

Finkel, Jori, "Hammer announces \$100,000 prize for new biennial; 60 artists chosen," *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 2012

## Los Angeles Times

### Hammer announces \$100,000 prize for new biennial; 60 artists chosen



The Hammer Museum announced on Wednesday a new \$100,000 award to a Los Angeles artist participating in its first biennial, "Made in L.A." And, in a popular voting process familiar from reality TV, the winner will be chosen by people who see the exhibition, after a jury of art experts narrows the choice to five finalists.

Known as the Mohn Prize, the award surpasses the Turner Prize from the Tate Museum in London and matches the Bucksbaum Award from the Whitney in New York for sheer dollar value. The hope is that it also rivals them as a mechanism for bringing attention to artists.

"I strongly believe that the most creative and innovative art in the world is being made here in L.A., and it has been that way for a number of years," said Jarl Mohn, who funded the prize with his wife, Pamela, through the Mohn Family Foundation. "This prize along with the biennial is a way to let the rest of the world know it."

A former MTV and VH1 executive who founded the E! television network in 1990, Jarl Mohn describes himself as an "angel venture investor in digital media" and a passionate art collector. He said he has committed to funding the prize a minimum of five times as well as publishing a limited edition book about the winning artist each time.

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"I'm even more excited about the book than the money. Not only are we going to publish a monograph for the artist, but I will send at our expense this book and the Hammer [biennial] catalog to 500 of the most influential people in emerging art: curators, dealers, collectors, critics. I want to help to put even more L.A. artists on the map."

The prize is just one of the announcements that the Hammer is making at a media luncheon Wednesday. The museum is also releasing its list of artists selected for the new biennial. Anne Ellegood and Ali Subotnick from the Hammer, working in partnership with Lauri Firstenberg, Cesar Garcia and Malik Gaines from LAX Art, have chosen 60 "emerging and under-recognized" artists from the L.A. area for the show, which runs June 2 to Sept. 2. (A related Hammer museum project featuring different artists, the Venice Beach Biennial, runs July 13-15 along the boardwalk.)

Most of the 60 artists will be showing their work (or in some case performing) at the Hammer Museum, with others at the L.A. Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall Park. One collective, Slanguage -- Karla Diaz and Mario Ybarra Jr. -- will be taking over the gallery space of LAX Art for the run of the show with what Firstenberg calls "three months of art programming, like family activities and children workshops, the sort of programming they do out of their studio in Wilmington."

The other artists chosen are:

Scoli Acosta, **Kathryn Andrews**, Math Bass, Scott Benzel, Sarah Cain, Animal Charm (Rich Bott and Jim Fetterley), Sarah Conaway, Fiona Connor, Kate Costello, Meg Cranston, Michelle Dizon, Roy Dowell, Zackary Drucker in collaboration with Rhys Ernst, Patricia Fernández, Cayetano Ferrer, Dan Finsel, Morgan Fisher, Simone Forti, Liz Glynn, Mark Hagen, Zach Harris, Kenyatta A. C. Hinkle, Channa Horwitz, Pearl Hsiung, Ashley Hunt, Vishal Jugdeo, Mimi Lauter, Nery Gabriel Lemus, Thomas Lawson, Nzuzi de Magalhães, Dashiell Manley, Allison Miller, Nicole Miller, Meleko Mokgosi, Zac Monday, Ruby Neri, D'Ette Nogle, Michele O'Marah, Alex Olson, Camilo Ontiveros, Joel Otterson, Karthik Pandian, the Propeller Group (Phunam, Matt Lucero, Tuan Andrew Nguyen), Vincent Ramos, Laura Riboli, Ry Rocklen, Miljohn Ruperto, Analia Saban, Brian Sharp, Ryan Slugggett, David Snyder, Jill Spector, Koki Tanaka, Henry Taylor, Caroline Thomas, Cody Trepte, Erika Vogt, Lisa Williamson and Brenna Youngblood.

It's a fairly diverse list by many measures, including race, gender and medium of choice, with the curators not pursuing any particular theme but attentive to some "threads" that Firstenberg has described as "materiality, archaeology, theatricality, mythology and subjectivity."

A few of the artists, like Analia Saban, Ry Rocklen, and Liz Glynn, are already getting serious attention. Then there's the long-overdue but overnight-style success of Henry Taylor,

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who recently showed at Blum & Poe and currently has a show at PS1 in New York.

"I think we were all blown away by seeing his sculpture installations at Blum & Poe, and we couldn't stop thinking about him," Firstenberg said. "Yes, his market has gone crazy, but that has just happened very recently. He has had very few group and solo shows in L.A."

Some other choices are more surprising. Meg Cranston and Roy Dowell, both on faculty at Otis College of Art and Design, are serious artists whose work sometimes gets eclipsed by their role as teachers. And Simone Forti and Channa Horwitz, at 76 and 79 respectively, stand out as the oldest under-recognized artists in the show.

Forti is a pioneering improvisation-fueled choreographer who painted before she got involved with the dance world, while Horwitz makes mathematically-based, systems-driven visual compositions, some of which have been interpreted like scores by musicians. Both are known for exploring collaborative models; neither got major play in the various Pacific Standard Time exhibitions.

The youngest artist in the show is 24-year old Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle. "It was an unwritten rule not to choose anyone still in school," said Ellegood, senior curator at the Hammer Museum, "though I think Kenyatta is a slight exception because she completed her MFA but is still getting a master's in writing."

Three artists from the list show at Richard Telles in Los Angeles: Dan Finsel (whose studio is pictured here), Karthik Pandian and Ryan Sluggett. Another three show with David Kordansky Gallery in Culver City: Kathryn Andrews, Ruby Neri (yes, the daughter of Manuel Neri) and Thomas Lawson, the painter who is better known as the dean of Cal Arts. And four show with Thomas Solomon in Chinatown: Vishal Jugdeo, Ry Rocklen, Miljohn Ruperto and Analia Saban.

But Ellegood estimates that about a third do not have gallery representation at all. She also said that many artists will be making new work specifically for "Made in L.A."

"We tried to support artists through commissions and honorariums as much as we could," she said, noting that the entire "Made in L.A." budget, for the exhibition and catalog, is around \$800,000. "A big chunk of our budget has gone directly to artists, which was really important to us."

--Jori Finkel

*Image: Dan Finsel, right, at work in his Chatsworth studio in 2011, which shows a detail from "The Space Between You and Me." Credit: From the artist, photograph by Joshua White.*