

The LA art scene turns up the heat
this fall with the launch of the
ART PLATFORM-LOS ANGELES

fair and the massive
“PACIFIC STANDARD TIME”

initiative. But if they
build them, will you come?

LA'S ART EVOLUTION

By
Sue
Hostetler



Adam Gross, executive
director of Art Platform-Los
Angeles, at L.A.Mart.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER KILKUS FOR ALLYSSA PEEER MANAGEMENT

CUTTING-EDGE ART IS NOTHING NEW TO LA.

This city has a rich history of important art schools and institutions and is the birthplace of many significant art movements, but the palpable electricity of the current local art scene, coupled with the newfound international attention it has been receiving, has many wondering: What exactly transformed this city into one of the most influential global contemporary art capitals? Was there a tipping point? Or is it really just about perception and the LA art world becoming more present in the public mind?

As with most things, it all depends with whom you speak. Many feel LA has always been an integral part of the contemporary art universe. Esteemed local dealer Shaun Caley Regen, whose galleries, Regen Projects and Regen Projects II, have been mainstays here for many years and who has helped cultivate homegrown talent including Raymond

Pettibon and Lari Pittman, scoffs at the idea of a recent transformation. “The truth is Los Angeles has always had an incredible art scene,” she says. “Nothing in LA has changed to anyone who lives here—only the East Coast journalistic perception of Los Angeles has changed.”

Yet even Regen can’t deny the shifts within the LA art community, namely expansions and additions: Last year, LACMA built the Lynda and Stewart Resnick Exhibition Pavilion and Gagosian Gallery doubled the size of its Beverly Hills space; in 2013, collector Eli Broad will open his own museum. That is coupled with recent blockbuster shows such as MOCA’s “Art in the Streets,” which has helped make contemporary works more geographically and thematically accessible to Angelenos. And then there is a young group of local artists—Matthew Monahan, Thomas Houseago, Aaron Curry and Sterling Ruby—generating an international buzz.



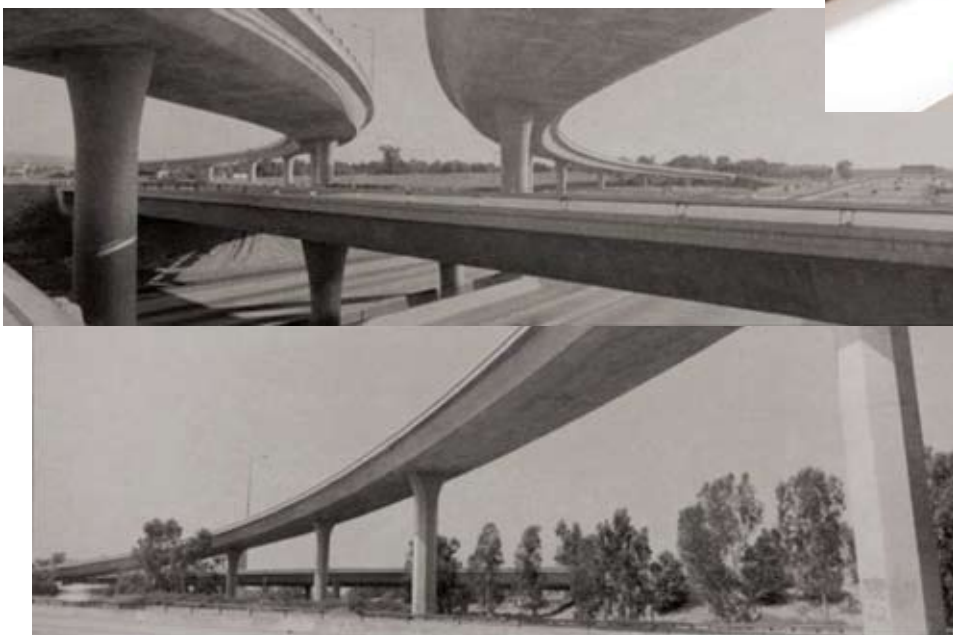
Maria Arena Bell and Jeffrey Deitch in front of Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* at MOCA. BELOW, FROM TOP: *Untitled #27* and *#5* from "Freeway" series 1994 by Catherine Opie, on view at Art Platform—Los Angeles.

But LA's visibility has been most amplified by the Western trek of art-world luminaries. One could go all the way back to 1999, when New York's The Drawing Center director Ann Philbin moved to the Left Coast to head UCLA's Hammer Museum. Then Michael Govan bade farewell to the Dia Art Foundation in 2006 to become director of LACMA. And, of course, it's by now the stuff of art-world legend that East Coast ubergallerist Jeffrey Deitch was hired last year to turn around the then-flagging MOCA. These shifts on the institutional level have brought the simmer on the city's contemporary art scene to a roiling boil. Other transplants include former Whitney contemporary curator Shamim M. Momin, who moved to Venice Beach and cofounded the nonprofit LAND; stalwart New York dealers Dominique Lévy and Robert Mnuchin of L&M Arts, who opened a gallery in Venice; Matthew Marks of Matthew Marks Gallery, who's in the midst of creating a space in LA; and art-world publicity doyenne Sara Fitzmaurice, who is opening a West Coast office for her PR firm, Fitz & Co.

And now, the proverbial top threatens to blow off late this month with the opening of "Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945–1980"—a massive collaborative, multi-institution project, which is an initiative of The Getty Research Institute—as well as the unveiling of Southern California's newest art fair, Art Platform—Los Angeles.

Opening officially October 1 (previews begin Friday, September 30), Art Platform—Los Angeles debuts Downtown at the L.A. Mart and will feature 70 to 75 galleries focused on recognized and emerging local contemporary artists. On September 30, "Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945–1980" (a six-month-long initiative) also kicks off with simultaneous exhibitions and programs at an unprecedented 60 cultural institutions

across Southern California, celebrating postwar work and the LA art scene from 1945–1980. "If you're from LA, you have this feeling something very special is happening in our city right now," says Adam Gross, executive director of Art Platform—Los Angeles and former MOCA staff member. "This is our time to shine, and Art Platform is providing a rallying point. The core of the fair is to contextualize what is going on in the



Shawn Caley Regen in front of Elliott Hundley's *The Lightning's Bride* at Regen Projects II.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER KILKUS FOR ALYSSA PIZER MANAGEMENT (REGEN, BELL, DEITCH); CATHERINE OPIE ARTWORKS COURTESY OF REGEN PROJECTS, LOS ANGELES © CATHERINE OPIE

LA art world." By working with local nonprofit organizations to make site-specific exhibitions and recent MFA graduates to create installations, as well as by providing access to the best private collections and critically acclaimed work being produced locally, the fair seeks to underscore Los Angeles as an influential art center. Gross emphasizes bringing an international fair to town was really just the next logical step: "A great fair is part of the maturation of any great art scene," he says.

Deitch, LA's unofficial art community poster boy, says he is in favor of it all. "I am embracing everyone who comes to participate in the Los Angeles art world with a positive and entrepreneurial attitude. It's going to make the whole situation [in LA] that much more dynamic." Cliff Einstein, local collector, chairman emeritus of MOCA and avid supporter of the new fair, concurs. "I think we can give the visitor a very complete experience—the chance to engage with the artists and experience large private collections installed in some of the country's most



FROM LEFT: Catherine Deneuve, *B & Bewitch* by Robert Heinecken and *We're in This Together* by Ryan McGinness, both on view at Art Platform—Los Angeles.

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— PERRY RUBENSTEIN

striking examples of residential architecture." Maria Arena Bell, current cochair of the MOCA board and influential art-world advocate adds, "Having a serious art fair join the calendar is important. There are high hopes for it and a great deal of enthusiasm as we head into fall."

But let us not forget, art fairs are about commerce, and as Andy Warhol cleverly said, "Being good at business is the most fascinating kind of art." To be sure, LA has always been a city of industry—from gold mining and oil drilling to orange farming and motion pictures—but can this city actually sell world-class contemporary art? Will the international dealers and collectors—even the notoriously "over-faired" East Coast hedge-fund buyers—embrace a new art show here? Gross clearly thinks so, and of course it doesn't hurt the fair is owned by the deep-pocketed Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc. (MMPI), producer of eight other art fairs, including the well-regarded Armory Show in NYC. "Our seasoned operations team at the Armory has great relationships with artists and dealers. By attracting the



Cliff and Mandy Einstein in their home gallery. BELOW: *Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas* by Ed Ruscha will be part of the "Pacific Standard Time" initiative.

best and most innovative galleries and utilizing the resources MMPI can bring to bear differentiates us from other fairs in LA," says Gross. "On Friday, September 30 we're all opening—Art Platform, Pulse, ArtLA and 'Pacific Standard Time.' If you're in LA, there's only one place you're going to be, and that's Downtown. What we've been able to do is create a critical mass of events you can't ignore."

The local art community seems cautiously optimistic and full of hopeful anticipation. "Will it rival Basel or Frieze? Well, we'll find out, but I think it will grow and grow and be totally embraced," says MOCA trustee Lilly Tartikoff Karatz. "It will be exciting for [Art Platform] to come!" Momin echoes the sentiment. "I really hope this works," she says. "We need everyone to come together—the support is critical. It needs to be collaborative, but I think we're ready for it." Brand-new LA transplant Fitzmaurice, who knows a thing or two about fairs after working with Art Basel for more than a decade and the Art Dealers Association of America's Annual Art Show since 2004, thinks the entire community stands to gain. "I think it's fantastic for Los Angeles," says Fitzmaurice. "LA has its group of internationally recognized major collectors, but also a large group of relatively unknown newer collectors that seek access to international galleries



and artists. Art fairs are a fantastic way to bring collectors more into the art world and help them educate themselves. That stands to benefit the community—artists, gallerists and museums." Or as Fitzmaurice's husband, Perry Rubenstein—who is moving his eponymous gallery from Chelsea to Hollywood this winter—succinctly puts it, "Everyone loves LA whether they know it—admit it—or not. All they need to do is come and see. And for those who resist, lose the hate. Because like it or not, this is the next art capital."

PHOTOGRAPH BY BETH COLLIER (EINSTEINS)

If there is one aspect of the conversation everyone seems to wholeheartedly agree on, it is that there is one ingredient—arguably the most important for any cultural capital—Los Angeles possesses above all: artists in residence. Lévy shrugs off the idea the famously capricious art market (or the media) might move on to a new city next year. "In LA, it's about the artists establishing a community, relationships among themselves and supporting one another," he says. "They can afford large studios. The light is great. The younger generation of artists is here to stay. Think of a German artist like Florian Maier-Aichen—even he chooses to live in LA. All of this is more interesting than a booming art market. One feels the energy today in LA is similar to the feeling in New York in the late 1950s." Adds Einstein, "I think LA has more good art being made right now than in any city in the world."

Deitch also references LA's continuation as a creative incubator for contemporary art. "Do you know who Ryan Trecartin is? I would characterize him as maybe the first real 21st-century artist," says Deitch. "He is pushing art closer to what people do in film and TV, and he moved to Los Angeles partially to be able to connect with people with technical skills in the film and television world. The most exciting thing about the creative situation in LA is this opportunity to cross the boundaries between the different media and put together something very fresh."

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—MARIA ARENA BELL

to LA and have had an incalculable long-term effect on the community.

So maybe nothing has changed—yet everything has. Regardless, the excitement within the community is palpable. "You feel the movement happening. It's thrilling," says Tartikoff Karatz. "Many different components have come together to create this magic." Bell also believes LA is ready for its close-up. "This is a great time in the arts for [this city]" she says. "The fact the contemporary art world has taken notice of this vibrant expression in LA makes perfect sense now. This is LA's time." Adds Momin, "Things have just coalesced. It *seems* overnight once it gains momentum because it has a more exponential presence, but this was decades in the making."

Perhaps Baldessari sums it up best: "The exodus to New York has pretty much stopped, and artists are staying in LA, which brings more galleries and several notable New Yorkers, such as Govan, Philbin and Deitch. As a result, art from LA has become sexy around the world." Rubenstein agrees. When asked what LA has that other art capitals do not, he says, "Simple. It's sexy. Very sexy." **LAC**

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN BALDESSARI (BLOODY SUNDAE)

THE POWER LIST

Local museum directors including MOCA's *JEFFREY DEITCH*, LACMA's *MICHAEL GOVAN* and The Hammer's *ANN PHILBIN* are well-known power brokers, but who else wields the most influence in the Los Angeles art world? Read on to find out.

JOHN BALDESSARI

He sits on the board of MOCA, is a pioneer of conceptual art and has nurtured and influenced generations of artists. A major retrospective of Baldessari's work traveled the world from 2009–2011.

MARIA ARENA BELL

The cochair of MOCA's board, Bell is credited with helping Deitch and Broad turn the museum around. She and husband Bill are longtime arts advocates, donors and collectors.

TIMOTHY BLUM AND JEFF POE

Their gallery, Blum & Poe—first opened in a jewel box-like 800-square-foot space in Santa Monica in 1994—has grown into an internationally renowned operation representing a stable of art-world heavyweights, including Takashi Murakami and Carroll Dunham. The partners cemented their reign in 2009 after moving into a giant 22,000-square-foot space on South La Cienega Boulevard.

ELI BROAD

A mega-collector, philanthropist and tireless supporter of the LA art scene, Broad is undoubtedly the most powerful person in the community. He's currently building a Diller Scofidio + Renfro-designed museum Downtown to house his and wife Edythe's extensive collection. Broad has played a central role in both LACMA and MOCA.

JOANNE HEYLER

The long-serving and highly respected director and chief curator of The Broad Art Foundation, Heyler has helped grow the collection a whopping 65 percent since she became its advisor. She's a low-key but global powerhouse who oversees art acquisitions and the lending activity of the foundation.



Bloody Sundaes, John Baldessari, 1987.

BARBARA KRUGER

An artist who creates instantly recognizable work with slogans about feminism, social hierarchies and consumerism, Kruger sits on the board of MOCA and has taught at CalArts.

SHAUN CALEY REGEN

A veteran of the LA gallery scene and indefatigable advocate for homegrown talent, Regen has been cultivating and promoting local artists for more than two decades. She's tough, smart, influential and sat on the Art Basel Miami Beach selection committee.

ED RUSCHA

Often referred to as the "Godfather of the LA Art World," Ruscha is known for using the LA landscape as a backdrop in his work. He represented the United States in the Venice Biennale in 2005 and sits on the board of MOCA.

PETER ZELLNER AND LAURI FIRSTENBERG

Zellner's Culver City-based architecture firm has become the de facto choice to create artist-friendly spaces for local cutting-edge galleries, including Matthew Marks Gallery, which opens its West Coast location this winter. His wife, Firstenberg, founded the progressive LAXART in 2005, a successful gallery for emerging and established artists. Young and well liked, this is one of LA's new cultural power couples.

THE ADMISSIONS DIRECTORS TO THE EIGHT LEADING LOCAL ART SCHOOLS

These academic gatekeepers decide which young artists will get to study with some of the most brilliant and creative minds of our time, and in turn, select those whose work will ultimately be seen in the annual MFA group shows.