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"An Overlap of Influence": How Hollywood and the Fine Art World Are Collaborating and (at Times) Colliding

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Artists, patrons, producers and curators (and a few skeptics) discuss how the two creative universes of Los Angeles feed each other and explore the backstory of L.A.'s booming art scene.

"My thing is with the L.A. art scene is: Why did it take everybody so long to recognize L.A. as an art mecca?" asks David Hoberman, the



they are, they expect you to run up and piss down their pants (eg and make them happy, this is those phras...

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CULTURAL CROSSOVER

PILAR TOMPKINS RIVAS (DIRECTOR, VINCENT PRICE ART MUSEUM) I did an exhibition for that first Pacific Standard Time about the arts in the early days of the city and learned that people like Cecil B. DeMille and his wife were deeply involved, even on the art committee that decided the design of the city, down to the lampposts. Edward G. Robinson played a role in developing arts policy and civic spaces.

ALLEN RUPPERSBERG (ARTIST) Everybody is susceptible to the lure of Hollywood. Myself included. That allure is always there. In the '90s, artists began to use [Hollywood] fabricators in production, to create bigger, more complicated works — like Paul McCarthy's animatronic-type figures in big installations.

MICHAEL GOVAN (LACMA DIRECTOR) A lot of artists are here *because* of Hollywood. Look at Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley with the tools of Hollywood they use. Early artists interested in those tools taught the next generation, like Diana Thater, then she taught Doug Aitken.

DAVID KORDANSKY (GALLERIST) Then there's the way that artists Alex Israel and Kathryn Andrews have used the idealized perspective, almost playing with the way the outsiders perceive Hollywood, the fantasy.

LAUREN HALSEY (ARTIST) Growing up in L.A., Hollywood was mythic, but for me it was hanging out on the boulevard in my 20s and loving the grime. What made Hollywood cool was the mess, the dark performances I'd see on the street, the stuff that's the opposite of how Hollywood is portrayed in the world.



Jennifer Rochlin/Courtesy of The Pit

Jennifer Rochlin's sculpture *Griffith Park*.

LAURI FIRSTENBERG (FOUNDER, LAXART; PARTNER, THERE-THERE GALLERY AND PRODUCTION COMPANY) The capital of this city was always Hollywood and art could never compete with that. But the relationship between Frieze and WME is a perfect example of how far things have come. We used to all live in separate lanes. But there's more interest in crossover, the Steve McQueen effect. My experience is that my clients are managers and producers and the leaders in the industry. My board members are agents and producers and the like. Now that the art world is as successful as it is, Hollywood is investing in the art world in no uncertain terms.

ANN PHILBIN (HAMMER DIRECTOR) There's starting to be an overlap of influence. Painters like Steve McQueen, Julian Schnabel and Rashid Johnson are influenced to make films. But they are bringing new methodologies into the dialogue. What's really exciting is the cross-disciplinary effect. Jay-Z is making a movie. Brad Pitt's making art. It feels very unstructured and very much a result of the atmosphere in L.A.

STEVE TISCH (PRODUCER, LACMA BOARD MEMBER) Does Mark Grotjahn want to direct a movie? I have not sat down and had that conversation, but if I hear that Mark Grotjahn wants to sit down with me, I look forward to hearing what he has to say. A canvas is as much as a storyteller as a movie, or a song. I don't see a Basquiat [work] as being that different from a song by Jay-Z or Drake.

CATHERINE OPIE (ARTIST, MOCA BOARD MEMBER) Between film, art and fashion, there is much more commingling. Not that I was ever intimidated by celebrity culture, but I suppose we all have had our prejudices before as to commingling. There is just a different understanding now that creativity comes in all forms and to embrace that culturally.



similarity to each other. The most important thing is that they're not, and that's one of the things that sometimes perplexes

NAIMA KEITH (DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM) If people are now going on the Beyonce tour of the Louvre or they see a celebrity hanging out at LACMA and they go because of that, then I'm OK with that. I'm hoping what drew you there was a celebrity, but what keeps you there is the work.

KLAUS BIESENBACH (MOCA DIRECTOR) I have looked at art with Gwyneth Paltrow, Darren Aronofsky, Spike Jonze and Alexander Skarsgard. And [artist] Lawrence Weiner, one of my patron saints in the art world, said, "You must meet Kathryn Bigelow!" It's great that an artist and a director like that are in contact.

DAVID HOBBERMAN (MANDEVILLE FILMS FOUNDER) Maybe I'm crazy — I don't really see a similarity to the two worlds other than from a purely artistic sense, where if I'm talking to a production designer or to a director I will oftentimes reference art and artistic periods that I feel that this movie could or should look like. For me it's been a great reference and complemented my filmmaking. But I don't see it other than that.

RUTH BLOOM (HAMMER BOARD MEMBER) I do not mind that a management company [Endeavor] is a part owner of Frieze and I do not mind that another management company [UTA] has their own gallery. People forget sometimes film is an art form. It's maybe a little bit more common art form, if you will, than a painting on your wall or a sculpture in your yard or a video that hangs on your wall. Film is an art form and it's something L.A. has been about for a century.

BIESENBACH It's interesting that in a city where performance and film are the foundation of the city, that performance is not that well represented in the museum context. It's a huge opportunity to bring these two worlds together. Performance art and media art could an incredible link between Hollywood, the art and music.

MARIA ARENA BELL (MOCA LIFE TRUSTEE) To make the analogy between the art and Hollywood ecosystems, museums could be analogous to studios, and you could say dealers are like agents, artists are like talent. Young artists need to find a dealer like young actors need to find a manager and an agent.

ALAN HERGOTT (ENTERTAINMENT ATTORNEY, FRIEZE L.A. HOST) What strikes me are the similarities in the growth and power of the talent agencies and the management firms and the growth and power of the most powerful galleries.

GERSH The art world, like our business, has become much more global — and galleries have taken on some of the grittier aspects of our business, where it's become more common to poach artists, which is obviously reminiscent of the agent world. That's a new phenomenon in the past five or 10 years.

PETER BENEDEK (UTA BOARD MEMBER) Unlike the entertainment industry, there are typically no tentpoles or reboots in the art world. The art world is always starting from scratch — and that's refreshing.

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THE BACKSTORY BEHIND L.A.'S ART BOOM

HOBBERMAN My thing is with the L.A. art scene is why did it take everybody so long to recognize L.A. as an art mecca? If you look back at the '60s you've got John Altoon and Ed Moses and Ed Ruscha and Baldessari and Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy all these people were around and teaching during that period.

HERGOTT You see the long-term beneficial effects of having strong departments in studio art at UCLA, USC, Art Center, CalArts, Otis, Irvine, the Claremont schools all feeding the beast, shall we say, of art makers and art consumers — some of them were from here, some stuck around. Between the excellent faculties at all of those institutions who generate their own intellectual heft and the students that they have turned out, many of whom have become some of the most significant artists of their generation, it has had an enormous long-term effect. If you look at the [Hammer's] "Made in L.A." shows, or even the Whitney Biennial, and see where all these folks went to school, you will see those seven or so colleges and universities having a huge representation amongst the people who are making art.

SUSANNE VIELMETTER (GALLERIST) The role of the major arts schools in L.A. should not be underestimated in transforming Los Angeles into a really important international art metropolis, and this happened through the very often quite rigorous artistic discourse that's taking place at these schools — and most of the practicing artists in L.A. actually teach at UCLA and Art Center and Otis. That laid the groundwork, really, for this city.

ELI BROAD (FOUNDER BROAD MUSEUM) I think it started changing in 1979 when we founded the Museum of Contemporary Art. Before then



Temporary Contemporary — opening in 1988 and the main building in 1999.

BENGSTON About 25 years ago we decided we were just as good as New York if not better. Actually, we thought we were better. We were so full of shit. We're Hollywood.

IRVING BLUM (FORMER DIRECTOR, FERUS GALLERY) There's absolutely no question, to be concise, that the L.A. art world owes a great deal to high real estate prices in New York. There's been an influx of younger artists who have a hard time back East finding space — that really has a great deal to do with the expansion here and a great deal to do with a lot of the activity.

STEVEN MELNICK (SVP MARKETING, 20TH CENTURY FOX TV) This is a community of creators and it is a community of rule breakers and Los Angeles affords that in a way that other cities may not. Artists have been drawn to Los Angeles because of cheap rent and spectacular light as well as something a little bit more cerebral and emotional, which is the feeling you can help create the canon of a community. It was true with John Baldessari and Betye Saar, David Hockney, the Chicano muralists. That's always been an element of what Los Angeles has been.

BROAD We always had people like David Hockney, John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha and others but now with the advent of others — whether it's Mark Grotjahn, Mark Bradford or a half a dozen others — Los Angeles has clearly become the contemporary capital of the world, other than commercially, which is still New York.

DOUG AITKEN (ARTIST) There's been a really amazing legacy in Los Angeles of people really believing in something strongly enough to just make it happen — that's completely separate from the aggressively commercial system that we often see now.

LARRY BELL (ARTIST) When LACMA opened its new building, that was a pretty heavy time. They were starting to let the camels into the tent and having parties where the artists were allowed to, you know, were invited to things. So the social life changed a bit.

BROAD You know, people would think of Los Angeles as Hollywood, Disneyland, the beach and so on — we've broken out of that and I think the fact that we've got a great opera, a great symphony, great museums has really changed the image of the city dramatically. Also the number of directors that came here from New York is incredible, whether it's at MOCA, which has a great new director, Klaus Biesenbach, Annie Philbin, Michael Govan and others.

SHAUN REGEN (GALLERIST) I think Ann Philbin coming to town and turning around the Hammer, really turning it into a contemporary museum, and Michael Govan coming to LACMA and changing the reputation of LACMA I think that those were very significant moments because before, for contemporary art, you really only had MOCA.

BRUCE FERGUSON (PRESIDENT, OTIS COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN) A big inflection point would be Annie Philbin taking over the Hammer. I was on the board of the Drawing Center in New York [which Philbin ran] for years and when she moved out here I thought, "Oh, wow! Hm...!" She had freedom and flexibility and she has changed the landscape by making UCLA's modest university art gallery into a national museum that's a central part of the discourse and dialogue in American art. Things like that don't just happen all the time!

PHILBIN When I moved to L.A. from New York in 1999 there was already a large community of artists here. It was one part of the ecosystem that was already healthy and it has become even more so. The collector base, philanthropic sector, gallery scene and museums weren't as strong then but they caught up and this city now has a thriving, full-fledged art world.

JONAS WOOD (ARTIST) When I first started showing in L.A. and living here [in the early 2000s], I always heard that gallerists in New York dissuaded people from showing art here in L.A. because they didn't think there was an audience. The theory when I moved here was that if you had a chance to show in New York, you would show your best work there and not here. I feel like that is changing. It hasn't still changed for everyone. It's still changing. And I think the feeling that you could launch a very prestigious large art fair like Frieze in L.A. and make it work in 2004 and 2005, it would never have happened.

CHEECH MARIN The arrival of Michael Govan, the director of LACMA [in 2006], was the moving force of getting everything going in LA. He came into the city and his first move was to reach out to all those communities that had kind of been pushed away. He reached out specifically to the Chicano community, and I was part of that and when we started doing shows together at LACMA with the Chicano painters of LA. We started building that that conversation between the community and the museum. That conversation can only exist if there's pictures of their community on the wall, otherwise they're not talking to you. Michael realized that right away.

PHILBIN The Getty's first Pacific Standard Time, in 2011, was the reason a lot of people from the art world started to fly in to this city. It taught them about Los Angeles. More recently the growth has been institutional: the arrival of the Broad, the Marciano, the major global art galleries, and, now, Frieze.

...established New York curator starting her own endeavor here, and she brought some of her influence and knowledge base. Also, when Freedman Fitzpatrick in Hollywood started [in 2013]. They were one of the first galleries to start in Los Angeles and exclusively show a purely international program. That moment was very interesting. They played a part in starting the Paramount Ranch project [an art fair from 2014-2016]. It signified that L.A. wasn't just a place where content was percolating, that there was a collector base that was excited about international work. On the heels of that, you've got these international players in larger galleries opening their outposts in L.A., like Spruth Magers, to be close to their artists. You started to see the L.A. marketplace really becoming even more of a destination.

TINA PERRY (OWN TV GM) The last three years or so in L.A. have been really interesting because in the entertainment business there's been this whole conversation about diversity and inclusion and everybody's trying to figure that out. But the art world in L.A. figured that out. With respect to the curatorial space, you have a number of museums and spaces that have people of color running them. You have Hamza Walker at LAXART, an African-American male. You have Cesar Garcia at The Mistake Room, the founder and director of that, and he's Latinx. You have Erin Christovale at the Hammer, she's a curator. You have Jamillah James at ICA downtown. Nine, 10 years ago there was *one* curator of color I knew in this city.

PETER GOULDS (GALLERIST, L.A. LOUVER) Every new district has been the district that would stick. And so at different times it was Venice, at another time Santa Monica, then it went into downtown, and there was a previous incarnation of downtown 30 years ago and that failed. West Hollywood, La Brea, now Hollywood is another area today. At the end of each of these periods, one or two galleries remains where they were. We are in the same [Venice] location 43 years. Certain galleries established a place for themselves in each of these mutations.

HALSEY There are multiple art worlds in LA. In this book by Kellie Jones called *South of Pico* she described how the artists here in L.A. in the '60s and '70s before my time were navigating all these spaces: showing poolside in Hollywood, in the back yard, art for TV shows, showing in Leimert Park, at church. I remember trying to sell my work at Venice Beach. There is that art world at Venice Beach, the galleries are one world, there is one on the corner somewhere, a million in downtown L.A., in Leimert Park, one in Watts. High, low, and everything in between. L.A. is a splurge of all these things at once. Navigating all those spaces at once without saying "Oh, this has a market" and "This does not" is important to me as an artist.

BETYE SAAR (ARTIST) I am an artist who really loves making objects and really is not concerned about L.A. or New York or what the art world is doing or not doing.... I feel it really doesn't matter where you are, if you love being an artist and continue to make art, everything else is superficial.

ALEX ISRAEL (ARTIST) The synergy between Chris Burden's *Urban Light*, the selfie, and Instagram really anchored L.A. in the flood of art-going imagery that's become pervasive in an age of social media. Why anything goes viral, I guess we'll never really know, but that work — accessible, beautiful and right in front of LACMA on Wilshire Blvd. in the heart of the city — did, and it probably has to do with the fact that L.A. is and always has been a car culture built on roads and freeways, and a city of stars and lights.

Gary Baum, Ashley Cullins, Peter Kiefer, Degen Pener, Jordan Riefe and Janelle Zara contributed to this report. Interviews edited for length and clarity.



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