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"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"

## Highlights of Frieze Los Angeles



*Terry Allen installation. Courtesy of L.A. Louver Gallery*

**By LITA BARRIE** March 4, 2024

Frieze week is the high point of the L.A. art calendar, bringing over 350,000 visitors to the city. Art galleries and museums time their best exhibitions to coincide with the festivities, which include endless parties, book signings, panels, concerts and art openings.

Frieze L.A.'s fifth edition is smaller than last year – with 95 exhibitors, 20% less than the previous year's tally of 120 – but it is the busiest, most popular and successful edition yet. Because the event is more compact and easier to navigate in one large tent (instead of the two-building model in prior years), it is closer to parking and the surrounding eateries and outdoor dining areas.

The gallery booths are consistently high quality with no disappointments among them, because there is always at least one interesting artwork; in most cases, there are several in these carefully curated booths. Christine Messineo, director of Frieze Americas, brought blue chip mega-galleries and first-time exhibitors together to create a dynamic mix that reflects the electric, eclectic diversity of the flourishing L.A. art ecosystem. Artists, gallerists, curators, collectors, art critics and philanthropists were crowded together with major A-list celebrities, including Robert Downey Jr, Leonardo DiCaprio, Will Ferrell, Ariel Emanuel, Owen Wilson, Rob Lowe and even Jane Fonda. This is certainly the most intellectually stimulating - and glamorous - time to see and be seen by important people in L.A.



*Installation view, Roberts Projects at Frieze LA 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles, California. Photo by Paul Salvesson.*

On the first VIP day, the aisles were at almost maximum capacity by noon, and remained joyful and lively until they closed at 7:00 PM - with many guests still happily drinking, dining and talking in the outdoor areas. Galleries had robust sales: Gladstone Gallery sold a large-scale drawing by Richard Serra for \$2 million. Thaddaeus Ropac sold a Robert Longo piece for \$1.6 million and an Anselm Kiefer piece for \$1.4 million. Hauser & Wirth sales included an Ed Clark painting for \$950,000, a Frank Bowling painting for \$800,000, a Charles Gaines piece for \$795,000 and a Rita Ackermann painting for \$425,000. David Zwirner sales included a Huma Bhabha sculpture for \$650,000, two John McCracken sculptures from

\$450,000 to \$500,000 each, and a Steven Shearer painting for \$480,000. Roberts Projects sold an Amoaka Boafo painting for over \$300,000 and a Suchitra Mattai work for \$60,000. And these are only the beginning of reported sales.

During a deeply troubling time of wars on multiple continents, it is difficult to forget all the suffering in the world driven by the evil and stupidity of heartless, megalomaniac politicians. This makes the elevated, rarefied atmosphere of Frieze a welcome reminder of the higher, humanitarian aspirations of art, art lovers and aficionados. Of the hundreds of artworks on view, I saw a few gems that remain vivid in my memory: a beautiful mixed-media painting by Laura Owens in the Matthew Marks Gallery booth, a grotesquely beautiful painting by Louise Bonnet in Galerie Max Hetzler's booth, a celestial Anish Kapoor sculpture in the Lisson Gallery booth, several powerful erotic sculptures by Isabelle Albuquerque in the Jeffrey Deitch Gallery booth and a grouping of pristine, minimalist John McCracken sculptures in David Zwirner Gallery's booth.

Black art and women's art is well represented in many booths, which often explore aesthetic differences and political issues. Focus is an edgy space reserved for US galleries operating for 12 years or less, platforming emerging and underrepresented voices. Dominique Gallery presented Mustafa Ali Clayton's ceramic sculpture, which was selected by the jury of the new California African American Museum (CAAM) Acquisition



Fund. Frieze Los Angeles and CAAM partnered on this new initiative to acquire artwork from a booth in this section.

Most of the gallery booths contain samplings of the gallery's roster of artists or pairings of artists with parallel aesthetic or political commitments. With so much art of such high quality, it is impossible to say what are the "best booths" - but six booths stand out in my memory as favorites for their beautiful presentation:



*Installation. Courtesy of Ghebaly Gallery. Isabelle Alburquerque. Bronze sculpture. new work from 'Orgy for Ten people in One Body' Courtesy of Jeffrey Deitch Gallery*

## **Jeffrey Deitch Gallery**

This powerful presentation pairs artworks from two formidable women: Isabelle Albuquerque's life-size erotic bronze sculptures – based on her own body – alongside Celeste Dupuy-Spencer's large fearless paintings, which are loaded with complex iconography drawn from real and imaginary worlds. Albuquerque's new work from her series *Orgy for Ten People in One Body* is equally fearless and unflinching. She plays with the paradox of submission, of which she writes, "You found that in the surrender is the power. You were ashamed to show a woman on all fours, but you were driven to. There was some kind of truth in it for you." Albuquerque concludes, "You quickly understood that dominance was the twin of submission, and that these two twins never left each other's side."

## **L.A Louver Gallery**

This memorable presentation of six decades of Terry Allen's drawings and sculptures also combines a meet-and-greet with Brendan Greaves, author of the legendary artist's forthcoming biography, *Truckload of Art: The Life and Work of Terry Allen*. Allen is a polymathic force who explores the cultural complexity of the West through people who are like the lightning in his song "Cortez Sail": "tearing the clouds, then closing the tear." Allen and the Panhandle Mystery Band also performed in the Masonic Lodge at Hollywood Forever Cemetery for "Music Beyond the Grave" during Frieze week.



*Installation. Courtesy of Ghebaly Gallery*

## **Roberts Projects**

One of the first galleries in L.A. to focus on African-American artists like legends Betye Saar and Kehinde Wiley, Roberts Projects has continued to represent significant black artists and help them develop their careers – from the emerging to the established. This tightly-curated selection of works subvert the meaning of “oasis” from diverse perspectives: works by Amoaka Boafo, Daniel Crews-Chubb, Lenz Geerk, Suchitra Mattai, Collins Obiaku, Ed Templeton and Brenna Youngblood – in addition to legendary figures Noah Davis and Betye Saar – all explore the relief we seek from hardship.



*John McCracken, installation. Courtesy of David Zwirner Gallery*

## **David Zwirner Gallery**

This refined presentation is a sampling of legendary artists in the impeccable gallery's roster: an exquisite selection of John McCracken's pristine minimalist sculptures, surrounded by Josef Albers minimalist paintings. Nearby, Joe Bradley and Katherine Bernhardt's exuberant, colorful paintings are paired with legendary Yayoi Kusama's sculptures to dramatically change the tempo.





*Loie Hollowell, Split Orbs in yellow-orange, purple, red and blue, 2023. Courtesy of Pace Gallery*

## **Pace Gallery**

This complex presentation is a sampling of illustrious artists, including Robert Irwin, Robert Longo, Lynda Benglis, Mary Corse, Louise Nevelson, Li Songsong, Alicja Kwade, Gordon Parks, Torkwase Dyson, Loie Hollowell, Tara Donovan, Maysa Mohamedi and Mika Tajima. The exhibited works

include Tajima's large weavings to several sculptures by women including Kwade and Donovan, to an historic Benglis sculpture.

### **François Ghebaly Gallery**

This diverse installation includes an intriguing mural by Christine Sun Kim along with five of her drawings. Kim uses communication which exists as an echo bouncing off an interpreter, to then be captioned and transcribed, eventually traveling to the eyes and ears of her audience. This parallels the circuitous pathway between languages, from American Sign Language (ASL) to English to German. **WM**

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