



We Heart



Jose Reza (Prime)  
Courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, CA

Los Angeles • Art & Culture

Roll Call, curated by Gajin Fujita  
**No Angels: the law-breaking artists who have shaped and defined the street art culture of Los Angeles...**

James Davidson • 16 November, 2016 – 14 January, 2017

‘Los Angeles is the city that raised me, its streets guided me, and graffiti was my transport.’ Fascinated by the scene taking off in New York, after seeing iconic street culture movie *Style Wars* in the early 1980s, Gajin Fujita is one of L.A.’s street art pioneers; and he speaks passionately about his life’s obsession. ‘Graffiti took me all over the city, seeking out prime real estate to stake my claim, tag my name and flex my skills. It’s how I came to know all the artists in this exhibition; some of us go back almost 30 years.’



Gajin Fujita. Courtesy, L.A. Louver, Venice, CA

That exhibition? Roll Call, a coming together of 11 artists curated by Fujita; opening 16 November at Venice gallery, L.A. Louver. ‘We were lured by the potential of street fame and notoriety,’ explains Fujita of KGB (Kidz Gone Bad), the burgeoning crew he had formed with school friends Alex Kizu (Defer) and Jesse Simon in 1984, ‘fuelled by the adrenaline rush of breaking the law — working covertly and on constant alert, our heads on a swivel.’ The movement would gain momentum, and L.A. would soon be on the map alongside the East Coast city Fujita and his friends were inspired by. The City of Angels has a much longer heritage with street art, though, long predating the ‘wild style’ imported from New York; gangs had been marking their territory with tags since the 1940s, and the inclusion of graffiti forefather Chaz Bojorquez (who created his first spray paint stencil motif in 1969) in this exhibition pays respect to that heritage. Retna, renowned for his hieroglyphic-like letter forms, and rising star Patrick Martinez represent the city’s fresher blood.

‘To me, these artists are a cross section of generations and geographies of graffiti,’ says Fujita of his curated 11, ‘this show is a reflection of the people that have impacted my life, and the city of Los Angeles.’

The full list of L.A. artists involved in the exhibition: Chaz Bojorquez; David Cavazos (Big Sleeps); Fabian Debora; Ricardo Estrada; Gajin Fujita; Alex Kizu (Defer); Patrick Martinez; Retna; Jose Reza (Prime); Jesse Simon; Slick.

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