

The inaugural Frieze Los Angeles was staged at a tent at Paramount Studios designed by Kulapat Yantrasast of L.A.-based firm WHY. Yoshihiro Makino

Los Angeles

# Frieze L.A. Takes Over Paramount Studios with WHY-Designed Plan

L.A.'s inaugural week of art fairs makes the case for new destinations and outside-the-box venues

By Samuel Cochran

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The tent withstood the downpour. This past Thursday, the heavens opened up just as [Frieze Los Angeles](#) was making its grand debut, welcoming the inaugural fair with torrential rain that kept fearful collectors and Uber drivers off the roads. But inside the tent, the art stayed dry and admirers undeterred thanks to [Kulapat Yantrasast](#) of the L.A.-based firm WHY, which devised the successful indoor/outdoor scheme at Paramount Studios. Covered walkways ushered visitors toward the entrance, whose faux foliage-covered façade echoed Paramount's iconic arches. Inside the entry pavilion, blue-stained plywood panelling referenced the humble backsides of stage sets, suggesting that by stepping into the tent you were stepping into the spotlight. Upon doing so, of course, you found a crowd vying for it, as A-List Angelenos and the traveling circus of curators, collectors, and critics that is the contemporary art world circulated and schmoozed.

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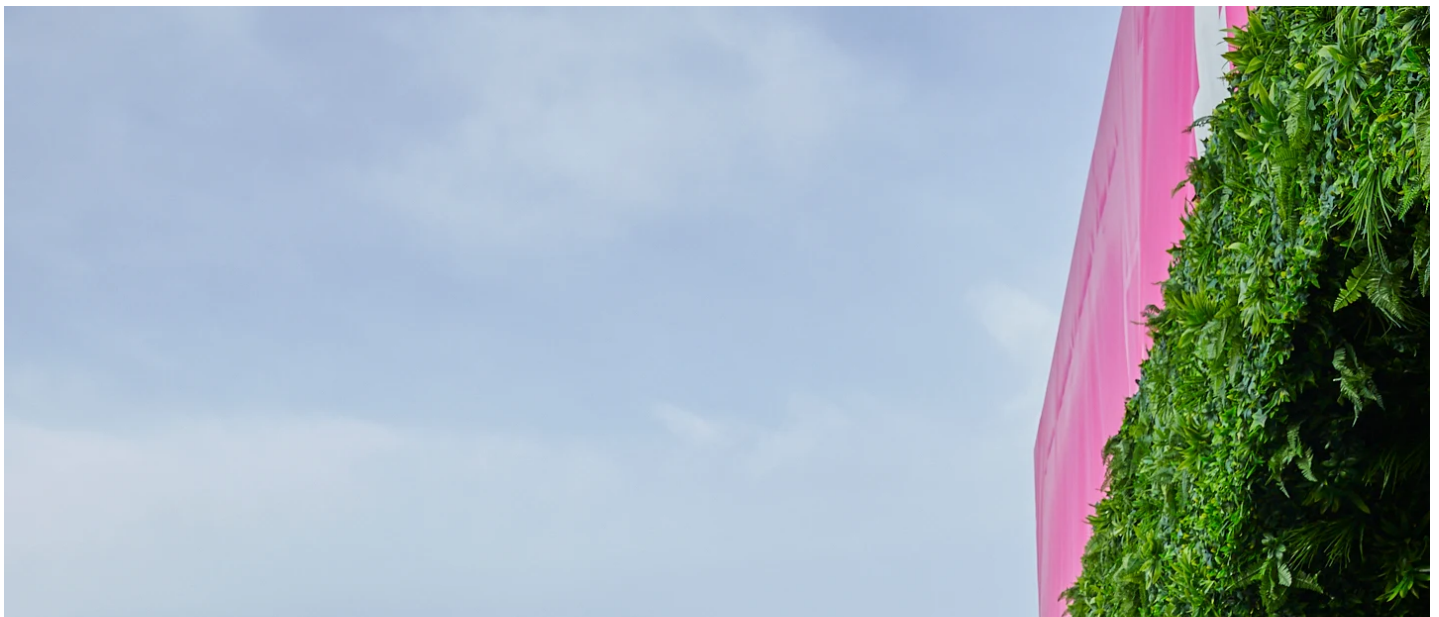
Though the tent itself (a custom 62,000-square-foot design with reusable rental components) was relatively straightforward, its setting was superb and its small scale wonderfully refreshing—with some 70 exhibitors compared to Frieze's usual 200-plus. The real wow moment awaited on the Paramount back lot: a patchwork of fake storefronts and streetscapes that were transformed into pop-up shops, restaurants, and site-specific installations, including crowdpleasers by L.A. artists Sarah Cain and Paul McCarthy. If only someone had had the foresight to use them as a backdrop for a movie about an art fair.



Blue-stained plywood panelling at Frieze referenced the humble backsides of stage sets. Yoshihiro Makino

“For [Frieze](#), the challenge was how to get people to understand the indoor/outdoor connection, how to get people from car to entrance to tent to back lot,” reflected Yantrasast, whose color-coded signage served as a kind of yellow-brick road. While the studio setting instantly distinguished Frieze from other fairs, its programming—with a preponderance of L.A. galleries and work by L.A. talents—cemented that unique sense of place. “It’s not the usual supermarket, it’s more like a farmers market,” Yantrasast said. “People are selling products close to where they’re made—very fresh, very local.”

It’s a fun metaphor to entertain, all the more so since Frieze, like any L.A. farmers market, proved the perfect place for spotting celebrities, among them Amy Poehler, Brad Pitt, and [Michael Keaton](#). And juicy California citrus indeed abounded in the form of new photographic works by Kathryn Andrews, ceramic vessels by Shio Kusaka, and small-scale paintings by Jen Guidi, among myriad local creations.







The entrance to Frieze was covered in faux foliage. Yoshihiro Makino

Fresh produce, oddly enough, was the subtext at the L.A. debut of the [Spring/Break Art Show](#). Set at the the Stalls at Skylight Row [DTLA](#), the show enlisted some 40 local independent curators, artists, and gallerists to transform one-time storage units for fruit and vegetables into daring displays. Surprising and scrappy, in a fast-changing pocket of the city, the site organically achieved what many fairs fail to ever do: captivate audiences with something unexpected.

Perhaps, then, the great takeaway from last week was not that L.A. has cemented itself as a capital of the art world. (That's long been a truth universally acknowledged.) Rather, what became clear is that art fairs have evolved well beyond convention centers and could-be-anywhere buildings. It's no longer enough to create a supermarket for status symbols. Our ravenous appetites for new experiences and new places demand more.





On the Paramount back lot, a patchwork of fake storefronts and streetscapes were transformed into pop-up shops, restaurants, and site-specific installations. Yoshihiro Makino

Which leads me to [Felix](#), arguably the week's sleeper hit. Mounted at the Hollywood Roosevelt, the fair invited 40 galleries to adapt the hotel's private suites and bungalows as exhibition spaces, resulting in a voyeuristic treasure hunt as gleeful visitors wove in and out of bedrooms. Art fairs, like hotels, can feel like exclusive enterprises, with VIP guest lists and entrance fees and all the posturing and ick that comes with them. But not Felix, which was free and open to anyone who wandered in off Hollywood Boulevard. It kind of makes you wonder: Would an art fair at a farmers market really be all that crazy?

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