

January is L.A. Art Month Three major art fairs tout West Coast influence

By Avital Binshtock



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE LOS ANGELES ART SHOW

It's that time of year again; the time for art-loving Angelenos—whether dilettante or connoisseur—to come together at L.A.'s preeminent art events. Foremost among them is the Los Angeles Art Show, which is scheduled for January 25 to 27. Kim Martindale, its organizer, uses the word "encyclopedic" to characterize the event's encompassing nature. "It's defined by having centuries of art in one location," he said. "People can come to the fair and discover what they really have a passion for. It's what makes it unique—the mixing of the modern and the historical. There's a whole broad range."

Martindale has overseen the show's evolution from its inception as an association fair in Pasadena (14 galleries, all specializing in historical works) to a 125-gallery event that incorporates all genres, from California plein air to contemporary. And though it used to be mandatory that exhibitors belong to the Fine Art Dealers Association (FADA) to be able to represent at the fair, that requirement has since been waived.

So now, because the show's 125 galleries already spread out over 100,000 square feet, Martindale is looking at expanding next year, either at the fair's current location (Santa Monica Airport's Barker Hangar), or at the Los Angeles Convention Center, a move he said is "fairly likely." Primarily, he's seeking to ease the parking problems that have irked attendees for the past few years.

According to him, people planning to attend the show this year (its thirteenth iteration) can expect to "see great art and diversity in art, and to meet people that are knowledgeable about art. They can ask questions and expand their knowledge base about what art was historically and what it is right now."

Also new this year is an affiliation with the International Fine Print Dealers Association (IFPDA) Print Fair, which has been held at

LACMA West for the past few years. This time, they, too, will be at Santa Monica Airport's Barker Hangar for their 23rd annual presentation. Said Martindale, "I'm excited that they're moving together. My goal is to unite L.A.'s art community."

Kevin Salatino, LACMA's curator of prints and drawings, characterizes IFPDA's event as "the best print fair held on the West Coast." Participants include members of IFPDA who deal in everything from prints by the old masters to those from cutting-edge contemporary artists, effectively spanning five centuries of work.

Unlike any other fair in L.A., this one is devoted exclusively to a single medium: fine prints. "While this may seem restricted," said Salatino, "bear in mind that there are many kinds of prints, from woodcut, etching and engraving to lithography, mezzotint and aquatint, to silkscreen and photo-offset processes, to new digital techniques. So there is extraordinary variety available even within what is ostensibly, one medium."

Because of that, the print fair attracts a wide spectrum of collectors, both in terms of experience and interests. Salatino said, "A first-time buyer interested in acquiring his or her first work of art can find something good and affordable, while a serious, well-heeled collector can also find work of the highest quality, from Durer to Ruscha."

The same weekend, artLA will be taking place just a few miles away at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. ArtLA offers an informed cross section of contemporary art trends happening from Tokyo to Berlin with a focus on Los Angeles-based artists and galleries. The fair showcases 64 top established and emerging galleries from three continents, over half of which are participating for the first time. The galleries represent the most compelling and challenging work being created in art centers including Berlin, London, Mexico City, New York, Paris, and Tokyo, and over half of the galleries participating are based in Los Angeles.

"This is an exciting moment in Los Angeles as the city has become an important and internationally recognized center for art making," said Tim Fleming, Director of artLA. "More and more prominent contemporary art galleries and visual artists are based in Los Angeles, and the quality of work being produced in L.A. continues to garner international attention." Adds Fleming, "Our fair is designed to be accessible to all: serious contemporary art collectors, museum curators, art enthusiasts interested in seeing what's happening now in the contemporary art world, art patrons, artists and more. We are dedicated to fostering the Los Angeles art community."

The Opening Night Preview benefits the Hammer Museum, and museum director Ann Philbin is applauding the list of participating galleries. "There is a really nice connection between the artwork presented in our Hammer Projects series and artLA's attention to work by emerging artists—specifically L.A. artists."



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Photo i.a. happens two weeks before, from January 11 to 13. Stephen Cohen, its director, defines photo i.a. as "a photographic art exposition of photo-based art, video and mixed media." Its new location fit, too, is now at Santa Monica Airport's Barker Hangar, he said, is "a larger and more visitor-friendly venue than before. We are happy to have a larger space that allows for larger exhibitor booths."

The fair, which has burgeoned from 17 galleries and 1,500 attendees in 1992 to more than 70 exhibitors and 8,500 visitors in 2007, will exhibit "much more contemporary, video and mixed-media works than ever before," Cohen said.

Julius Shulman, the noted architectural photographer, will be honored with an award at photo i.a.'s opening reception; other events include a book-collecting seminar led by gallerist Paul Kopeikin and a talk with Charlotte Cotton, LACMA's new curator.

When asked why—or whether—L.A. is a suitable destination for an art show, Martindale points to the city's strong museum and gallery base and its many ardent collectors. "L.A., I believe, is developing into a very important art community," he said. "It truly has the potential to be the art center for the U.S. So it's crucial to have the development of art fairs there. Events capture people's attention and act as vehicles that help that spark grow."

Salatino concurs: "No other city besides New York is as important and productive an art center as L.A. It's a city full of art collectors of the highest caliber. As if that weren't enough, the post-war printmaking revival is synonymous with L.A., where such presses as Tamarind, Gemini G.E.L. and Cirrus Editions were born...What could be more appropriate than a print fair in a city which has, for the past 50 years at least, loved the print?"

Cohen points out a more practical reason for why L.A.'s a great destination for a winter art show: "Obviously, there is the weather in Los Angeles during January. Also, the proximity of great museums in the area: MoCA, LACMA, the Getty Institute and the Hammer, which has become a major force in contemporary art. There are also the great educational programs at CalArts, UCLA and USC that provide very fertile ground for new artists. Many mid-career artists are choosing to relocate to Los Angeles, making the area a great engine for contemporary art."

Last year, more than 20,000 people showed up for the L.A. Art Show. This year, Martindale expects an even wider turnout: "It should attract everybody that's interested in art. The art world is already so small that it has to unite rather than being after specific audiences. It shouldn't be divided into demographic or taste-driven niches. So the audience should be anyone who even has an inkling of interest in art—they should come here and let it grow. My interest is just uniting all those people."



PHOTO: COURTESY OF PHOTO I.A.

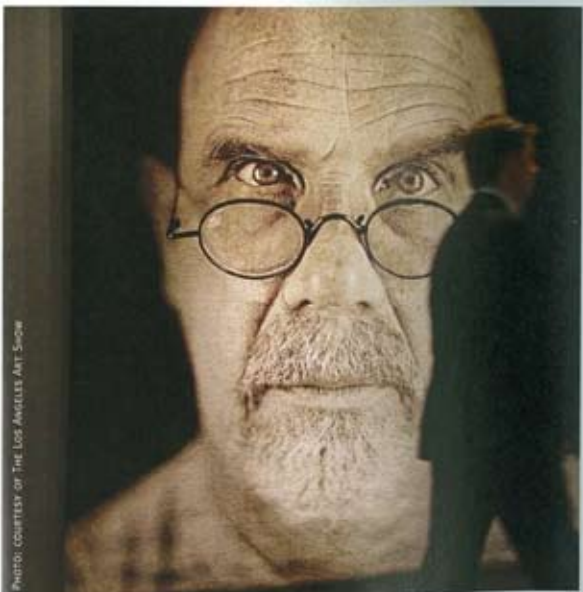


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FAIR INFORMATION
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