

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

14 ARTISTS ON LOS ANGELES

Exhibition dates:

18 September - 26 October 2024

Gallery hours

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

45 N Venice Blvd

Venice CA 90291

info@lalouver.com

310 822 4955

lalouver.com



Peter Alexander

Curt, 1996

acrylic on canvas

36 x 48 in. (91.4 x 121.9 cm)

Venice, CA - L.A. Louver presents *Trouble in Paradise: 14 Artists on Los Angeles*, a portrait of the city described through troubling vignettes. The exhibition gives form to the underlying frissons lurking beneath L.A.'s sunny façade through photography, painting, sculpture, and film, united in their depictions of a nameless force.

A sense of apprehension is invoked throughout the exhibition as the viewer plays a part in each open-ended narrative. Kristin Calabrese's ruined kitchen in *Luck of the Draw* (2001) and other figureless scenes thrust us into the moments surrounding catastrophe, inducing sinking feelings of powerlessness. Sculptural works, including Michael C. McMillen's locked bronze chest *Nomad* (2003) and Ben Jackel's meticulously rendered *Boomerang (Gunshot Detector)* (2024), present a physical confrontation and evoke analogous feelings of helpless liability. Multiple artworks operate within the parameters of movie genre – see Charles Garabedian's noir-esque *Assassination* (1966) and the horrific *Lower Arroyo Seco* (1999) by Charlie White. These works capture a fugacious sentiment that underlies the theatrical nature of life in Los Angeles in which every person is an actor without a script.

A glamorized depiction of disaster à la Hollywood is seen in Rebecca Campbell's *Epidemic* (2011) as a woman in front of the Santa Monica Pier has her body overtaken by flowers and butterflies, an allusion to L.A.'s toxic obsession with beauty and entertainment. Peter Alexander's luminous burning palm tree *Curt* (1996) introduces the sinister fantasy of the city on fire, a notion reiterated in Steven Criqui's *Untitled (Consumer's Liquor)* (2001-2003) in which a common urban landmark is set ablaze.

In other works, nighttime operates as a vehicle to convey realities of Los Angeles less often acknowledged. Tony Berlant's *Topanga after Dark* (2018) positions the viewer alone in the canyon's wooded landscape in darkness, armed only with night vision, conjuring ambient feelings of isolation and accompanying fears. Sandra Mendelsohn Rubin's tri-part depiction of wildlife in *Coyotes* (2020) is a reminder of the unpolished truths about the city's surroundings, history and nonhuman neighbors. Gajin Fujita's works on paper highlight negative space as a formative element, showing that which is unseen to be a guiding force shaping our conceived reality.

Visual fragmentation is present throughout the exhibition and represents L.A.'s unsettled, transitory qualities. Literally depicting separate and disjointed realities, Don Suggs's *Venice Walk* (1999) overlaps the photographed bodies of beachgoers within the same time-space, while Criqui's collaged compositions and Rubin's multi-canvas composition similarly confuse boundaries.

The resulting effect of these artworks in proximity is a complicated and psychological depiction of the City of Angels.