

TOP 10 GALLERIES ON THE

EDGE

Where hip artists and big-time collectors meet

When it comes to art production, we are in a very important period right now," says Paul Schimmel, chief curator of downtown's Museum of Contemporary Art. "L.A.'s creative community is possibly more significant than that in just about any other city in the world at the moment."

Not a bad endorsement for the local art scene. The problem is, with more than 250 art galleries spread from Venice to mid-Wilshire to downtown, it isn't exactly user-friendly. And with that many galleries, you can also bet there's a lot of bad art out there. But the good news is that there's a surge of innovative work.

Not only is L.A. home to such world-class artists as David Hockney and Ed Ruscha, but the next generation, epitomized by Mike Kelley and Charles Ray, and the new generation—Frances Stark, Toba Khedoori—are helping to redefine what good art is. Meanwhile, the city's current breed of gallery owners is reshaping L.A.'s role in the global marketplace.

"Ten years ago, collectors were afraid to buy L.A.," says Marc Selwyn, director of the PaceWildenstein gallery. "They didn't trust the gallery infrastructure here and preferred to go to New York or elsewhere to buy their art—even L.A. art. But that changed dramatically. Today, more people are coming to L.A. over a number of other places as their primary stop."

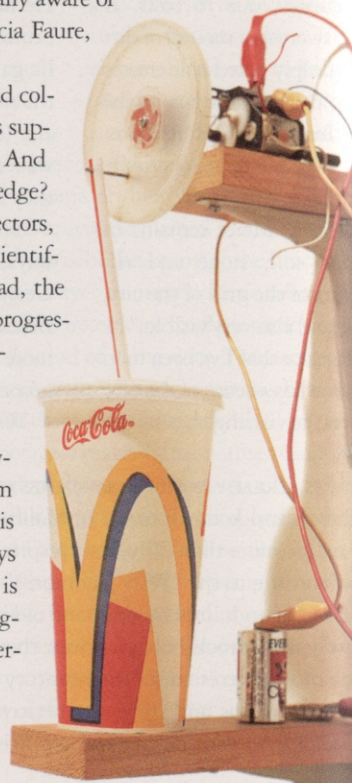
Of course, even most art neophytes know about PaceWildenstein, Gagolian Gallery, the Ace Gallery, L.A. Louver and Rosamund Felsen. And those only tangentially aware of the local scene have heard of Fred Hoffman, Shoshana Wayne, Patricia Faure, Fahey/Klein and Kohn Turner.

But what about the next generation of galleries? The ones critics and collectors are talking about? Where do the hip artists want to be? Who's supporting local talent and making waves in international art circles? And which of the established galleries have managed to stay on the cutting edge?

To find out, we informally surveyed top curators, critics, collectors, artists and gallery owners and came up with a strong (if not quite scientific) consensus. Longevity was not a factor, nor were price tags. Instead, the recurring names were those with the most avant-garde works and progressive approaches to local and international marketplaces. In no particular order, **HERE ARE 10 OF THE BEST:**

POST This gallery provides one of the best spaces in the city to showcase the works of artists active in the community, like Linda Day, Tim Hawkinson, Yunhee Min, Carolee Toon and Liz Young. "POST is probably one of the top three artist-run spaces in the country," says Michael Salerno, of the irreverent art journal *Coagula*. The reason is POST's director, Habib Kheradyar, known for discovering hot, emerging artists long before they've made a name for themselves. "I'm interested in youthful works," explains Kheradyar. "The young have the advantage of innocence." 1904 E. 7th Pl., 213-488-3379.

BY PAUL YOUNG PORTRAITS BY LISA ROMEREIN



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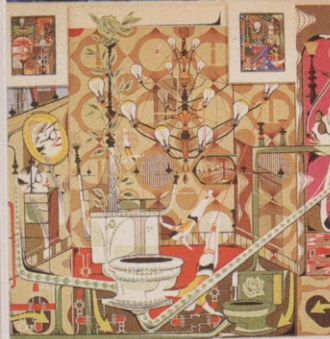
“Ten years ago, collectors were afraid to buy L.A.”



REGEN PROJECTS

Right: Shaun Caley Regen of Regen Projects with Kcho's *Para Olvidar*, 1996.

Below: Elizabeth Peyton's *Flower Liam*, 1996, and a detail of Lari Pittman's *Once a Noun, Now a Verb*, 1997.



ACME seems destined to make the biggest

REGEN PROJECTS Many believe Stuart Regen to be the West Coast's next major player—on a par with New York art gurus Larry Gagosian and Leo Castelli. But Regen and his wife-partner Shaun Caley Regen have other plans. "Larry is brilliant," says Shaun, "but we're much more interested in younger artists and working with them on their careers. I think the difference between us and some of the New York dealers—and this goes for a lot of the younger gallery owners in this town—is that we're 'gallerists,' not just dealers."

The important thing is not in whose footsteps Stuart and Shaun are (or are not) following but the caliber of the artists whose works hang on their walls. The A-list lineup includes Stephen Balkenhol, Matthew Barney, Kcho, Toba Khedoori, Liz Larner, Raymond Pettibone, Jack Pierson, Lari Pittman, Julie Becker and Wolfgang Tillmans, all of whom have had shows and/or retrospectives in museums here and abroad. There's also

Charles Ray, who will be showing at New Whitney Museum next year, and Sue Williams will be a guest artist at Laurenz House in Basel, Switzerland. 629 N. Almont Dr., 310-276-5424.

DAN BERNIER When Dan Bernier talks about art, it sounds more like a philanthropist than a dealer. He's not just interested in selling, but he's also dedicated to creating programs that help emerging artists and young collectors. "I love the idea that art can alter your experience of life," he says. "My artists have done that for me. I can only hope that they will for others, too."

Bernier's passion for new ideas has built a strong base of clients, from British collector Charles Power to Ivan Moskowits, a med student who has already amassed a considerable collection of contemporary art. Many of them Bernier's most successful artists include Martin Koolhaas

Fischli/Weiss, John Schabel, Russell Crotty, Vic Munez, George Stoll, Steve Hurd, Casey Cook and Amy Adler. Kersels, whose work is strongly influenced by performance art, once created an installation by wiring almost every item in an office with speakers that played prerecorded music when the pieces were moved. He has three solo shows scheduled for next year. *6150 Wilshire Blvd., 310-264-4882.*

ACME With a sleek new location, ACME, along with the Dan Bernier and Marc Foxx galleries (which share the same building), seems destined to make the biggest splash on the art scene since Bergamot Station in 1994. But it will not, emphasizes co-owner Bob Gunderman, be called Baby Bergamot. Instead, the three-gallery space will be dubbed 6150 after its address on Wilshire Boulevard, just a brush stroke away from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

"We want to provide the most enjoyable gallery experience we possibly can," says Gunderman. ACME, which grew from the ashes of Foodhouse, one of the most successful gallery spaces of the early '90s, has put together a diverse program that includes figurative painting, photography, conceptual and interactive art, installations and even landscape painting. Gunderman and co-owner Randy Sommer believe that nonlinearity is the gallery's greatest strength. ACME attracts a constant parade of art big shots, including directors and curators from MOCA and LACMA, as well as savvy young collectors like music executive Matt Aberle, veterans such as real estate magnate Barry Sloan and reps for Eli Broad and Peter Norton.

The main draws, of course, are the artists and their works: Chris Finley's intricate, interactive household-item sculptures; Jennifer Steinkamp's hypnotic,



ACME

Left: ACME's Randy Sommer and Bob Gunderman.

Below left: Miles Coolidge's Safetyville, 1994.



BLUM & POE GALLERY

Below: Kim Dingle's Crazy's Pig (Girl with Guinea Pig), 1997.



ic, computer-generated light shows; and Carlos Mollura's massive plastic balloonlike sculptures. Uta Barth is currently preparing for shows in Tokyo and Sweden; Kevin Hanley is working alongside curators in France and Italy; and Joyce Lightbody, Monique Prieto, Francis Alÿs, Miles Coolidge, Finley and Mollura are all in the process of developing upcoming shows. *6150 Wilshire Blvd., 310-264-5818.*

splash on the scene since Bergamot Station.

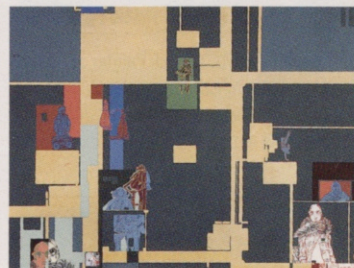


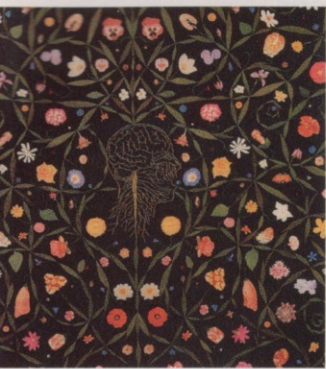
BLUM & POE In 1994, Timothy Blum and Jeff Poe joined forces to create a gallery with a global approach. Blum, who had run a gallery in Tokyo, offered his expertise in the contemporary international, especially Japanese, art world. Poe, who cut his teeth on L.A.'s defunct Kim Light gallery, brought his penchant for younger works. Together, they built a gallery that introduces important Asian artists to L.A. "Our objective is to find works and ideas that move the art world forward rather than backward," says Poe. The common link among their artists—including Jennifer Bornstein, Sam Durant, Anya Gallaccio, Sharon Lockhart, Paul McCarthy, Takashi Murakami, Ushitomo Nara and Kim Dingle—is that no one works in a single medium. Dingle, for example, is known for her paintings of petulant little girls clad in party dresses as well as for her installations with cavorting life-size nymphs. *2042 Broadway, Santa Monica, 310-453-8311.*

DAN BERNIER GALLERY

Left: Dan Bernier in his gallery.

Below: A detail from Casey Cook's EndingtheBeginning, 1977.





CHRISTOPHER GRIMES GALLERY

Above: Detail of Fred Tomaselli's *Head with Flowers*, 1996.

CHRISTOPHER GRIMES In business since 1979, Christopher Grimes is considered an old-timer on the local art scene. But unlike other veterans in town, he has managed to keep his program fresh. "When I started, I saw this as a vocation in which to learn," he says. "The day I stop learning, I will quit." Grimes's penchant for new ideas is reflected not only in his diverse group of intellectually strong artists but also in how he discusses their work. Arguably the most articulate dealer on the scene, he can wax philosophical about Tony Tasset's pieces that often refer to the works of other famous artists, Nayland Blake's handmade stuffed rabbits representing gay men or Fred Tomaselli's intricate collages of "illegal materials," such as marijuana, acid and pills. (His other artists include Linda Burnham, Georganne Deen, Lewis DeSoto, Sharon Ellis, Tom Friedman, Jacci Den Hartog, Skeet McAuley, Megan Williams and Lisa Yuskavage.)

Grimes is also one of the few dealers actively cultivating strong connections with South American artists, dealers and curators. This, as MOCA's Schimmel points out, is vital to the future strength of the local art scene because of the increasingly global climate of the art world. "L.A. will not be able to compete with New York or the other main art markets," says Schimmel, "until it establishes a rock-solid connection with its rich neighbors—Latin America and Asia." Grimes is making that connection. *916 Colorado Ave., Santa Monica, 310-587-3373.*

MARC FOXX GALLERY

Right: Hiroshi Sugito's *The End*, 1996.

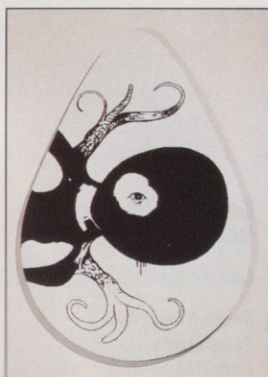
MARC FOXX Marc Foxx set off on his own in 1994 from the Angles gallery in Venice and has been building a steady roster of clients (including several heavy hitters

in the film industry) ever since. Like Blum & Poe, Foxx's strength is his international scope, and he prides himself on bringing talent from Iceland, England, Japan and Thailand to the attention of L.A. audiences. Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugito does large-scale paintings with a subtle palette and spare, childlike figures. Icelander Olafur Eliasson creates installations centering around man's relationship with nature, while Thai artist Udomsak Krisanamis builds meticulous, layered collages. Along with Foxx artists Robert Blanchon, Jim Hodges, Frances Stark and Robert Therrien, their common thread is a refined aesthetic backed by a subtle use of form. *6150 Wilshire Blvd., 310-315-2841.*



PATRICK PAINTER "A lot of people are pretty excited about Patrick Painter coming to L.A.," says artist Sam Durant. "I think he's going to bring a lot of new ener-

When PaceWildenstein and Gagosian stole Leavin's



PATRICK PAINTER

Right: Patrick Painter at his L.A. gallery.
Above: Mike Kelley's *Untitled #1*, 1994.



gy to the scene." Painter, who had a very successful run as a producer of limited editions in Vancouver, says he was "drafted" by Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, two of L.A.'s most important contemporary artists, to open his own local gallery.

Accepting the challenge, Painter put together an impressive group of artists, including Roy Arden, Glenn Brown, Larry Clark, Mark Lewis, Jorge Pardo and Diana Thater, all of whom use the media—literally—as source material for their work. Canadian Mark Lewis likes to cut pieces of film from well-known classics, such as *A Touch of Evil*, to create his own art. Others play with photography, video and pop-culture elements. Painter believes that these and other media-based works are among the most important artistic statements being made globally, and he finds it ironic that they are downplayed in Los Angeles. He sees his own role as similar to that of a producer. "Film production is my model," he says. "The artwork is the production itself, and the gallery is the theater." *Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, 310-264-5988.*

UNTITLED #1: DOUGLAS M. PARKER STUDIO

HAIR AND MAKEUP: SHANNON FROST/CLOUTIER
CINEMPHILIA: DOUGLAS M. PARKER STUDIO; QUO VADIS:
FREDRIK NILSEN

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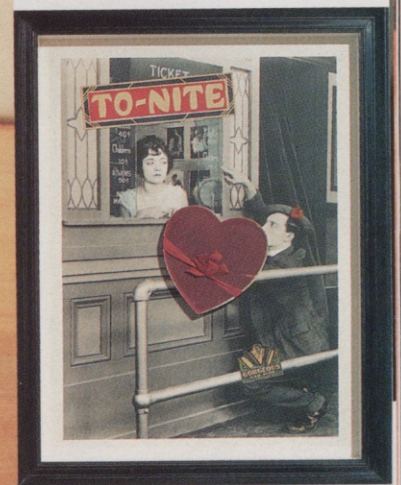
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MARGO LEAVIN GALLERY

Left: Margo Leavin at her gallery in Jean Prouve's *Armchair/Fauteuil Visiteur*, 1943, in front of Yayoi Kusama's *Untitled*, 1968.

Below: Alexis Smith's *Cinephilia*, 1996.



thunder, she added L.A. artists to her roster:

MARGO LEAVIN The grande dame of L.A. art dealers, Margo Leavin has been selling art in this city for more than 25 years. What sets her apart from other established gallery owners is her knack for adapting to the ever-changing art scene and discovering and promoting local talent. Leavin earned her status by weathering radically fluctuating markets, shifting trends and public apathy. When she started in 1970, few people were buying the kind of avant-garde art in which she dealt: Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures, Julian Schnabel's "plate" paintings, John Baldessari's early photo-based works. The toughest time was a few years ago when the bottom dropped out of the contemporary art market and, ironically, PaceWildenstein and Gagosian opened galleries in L.A., stealing her thunder. Rather than close up shop, Leavin switched gears, adding more L.A. artists to her roster—Larry Johnson, Christopher Williams, Roy Dowell, Allen Ruppersberg and Stephen Prina (who once turned a catalog listing of Manet's paintings into a piece of art), who are all known for their highbrow conceptual pieces. "I feel very lucky to have the artists I

have," says Leavin. "But [success] is also about strong commitment and determination to get through the tough times." 812 N. Robertson Blvd., 310-273-0603.

RICHARD TELLES FINE ART On the ultrahip stretch of Beverly Boulevard between La Brea and Fairfax, Richard Telles boasts a small but interesting group of painters, sculptors and installation artists whose work is defined by a clean, spare aesthetic—Ginny Bishton, Liz Craft, Richard Hawkins, Mary Heilmann, Jim Isermann and Jennifer Pastor, who is known for her large-scale plaster nature scenes. Telles says many of his artists work slowly and meticulously, but he's not complaining: "I'm extremely loyal and committed to them, and I like that they take their time." 7380 Beverly Blvd., 213-965-5578.

ALSO WORTH A VISIT Angles, *Santa Monica*; Peter Fetterman, *Santa Monica*; Richard Heller, *Santa Monica*; Iturralde, *L.A.*; Craig Krull, *Santa Monica*; Miller Fine Art, *L.A.*; Newspace, *L.A.*; Bennett Roberts, *West L.A.*; and Tasende, *West Hollywood*. ■

RICHARD TELLES FINE ART

Below: Liz Craft's *Quo Vadis*, 1997.



HAIR AND MAKEUP: SHANNON PROST/STYLING; GINEPHILIA: DOUGLAS H. PARKER STUDIO; QUO VADIS: FREDRIK NILSEN