

A Call To Arms: Can LA Match Miami Beach?

THE ART WORLD COMES TO LOS ANGELES

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WORDS PHIL TARLEY

“Los Angeles is the most dynamic art scene in the world today and PULSE is thrilled to give this creative and exciting market the fair that it so deserves,” opined Cornell DeWitt, Director of PULSE Contemporary, at a private brunch during Art Basel, Switzerland, while speaking about PULSE’s upcoming Los Angeles opening. Prepare to experience the biggest contemporary art phenomenon to ever hit Los Angeles. Art Platform—Los Angeles, PULSE, and upstart Fountain, three different international fairs, are taking over downtown Los Angeles on the same weekend (September 30—October 2), and planning to rock this town with the most enormous contemporary art extravaganza Los Angeles has ever experienced.

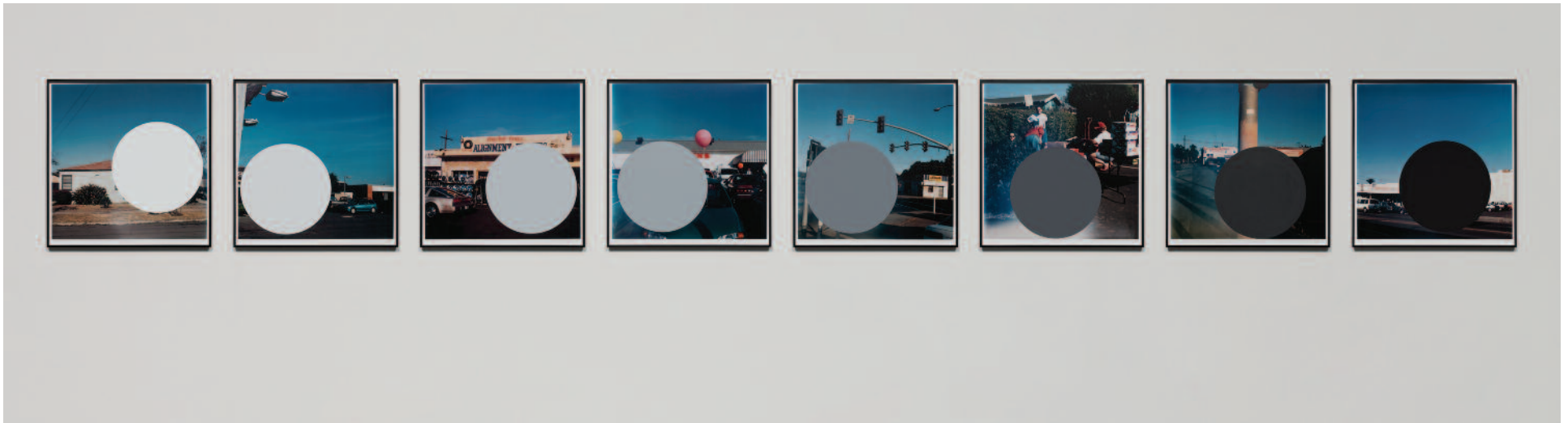


EMPEROR BUG OF THE NORTH • © CHRIS WILDER. COURTESY EDWARD CELLA ART + ARCHITECTURE.

Likened to a mini Art Basel Miami Beach, a widely used model where giant multi-national fairs convene at the same time, in the same city, and exert a synergistic leap of international attendance that often results in huge art sales. To amplify this effect, the Getty’s monumental Pacific Standard Time show also opens on the same weekend, a further enticement for the jetsetters to fly here.

The Getty’s *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980*, years in the planning and funded with millions of dollars, is a collaboration of more than 120 cultural institutions and galleries across Southern California. PST tells the story of the birth of the Los Angeles art scene and how it became a major new force in the art world.

Along with PULSE — a major show at Art Basel Miami Beach, staging at LA LIVE, is Art Platform — child of New York’s The Armory Show, just a few blocks away at the LA Mart, on Broadway. Also on board is Fountain Art Fair LA



NATIONAL CITY • © JOHN BALDESSARI. COURTESY PATRICK PAINTER GALLERY.
ART PLATFORM—LOS ANGELES ART FAIR

at Lot 613 Imperial Street. Fountain, which bills itself as an alternative “anything can happen” exhibition of avant-garde artwork, goes up in New York during Armory week, Miami during Art Basel Miami Beach, and now in Los Angeles, during Pacific Standard Time weekend.

The Standard Hotel, which throws cool, sexy art parties, seems to be an unofficial fourth venue, adding what will hopefully be a sublime layer of artful magnificence - to those invited - and making up the fourth ring of this circus maximus - the fifth if you count the Getty. (The Getty’s posh and private opening bash closes out the weekend). Taschen - purveyor of some of the world’s best art books, and famous for their, legendary, A-list soirees, has just booked a booth at Art Platform.

Other smaller satellite shows like *Beyond Eden*, at Barnsdall Park, are eventing on the same weekend. Plans for numerous underground pop-up galleries are percolating to open simultaneously all over downtown. Mat Gleason’s AVANT-LA, at the Rutland Hotel, is launching right next door to Art Platform.

“Platform made me realize that LA had a unique opportunity to step up its game. This is a chance for LA to look at how Miami just flips on the switch and creates a major cultural movement around Art Basel. Art Platform is at the

epicenter, so I rented the closest space I could find to that fair. I want to be a part of something great.”

Also at Art Platform, Patrick Painter Gallery is showing John Baldessari and Ed Ruscha, complimenting the conceptual through-line of all the Pacific Standard Time shows. At the antipode of Classic Last Century is Cliff Benjamin’s Western Project, proffering more difficult and unconventional fare, like Los Angeles bad boy Ron Athey art. Benjamin told me that his gallery brings, “a particularly LA sensibility to Art Platform, irascible and unconventional — tough material that can only be made here.”

Not to be outdone, Pulse is also showing some of the best LA art around. Zackary Drucker’s transgender photography headlines Luis de Jesus’ booth; Fred Torres Collaborations is selling vintage David LaChapelles’ and Gretchen Ryan’s baroque, cheerleader prints. A book signing at Torres’ booth will spotlight artist-photographer Ken Gonzales-Day.

Other galleries are mounting a diversity of Los Angelic shows curated against the PST backdrop like, *Some City Angeles* at Edward Cella Art +Architecture. Then there is The Brewery, the stalwart barnacle of the downtown scene, holding its art walk October 1 and 2. All this seems to herald a

major parallel circus minimus, resonating with a howling cacophony of artful dissonance.

So many have, for so long, floated Los Angeles as a venue for an Art Basel Miami Beach-like fair. For the last eight years, we have seen Miami cashed up, t-arsed out, and transformed, by world-class artists and their admirers, celebrities, international bankers, socialites, movie stars, royalty, publicists and uber party planners, into a transcendent oasis of international art splendor.

The world has watched in fascination as Art Basel MB brought a sea change to the way in which contemporary art is sold and a sea change to the city of Miami as well. All the parties, all the opulence, all the red dotted art and all the private collections that open in the sumptuous homes of the Miami art elite during their show work in tandem to promote the event. And Miami does it smartly, with an eye towards international style, wealth and easy accessibility to fair-goers.

Now comes Los Angeles' turn. Can we live up to what Miami does? Our art and movie stars, our celebrity glamour machine, event planners, publicists, and our private art collections — will they too, all rise to the occasion to throw the kind of spectacular ultra-parties that make international fair-goers want to come back next year and the year after that? It is as much about the hype as it is about the art. The business of doing art business has always been about the show and tell, and celebrity.

Los Angelinos have long been dim to Los Angeles' artists. Art from LA has always sold better in New York, in Paris, and in Miami. In Fabrik's coverage of Art Basel MB last winter, *Los Angeles Takes the Show*, I wrote about how creative works from LA were at the top of my picks. Brisk sales went down at Patrick Painter and at Tim Yarger's galleries. Cherry and Martin's L.A. video, *Creative Ideas for Every Season*, by Brian Bress, dazzled the fair. International buyers were hungry for work from L.A. and still are.

Peter Mays, Executive Director of The L.A. Art Association, an organization devoted to the promotion of emerging and mid-career artists, is energized by the onslaught of these big international fairs.

“With LA now driving content internationally, it's the opportunity and the expectation for the fairs to establish ongoing and sustainable ties to our com-



DUDE STARTS FREAKIN • © WAYNE WHITE. COURTESY WESTERN PROJECT.
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munity. The world is now aware of the potency of LA's emerging artists and their voice in the trajectory of contemporary art."

It remains to be seen if Los Angeles can establish our event as a yearly art phenom where the glitterati mark LA on their social calendars, and call NetJet for their rides, like they do for Miami. If we can, not only can we expect increased sales of Los Angeles art to international fair-goers, but we can also count on a rise in the way Los Angelinos see Los Angeles art as desirable and acquirable.

Our entire LA art market depends on how we do. It's time to be more than a witness, Los Angeles. It is time to step up to the plate.



PERFORMANCE ART • RON ATHEY. COURTESY WESTERN PROJECT.
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If These Walls Could Talk, 2011 / Neon on acrylic frame / 10" x 30" x 3'

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