

# ARTNEWS

Frieze Los Angeles Begins: 70 Galleries, Giant Bottle of Ketchup, and Chris Burden Sex Tower Rise at Paramount Studios

By Andrew Russeth



Hannah Greely, *High and Dry*, 2019

The most common refrain heard on the Paramount Studios lot on Thursday morning, in the minutes before the first edition of Frieze Los Angeles opened to invited guests, was that it always seems to rain when Frieze opens an art fair. (One notable exception, of course, was Frieze New York last year, when the weather was instead ferociously hot.) Rain had been coming down hard all morning, and people huddled under pink Frieze umbrellas and tents while waiting to venture into the fair. Mercifully, the downpour subsided quickly.

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The art crowd was out in force, including Studio Museum in Harlem director Thelma Golden, Serpentine Galleries artistic director Hans Ulrich Obrist, SFMOMA contemporary art curator Eungie Joo, and Naima J. Keith, deputy director of the California African American Museum in Los Angeles and co-curator of Prospect 5 in New Orleans in 2020. Collectors making the rounds included Mera and Don Rubell, Maja Hoffmann, and Pamela Joyner. Also present were celebrities like Michael Keaton, Jodie Foster (discreet in a bucket hat), Leonardo DiCaprio, Amy Poehler, and Brad Pitt. Norman Lear, the television luminary, was overheard saying, “Art bringing people together in bad weather—it’s really something.” The City of Angels keeps on giving.

At a breakfast before the opening, Eric M. Garcetti, L.A.’s mayor, fresh from abandoning a presidential bid that never really began, welcomed the art world to his city, speaking of it as “at once a place and a metaphor.” He described Frieze in similar terms before introducing the fair’s director, Bettina Korek, with a quip: “She has so many fans in this room that if she’d run for mayor I would have stood down.”

To a crowd of local politicians, collectors, and jet-setting art types, Korek said, “You’re part of a community that we hope will grow.”

Then it was off to the races. But how to navigate it all? “It’s super fucking easy because it’s only three lanes,” a friend told me as I arrived. It’s true: the fair, featuring 70 galleries, is a breeze to navigate, though traffic jams were forming in the aisles by early afternoon. It was packed, the mood buoyant, the dealers busy.

They had, after all, come to sell. Most of the exhibitors are blue-chip outfits—regulars on the international art-fair circuit—and most booths were stocked with trophies. Acquavella Galleries, from New York, devoted its walls to the 98-year-old Bay Area painter Wayne Thiebaud. The global giant Hauser & Wirth was showing a 1999 Mike Kelley installation that promptly sold for \$1.8 million. David Zwirner had a 2018 Chris Ofili, *Juicings*—an intensely patterned painting—front and center, with Carol Bove sculptures and Josh Smith paintings waiting in the wings, where designer Raf Simons could be found chatting with the dealer’s son and gallery publishing director Lucas Zwirner.

Many dealers nodded to the L.A. setting in various ways, with Matthew Marks, of New York and L.A., giving over a section of its booth to ceramics and graphic works by local legend Ken Price. Gagosian was showing a 2008 drawing that Chris Burden made as a proposal for a sculpture for former Disney president Michael Ovitz; it involved dropping three huge steel beams into the formidable collector’s gallery space. “MICHAEL, YOU + I CAN FUSE ART + ARCHITECTURE INTO ONE INSEPARABLE WHOLE!” Pace Gallery had a deep cut by Andy Warhol: a black-and-white portrait of Judy Garland.

Sprinkled amid the moneyed exhibitors were about 10 smaller L.A. galleries, with discoveries on hand. Chateau Shatto had tender little figurative paintings by Van Hanos, sculpture by Aria Dean, and works by Parker Ito. Parker Gallery (no relation) had stunning oil portraits on canvas—in wild colors—by Irving Marcus, a Sacramento-based artist who turns 100 this year. And Paul Soto was showing massive shelves filled with Grateful Dead tapes—a formidable, loving archive of culture—by Mark A. Rodriguez.

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On Paramount's famed back lot, in and around fake buildings making up an imaginary New York, Hammer Museum curator Ali Subotnick put together a toothsome group show. (Intriguingly, tickets are available for just this section, for those not interested in attending the rest of the fair.) Hannah Greely has radiant sculptures of clouds and clothing—pure Red Grooms—like joy—hanging between fire escapes on laundry lines, and Trulee Hall threaded a spindly, scary green snake form through another building, evoking some sort of monster invasion. Lisa Anne Auerbach was offering psychic readings, and Sarah Cain had blasted another room with her trademark color and installed a stained-glass window out front.

Next to Paul McCarthy's towering inflatable sculpture of "Daddies" ketchup, tourists in ponchos looked onto the ersatz city. Sprinkled around the grounds were little green placards by Barbara Kruger with some of her phrases: "ARE THERE ANIMALS IN HEAVEN?" "ARE YOU HUNGRY?" As to the latter question, there was a pizza nearby from Roberta's (a Brooklyn favorite presented in pop-up form). All the better to feed the usual suspects arrayed with art to sell along the aisles inside, ready to make a deal.

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