

Visual arts: Frieze Los Angeles forges its identity

 sgvtribune.com/2020/02/06/visual-arts-frieze-los-angeles-forges-its-identity

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February 6,
2020



Frieze Los Angeles arrives here at a time when the importance of international art fairs is being hotly debated.

Over the last decade, the press, art critics and activists have been bemoaning the ubiquity and indifference of art fairs to the global climate crisis, serving as a bloated symbol of the elitist art world whose denizens recklessly fly around the globe.

Frieze Los Angeles seeks to rise above the backlash by showcasing an eclectic lineup of artists and galleries — both established and under-the-radar — as well as turning the fair into a multimedia event, with a film program, talks, installations and performances. An offshoot of similar Frieze fairs in London and New York, Frieze LA is being held Friday, Feb. 14 through Feb. 16 at the Paramount Studios in Hollywood. Frieze Week, which will take place at major art institutions as well as galleries and non-profit artist spaces, will begin Monday, Feb. 10.

The popular fair, now in its second year, will feature 70 galleries, including prominent art dealers David Zwirner, L.A. Louver and Gagosian. Hauser Wirth will showcase current art phenomenon Avery Singer's work as well as hosting the first Los Angeles solo exhibition of acclaimed Swiss artist Nicolas Party. Pace Gallery and Kayne Griffin Corcoran are planning to combine their booths to display geometric light works from seminal Los Angeles Light and Space artist James Turrell's "Glass" series.



The storied Paramount back lot will include two sections spotlighting creators and exhibitors that are decidedly inclusive. Frieze Projects 2020 features immersive art installations, site-specific works, performances and videos, many of which thematically tackle Los Angeles as either a myth-making machine or socio-political melting pot.

Rita Gonzalez, who organized Frieze Projects with Vincent Price Art Museum director Pilar Tompkins Rivas, says the curators sought out artists from Brazil and Mexico as well as local Latinx creators. The Frieze organizers are deliberate in giving women, people of color and LGBTQ artists a high-profile platform.

"I understand it's a marketplace, but it's also a place where we can share ideas and have discussions," Gonzalez said in explaining her approach. "A lot of the collectors don't want that shopping spree dynamic. They want that richness of conversation. ...They want it (the fair) to represent their spread of interests beyond (taking) their credit cards out."

Some of the Frieze Projects' artists are playing with the artifice associated with stagecraft inspired by the Paramount lot, according to Gonzales, who's the Department Head of Contemporary Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).





Rita Gonzalez organized Frieze Projects with Vincent Price Art Museum director Pilar Tompkins Rivas. (Photo by Mark Blower, courtesy of Frieze)



Los Angeles artist Gary Simmons is reviving his 1993 Backdrop Project, in which passersby would pose in front of his paintings and receive a Polaroid keepsake, as part of Frieze Los Angeles. Simmons' work presaged the arrival of selfie culture in the current century. (Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York)

Los Angeles artist Gary Simmons is reviving his 1993 Backdrop Project, in which passersby would pose in front of his paintings and receive a Polaroid keepsake. Gonzalez noted how Simmons' fabricated backgrounds and instant photos predated the Instagram age, but is now the expected behavior for art shows which aim to double as "experiences."



Sayre Gomez's installation of a cell tower camouflaged to look like a palm tree, is among the works featured in Frieze Los Angeles. (Courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles)

Los Angeles-based Sayre Gomez also comments on false constructions by drawing on prop-making to erect a sculpture of a palm tree camouflaging a cell phone tower.

Mexican artist Mario García Torres' video "Falling Together in Time" juxtaposes a 1981 incident showing Muhammad Ali talking a suicidal jumper off a building's ledge with the 1983 video "Jump" by Van Halen.



Women at the Manzanar Relocation Center in Manzanar, Cal., make camouflage nets for the War Department. Artist Tania Candianis installation Camouflage will attempt to recreate the loom-like structures incarcerated Japanese Americans made during World War II and will be drawing connections to current migrant detention camps along the U.S./Mexico border. (Courtesy of the artist)

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Gonzalez is also curating another section, Focus LA, which will showcase Los Angeles exhibit spaces open less than 15 years including as-is.la, Charlie James Gallery, Overduin & Co. and Various Small Fires.

Gonzalez hopes that both Frieze Projects and Focus LA will shine a light on the region's diverse art community.

"I think in general the kind of sensibilities the younger galleries have has been more inclusive in terms of gender parity and artists of color. (Galleries are) providing this idea of a network, even a kind of alternative family for some."

Frieze Week will kick off Monday, Feb. 10 with an evening hosted by The Getty featuring the Art for Justice Fund and will include a citywide campaign by conceptual artist Barbara Kruger.

Frieze Los Angeles

There's a lot to see and hear at Frieze:

The Frieze Films & Talks series will be held at the Paramount Theatre at Paramount Picture Studios, curated by Venus Lau the artistic director of Hong Kong's K11 Art Foundation.

For the first time, the Deutsche Bank Frieze Los Angeles Film Award will be given in the form of a \$10,000 prize to one of 10 emerging filmmakers between the ages of 20 and 34 who completed short films "in response to Los Angeles' cultural landscape."

The Artist Street Fair at Paramount Pictures Studios will provide a platform for local creative enterprises and artist initiatives such as Artists for Democracy, A-Z West and grantLove.

A conversation between author and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates and painter Calida Garcia Rawles about his novel "The Water Dancer," moderated by LACMA curator of contemporary art Christine Y. Kim will take place Feb. 14 at Paramount Theater at Paramount Pictures Studios. Tickets include a copy of Ta-Nehisi Coates' book.

Information: frieze.com/fairs/frieze-los-angeles) for more information.

Other art fairs happening concurrently with Frieze will be held in Hollywood:

The Felix art fair (felifair.com) is setting up shop at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel from Feb.13 to 16.

The Art Los Angeles Contemporary (artlosangelesfair.com) exhibit will also hold court at the Hollywood Athletic Club from Feb. 13-16.