered camaraderie, functional gallery space, and a haven for the many women artists who'd been ignored by the art market and its dealers at the time. Friends and colleagues such as Mary Beth Edelson, Nancy Spero, Anne Healy, and Ana Mendieta composed this group—and all would make their mark on what we now understand as the feminist art movement. The friendships forged during this period still remain, even as they individually worked with a diverse range of approaches and achieved varying degrees of recognition. Concurrently, Lasch turned away from minimal forms and began to repurpose paint in unorthodox ways. She adhered to the minimalist process of repetition, but merged her training as a fine artist with her skills as an apprentice in her father's bakery. A master pastry chef, Lasch's father taught her the art of baking. An expert at icing, Lasch replaced the sugared butter with acrylic paint, and candy sprinkles with pins and pearls. "Cakes marked time," Lasch has noted. "Birthdays, weddings, communions, bar mitzvahs—cakes were the witnesses to our living process." The resonant qualities of these early sculptures, coupled with their temptingly fine detail and seemingly joyful purpose, gave quick rise to Lasch's reputation. Over the years Lasch has incorporated materials ranging from baroque pearls, glass beads, and gold leaf to pins, quills, and bones in her increasingly elaborate pastry sculptures.

## PANEL FOUR

### HEARTBREAK

Though an optimist at heart, Lasch's life has not been without heartbreak. In 1983, Lasch was awarded the Rome Prize. Her residency at the American Academy in Rome was incredibly productive, as seen in her creative output from that period. She also met her second husband in Rome. In the years that followed Lasch would produce a wide range of work, from pen and ink drawings to sculptures in media she hadn't worked with previously, such as porcelain and bronze. Works from this time were sometimes inspired by dark moments drawn from her personal stories, and the resulting sculptures explore the terror of naivety, the anger of betrayal, the subsequent ennui of heartbreak, and the humor within one's search for true love. Her sculptures can be bitter, as in her *Woman Gone Mad* series, made to commemorate the pain of her second divorce, to bitingly funny, as in *Box of Poison Cookies for Past Lovers*. Lasch's fearlessness in acknowledging her heartbreak and commemorating loss is also apparent in her use of the broken egg, a motif that exists in several of her sculptures, which denotes life amidst death. Though dark colored materials are used in much of this work, the artist also deploys light-filled, metallic finishes to honor loss, as seen in her gilded prayer cloths which contain Buddhist prayers sealed inside and flowers from her mother's grave.

## PANEL FIVE

### BIRTH

Lasch's more recent sculptures wholly embrace the female form and its traditionally feminine object of desire and objectification: the dress. Lasch began making dresses entirely of acrylic paint in 2013, and her exposure to hi tech paint formulations in 2015 during a Golden Foundation Residency activated the series with even more intricate detail and luminous finishes. Every dress is made entirely of paint, from the swaths of shiny satin to the lacy bodices and delicate sleeves. Each is remarkable, with silhouettes drawing from varied moments in European and American fashion history—a collapse of time and memory into familiar forms. The lace patterns are always different, sometimes crafted with the help of molds, or made entirely with paint piped from paper cones. All are adorned with pretty details, such as pearls and glass beads, carefully applied in the manner of Lasch's cakes. The dresses mark time, just as cakes do, but in even more complex form. Some dresses celebrate a child's birth, such as *Welcome Hadley Grace*. Others pay tribute to a life lost, such as *Jeanne Hébuterne*, who was the muse and companion of Amadeo Modigliani, and committed suicide soon after the artist's death while pregnant with their second child. Without bodies, the dresses retain ghost-like presences—an encapsulation of both life and death.

## PANEL SIX

### DEATH

Lasch found it striking that life's occasions would be commemorated with cake, though never for death, "one of our last and most important transitions." Alongside her beautiful ivory cake towers, including one commissioned in 1979 by the Museum of Modern Art for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Lasch made a series of black cakes. The towers were coated in black paint and embellished with dark details such as cut paper, bird feathers, pins, bones, and hair. These organic elements, with their sinister qualities, demonstrate Lasch's affinity with German Expressionism and contemporaries such as Joseph Beuys.

Moved by personal stories of struggle, despair, and hope, Lasch makes tributes to people she knows and to those she never knew, to those who helped her ancestors, and to strangers whose stories compel her to find representation in her artwork. These stories appear in the artist's cut and embellished paper pieces, such as *Death of a Princess II*, an homage to an unnamed Middle Eastern princess, *Letters to the Dead*, or her gilded paper prayer cloths made to honor her parents. In the 1980s Lasch brought one of her all-black cakes to an exhibition mounted in the aftermath of the nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island. Lasch's other black cake and egg sculptures are sometimes titled with the word *bardo*. In Tibetan *bardo* signifies a liminal state between death and the afterlife, but it can also refer to personal moments such as meditation or illness, when life is momentarily disoriented or suspended.

PANELS FOR EDUCATION / STORE EPHEMERA –

***Pat Lasch: In the Studio.* 2017**

HD Video.

This video brings the artist's masterful technique to life. Discover how Lasch's youthful training in a bakery translates to her creative practice as she creates embellishments and piped-paint lace for her new work, including delicate pastry and dress sculptures.

Produced by Palm Springs Art Museum

Editor: Julianne Aguilar

Videographer: Max Finneran

**Touch and Feel: The Artist's Materials**

Take hold of the luminous and surprisingly sturdy materials that the artist Pat Lasch uses to make her elaborate cake, pastry, and dress sculptures. These cards hold swatches of acrylic paint that the artist has created using rubber molds and paper cones of piped paint.

**ArtTalk with Pat Lasch**

Wednesday, April 5, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Palm Springs Art Museum in Palm Desert, The Galen

Free, space is limited.

Join Pat Lasch for a tour of her exhibition *Journeys of the Heart*. Learn about her breathtakingly intricate creative methods that manipulate fine and decorative art media as a mode of feminist practice. Lasch explores her career of four decades, beginning with her experience as an early member of the women's art collective A.I.R. Gallery in New York. The decorative qualities of Lasch's work are essential to how she engages with broader social and conceptual concerns, such as gender and repetition.

**Catalogue and Limited Editions to Commemorate *Pat Lasch: Journeys of the Heart***

A fully-illustrated color catalogue accompanies the exhibition. Numbered limited edition copies, signed by the artist, are also available. In addition, to commemorate the exhibition the artist has created limited edition mini cake sculptures, available for purchase at The Galen. The sculptures come in three colors, each in an edition of 13... a baker's dozen. Ask staff at the admissions desk for more information.

## OBJECT LABELS

A Couple's Prayer (from the Prayer Cloth Series). 2006  
gold, silver, and copper leaf, netting, and acrylic paint on Arches paper  
Gift of Albert Aaron  
2-2011

Lasch says, "The crucial question for me as an artist is, Who am I? Where am I from?" This prayer cloth is a natural outgrowth of that concern with transitions between our physical and spiritual lives and the larger philosophical questions they raise. Following the deaths of her parents, she began fixing gold leaf squares to the front of netting, which she backed with heavy Arches paper squares containing Buddhist prayers sealed inside them. The gold leaf gives the works a radiant beauty made even more poignant as we recognize it as a tribute to her parents and the transience of life.

A Life Blessed: 50th Anniversary Golden Egg. 1985-1986  
plaster, thorns, gold leaf  
Collection of Jennifer Grausman  
L2016.72

A Life Blessed: Anna Reilly II. 2012  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls, beads  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.19

A Life Blessed: Communion Dress. 2015  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.18

A Life Blessed: Shroud. 2017  
acrylic paint  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.20

A Life Blessed: Wedding Dress. 2016  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls, glass beads, crystals  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.16

Ancestral Patterning: Yab Yum IV. 1974-1975  
silver thread on canvas  
Collection of Donna MacMillan  
L2016.66.3

Ancestral Patterning: Yab Yum III. 1974-1975  
gold and silver thread on canvas  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.64.3

In Tibetan, *Yab-yum* translates as father-mother, the traditional union of compassion and insight in Buddhist philosophy. It represents an essential dualism, a sacred intercourse, a dialectic embodied in the memory of the parental union, and an endless coming into being.

Bardo Black Cake. 1980-1981  
wood, acrylic paint, cut metal  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.5

Bardo Black Egg I. 1981  
plaster, sand, acrylic paint, watercolor, pins  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.6

Bardo Black Egg II. 1981  
plaster, sand, acrylic paint, watercolor, lacquer, wire  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.7

Black Petit Fours. 2012  
wood, acrylic paint  
Private Collection  
L2016.73

Box of Poison Chocolates. 1983  
wood, enamel and acrylic paint, silver leaf  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.13

Box of Poison Cookies for Past Lovers. 1985  
mixed media  
Collection of Elaine Finkelstein  
L2016.69

Cake with Hanging Skirt. 2012  
acrylic, straight pins, wood  
Collection of Donna MacMillan  
L2016.66.1

Chocolate Egg and Bones. 1983  
mixed media  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.4

The symbol of the egg appears in many of Lasch's works. She lived on a farm for many years as a child. Collecting eggs from the family's chickens at the age of four, she recalls finding, to great dismay, an egg with a dead chick inside. That a source of nourishment for her family could also be a site of death was existentially troubling, but became a rich and resonant motif in her art. The egg in this particular work references the chocolate eggs her father made in his bakery.

Christening Dress, H.V., Four Pregnancies, Two Births. 2014  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.17

Helen Veronica was Lasch's mother, and this dress captures the ceaseless narratives of life and loss that frame many women's experiences with pregnancy. With its lovely form and intricate embellishments, the dress is named after an adult—not a child. The dress thus functions as a surrogate for the four pregnancies, and is an homage to the strength of a woman amidst loss.

Cologne Cathedral Altar. 1980  
mixed media collage and handmade paper mounted on board  
Gift of Norma Bussing  
2016.780

Lasch incorporated paper into many of her cakes in the 1970s and made a series of cut paper works during that period. Inspired by youthful travel in Europe, the romantic, flower-edged paper and waterfall-like composition references both a wedding veil and the cathedral's remarkable Gothic architecture.

Death of the Princess II. 1981  
feathers, paper, wire, beads, gold thread  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.14

This cut-paper work is a tribute to an unnamed Middle Eastern princess who had been stoned to death by her family. Similar to other paper works from the artist's *Wedding Veil* series, it has a layered, veil-like quality, which serves both to shield and control the female figure.

Echo. 1988-1990  
bronze, water, pump, painted wood, gold leaf  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.64.2

Five Hearts Presented to God for Judgment. 1989-1990  
cast iron, blackened bronze, carved stone, cast lead, gilded bronze, chamois cloth  
Collection of H. Tony and Marti Oppenheimer  
L2016.70

A heart of stone, a heart of gold, a heart of lead—Lasch mixes metaphors and materials in this lyrical work that displays the artist’s mastery at sculpting a range of media. Using materials that Lasch describes as “elements we are literally made of,” the artist symbolizes the entirety of our earthly bodies and the emotions embedded in our hearts, and re-presents them back to their source.

For Anni and Josef Albers. 2012  
paint, aluminum leaf  
Collection of Meredith Ward and Debra Wieder  
L2016.65.1-

Gypsy Rose Lee. 2012  
acrylic paint, gold leaf  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.24

Heart Worm. 1985  
mixed media, gold leaf  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.23

Birds and bats, creatures of night and day, are meshed together in *Heart Worm* and can symbolize the deadly sins such as avarice and jealousy that “get in and eat up your heart.” The gilded exterior is paneled with doors that reveal a fantastic animal within, a recurring motif in the artist’s works that function as a vessel for contemplation or a symbol of uncontainable emotion.

Jeanne Hébuterne: Two Pregnancies, One Birth. 2014  
acrylic paint  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.21

Katherine, the Given Away Child. 2012  
acrylic paint, beads, and buttons  
Collection of William G. Butler  
L2016.18.1

Lace Handkerchief Panel. ca. 2013  
paint, fabric, pearls, mounted on panel  
Collection of William G. Butler  
L2016.18.2

This panel is unusual in the artist's oeuvre as it incorporates an actual piece of lace into the canvas. The artist usually fabricates her own lacy designs using only piped or molded paint.

Lace Handkerchief Panel II. 2012  
acrylic paint  
L2016.63.26

Letters to the Dead. 1998  
mixed media on paper  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.15

Created over 30 days, Lasch made 25 letters on paper while on her second major residency in Rome. Spurred by the recent death of her father, and predating the death of her mother by one year, Lasch sought to explore “a matrix of experience and time.” Mining the stories of her personal past and those of her ancestors, some of the most powerful include a letter to a man who saved her grandfather from drowning in an icy lake, only to die of the pneumonia he caught soon after. The artist describes the creative process as transformative, and as “a kind of clearing of unfinished business in my life.”

Lillian: Two Births. 2014  
acrylic paint  
Private Collection  
L2016.68

Roman Resurrection I. 1983  
plaster, wire mesh, twigs, mixed media  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.3

Sacred Breeding: African Prince. 2007  
bisque porcelain, gold, paper  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.1

Sacred Breeding: Anna. 2007  
bisque porcelain  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.2

Sacred Breeding: The Egg Handler. 2007  
bisque porcelain  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.64.4

Sacred Prayers I. 2008  
gold, silver, copper leaf and acrylic paint on Arches paper  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.11

Sacred Prayers II. 2008  
gold, silver, copper leaf and acrylic paint on Arches paper  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.12

Saint Sebastian's Cake. ca. 1980  
wood, acrylic paint, pins  
Collection of Marilyn Pearl Loesberg  
L2016.67.1

Slippery Soap. 1989-1990  
bronze, glass  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.64.1

Lasch transformed the egg molds from her father's bakery into the bathtub in this sculpture. The infinity mirrors reflect the skeletons beneath the surface. "We are only here for a moment, and then we are gone forever," says the artist.

Small Cake. ca. 2012  
acrylic, straight pins, wood  
Collection of Donna MacMillan  
L2016.66.2

Thirteen Petit Fours. 2010-2012  
wood, acrylic paint  
Collection of Marilyn Pearl Loesberg  
L2016.67.2

Two Hearts for Three Friedas. 1987-1989  
bronze, stainless steel scissors  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.10

In 1978 the writer Hayden Herrera visited Lasch's studio. Herrera was one of the first to examine the work of Frida Kahlo and saw a deep similarity with Lasch's interest in pain and loss. Lasch didn't know about Kahlo, but was astonished because her middle name is Frieda. This work brings to sculptural form the connected hearts in Kahlo's famous 1939 self-portrait *The Two Fridas*.

Untitled. 2012  
acrylic paint, silver leaf  
L2016.63.25

Untitled Cake. ca. 2012  
wood, acrylic paint, baroque pearls  
Collection of Melinda Photis  
L2016.63.22

Wedding Cake. 2016  
acrylic paint, wood, baroque pearls  
Collection of Elise and Eric Batscha  
L2016.74

Wedding Tower. 1978  
paper, wood, acrylic paint, metallic thread and needles  
Gift of Roger W. Barrett  
28-2007

Featured in an early A.I.R. Gallery exhibition in New York City, this sculpture was made around the same time as the now-lost five-foot-tall sculpture commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art for its fiftieth anniversary party. This work was illustrated in Lasch's first publication, a cookbook, which was written with her baker-father Fred Lasch in 1985. Titled *Art Book/Pastry Book - If You Make a Mistake Put a Rose On It*, the sculpture was illustrated alongside a recipe for a sandtorte.

Wedding Tower. 2012  
wood, acrylic paint, baroque pearls, gold leaf  
Collection of Meredith Ward and Debra Wieder  
L2016.65.2

Welcome Hadley Grace. 2015  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls, glass beads, crystals  
Collection of Jane and Michael Murphy  
L2016.71

Wilhelmina's Bird Tower. 1979-1980  
wood, acrylic paint, glass beads, cut paper, hair, silver thread  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.9

Wilhelmina's Bone Tower. 1979-1980  
wood, acrylic paint, bones, cut paper, silver thread  
Collection of the artist  
L2016.63.8

Lasch's Wilhelmina cake towers are emblematic of the fusion of the decorative and the dark romanticism and folklore of her heritage. "The myths of German culture were ingrained in me since I was a small child. My father believed in Poltergeists. He told me stories of his own memories of his mother Wilhelmina . . . . Wilhelmina was married in a black wedding dress with a white veil. She died when my dad was six." When her remains were moved to a common grave 25 years later, Wilhelmina's bones and long hair were still intact. Lasch incorporated her own hair into this tower, making a tribute to and finding connection with a mother in her history whom she never knew.

Please print these labels same size all tombstone labels – to adhere on education “touch-and-feel” cards.

Materials from A Life Blessed: Wedding Dress. 2016  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls, glass beads, crystals

Materials from A Life Blessed: Wedding Dress. 2016  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls, glass beads, crystals

Materials from A Life Blessed: Communion Dress. 2015  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls

Materials from A Life Blessed: Communion Dress. 2015  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls

Test materials from Lasch’s new black wedding dress sculpture (in process)  
molded acrylic paint

Materials from Welcome Hadley Grace. 2015  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls, glass beads, crystals

Materials from Welcome Hadley Grace. 2015  
acrylic paint, baroque pearls, glass beads, crystals

Pat Lasch’s working materials for her sculptures

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