

# HYPERALLERGIC

## ARTICLES

### Best of 2017: Our Top 10 Los Angeles Art Shows

This year Los Angeles showcased especially diverse and robust exhibitions, thanks in part to an enormous initiative around Latin American and Latino art.

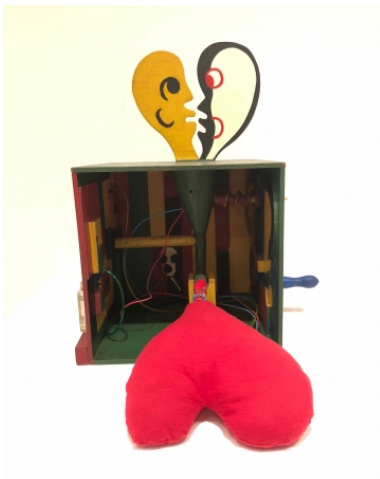
Hyperallergic | 4 hours ago



(image by Hrag Vartanian for Hyperallergic)

Many of this year's best shows in Los Angeles came out of the [Getty's Pacific Standard Time](#) programming, which funneled \$16.3 million dollars into the display of Latin American and Latino art. The participating museums, galleries, and other art spaces used this money to put together surprising, rigorous shows that addressed overlooked pockets of art history and lesser-known artists. The programming shined a light on the city's diverse, robust spaces and the potential for them to collaborate in the growing local art scene.

#### 1. *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985* at the Hammer Museum



Teresinha Soares, "Caixa de fazer amor (Loving box)" (1967), meat grinder, cloth, plastic tubes, two glass bottles with liquid, wires, oil paint (Elisa Wouk Almino/Hyperallergic)

September 15–December 31

*Radical Women*, shockingly, is only the second major exhibition in the US to be devoted to Latin American women artists. It is also the first to focus on a generation of Latin American women artists who've been largely elided because their work was long deemed "kitsch" or less important than that of their male peers. The 120 artists included in this show made moving, incisive, funny, and daring work; often, they protested the various South American dictatorships and sexist climates under which they lived. This show, conceived by Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta, fills a major art historical gap. —

Elisa Wouk Almino

#### 2. *Home — So Different, So Appealing* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

June 11–October 15

The first of the sprawling [Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA](#) exhibitions, *Home — So Different, So Appealing* squelched the notion that an exhibition of Latino and Latin American artists needs to be preoccupied with identity. It brought together almost 100 works under the guise of the domestic to complicate our ideas of modernity, migration, and



Antonio Berni, "Juanito va a la ciudad (Juanito Goes to the City)" (1963) (Elisa Wouk Almino/Hyperallergic)

diaspora. The result was a series of works that felt both timeless and timely, particularly in a city that is host to so many crises of home and homelessness of its own. —*Abe Ahn*

### 3. Jimmie Durham: *At the Center of the World* at the Hammer Museum



Installation view of Jimmie Durham: *At the Center of the World* at the Hammer Museum (photo by Hrag Vartanian for Hyperallergic)

January 29–May 7

Jimmie Durham may have been the center of controversy this year (don't get me started about the curator's statement about the issue), but it doesn't distract from the quality of his art, the strong curation, and the overall fantastic exhibition that was organized at the Hammer Museum. The show highlighted why his work matters in larger conversations in contemporary art that revolve around lineage, authority, and power. Durham focuses on the foundation of US identities, but he avoids reducing the issues and keeps us asking what the term Native American — which was only popularized as an "ethnic" or racial identity in early-19th-century US — really means and how it can limit the imagination of non-Native American audiences. —*Hrag Vartanian*

### 4. Laura Aguilar: *Show and Tell* at the Vincent Price Art Museum



Laura Aguilar "Grounded #111" (2006) (image courtesy the artist and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, artwork © Laura Aguilar)

September 16, 2017–February 10, 2018

Laura Aguilar's 1990 self-portrait "Three Eagles Flying" succinctly and candidly captures the photographer's multi-faceted identity. Flanked by an American and a Mexican flag, the LA-based artist — whose surname references the Spanish word for eagle (*águila*) — poses bare-chested, her body wrapped in flags and bound by ropes, both constrained and torn between the two nationalities. This exhibition lays out her three-decade career, during which Aguilar has explored the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality through photographs that blend documentary, conceptual, and formalist threads. Whether the subject is her queer, Latinx milieu or her own oversized nude body situated in desert landscapes, Aguilar's oeuvre offers defiant and unapologetic depictions of populations that demand to be seen on their own terms. —*Matt Stromberg*

## 5. *Power at Sprüth Magers*



Work by Sonya Clark in *Power* at Sprüth Magers  
(photo by Hrag Vartanian for Hyperallergic)

March 29–June 10

This exhibition easily filled the gallery's two large floors and included some extremely strong work by Sonya Clark, Renee Cox, Nona Faustine, Simone Leigh, Lorraine O'Grady, Sondra Perry, Renee Stout, Carrie Mae Weems, and others. My favorite part was curator Todd Levin's inclusion of the Ralph DeLuca Collection of African American Vernacular Photography, which pointed to a lesser-known history that has long informed American art. Levin could've easily curated this to focus only on the bold-faced names on the artist list but he clearly allowed the work to drive his choices, suggesting connections and relationships that seemed fresh and thoughtful. —HV

## 6. *Condemned to Be Modern* at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery

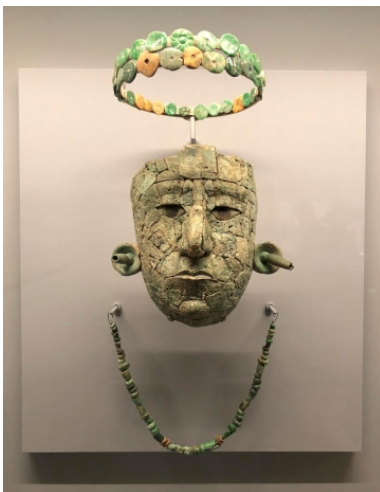


Installation view of *Condemned to Be Modern* at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (Elisa Wouk Almino/Hyperallergic)

September 10, 2017–January 28, 2018

This fascinating show considers the legacy of modern architecture in three Latin American centers: Brasilia, Havana, and Mexico City. In the mid 20th century, each of these cities adopted its own utopian vision, from the airplane-shaped city of Brasilia to the now-abandoned complex of art schools in Havana. For the show, curator Clara Kim selected contemporary artists who grew up in these cities and witnessed their utopian ideals crumble over time. Taken together, the poetic and critical artworks illustrate how we can't control our built environments, which inevitably morph and evolve. —EWA

## 7. *Golden Kingdoms: Luxury and Legacy in the Ancient Americas* at the Getty Center



Funerary Regalia of the Red Queen, mask, Maya (AD 672), Mexico, Chiapas, Palenque, Temple XIII, jasmine, malachite, shell, obsidian, limestone (Elisa Wouk Almino/Hyperallergic)

September 26, 2017–January 28, 2018

Several of the exhibitions in the Getty's PST: LA/LA initiative focused on modern and contemporary Latin American art, showcasing the region's unique synthesis of European and indigenous traditions. One of the most dazzling shows, however, featured work created in the Americas entirely before the arrival of Europeans. Golden Kingdoms explores luxury arts produced on the continent from about 1000 BC up to the European conquest, ranging from Peru to Mexico. Not just limited to gold, the objects on view were made out of jade, shell, bone, textile, and, perhaps most impressively, feathers. After surveying the embarrassment of riches on view, you might ask yourself why the ancient world we so often turn to is located in Greece or Egypt instead of our native, but no less stunning, American antiquity. —MS

## 8. *Anna Maria Maiolino* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles





Anna Maria Maiolino, "Glu Glu Glu..." (1967),  
acrylic ink and fabric on wood (Elisa Wouk  
Almino/Hyperallergic)

August 4, 2017–January 22, 2018

Anna Maria Maiolino's first major US retrospective is an excellent distillation of this Brazilian artist's output. Like a good retrospective, it not only feels like we are journeying through Maiolino's career, but also her life. As I discussed in [my review of the show](#), she was always responding to her life circumstances, whether as an exile, mother, or citizen living under a dictatorship. The results, which range from drawing and clay to photography and video, are exquisite. —EWA

## 9. *Below the Underground: Renegade Art and Action in 1990s Mexico* at the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena

October 15, 2017–January 22, 2018



Colectivo Caxa, Proyecto time ES money /  
Project time IS money installation in the  
Puente del Papa, previously known as Puente  
San Luisito, by the river Santa Catarina.  
Monterrey, Nuevo León, México.

Considering the current vogue for exhibitions examining the artistic milieu of the 1990s, *Below the Underground*'s timing seems *à propos*. The exhibition, another rung in the Pacific Standard Time ladder, introduces an Anglophone public to a spate of artists working in Guadalajara, Mexico City, and Monterrey during this period, who often adopted a punk, do-it-yourself approach to art-making, and created work responding to local issues such as the 1999 student strike at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and the migration of poor indigenous youth to crowded cities — as well as the contemporary driving forces of globalization and neoliberalism. Pushing against the social, cultural, and political framework largely informed by a Western colonial order, the artists reacted to and subverted these established systems through lively collaborations, ephemeral performances, multi-media projects, and cheaply shot video. The punk spirit reverberates in the exhibition materials: an accompanying bilingual source book looks and feels like an issue of *Maximum Rocknroll*. —Hyunjee Nicole Kim

## 10. *Alejandro G. Iñárritu: Carne y Arena* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art



*Carne y Arena* installation, design by Neil  
Kellerhouse (all images courtesy of LACMA)

July 2, 2017–February 11, 2018

Pairings of fine art with state-of-the-art technology often result in a disappointing experience, where the result falls flat on both counts. *Carne y Arena*, a virtual reality installation from filmmaker Alejandro G. Iñárritu, however, is much more than the sum of its parts, employing cinematic storytelling and immersive technology to create an emotionally powerful and

complex experience that transcends the boundaries of media. Based on real-life accounts, the [installation](#) places you in the midst of a group of migrants along the Mexican border as they are confronted by US border patrol agents. Are you a participant, a neutral observer, or somehow complicit in the drama? *Carne y Arena* doesn't offer any easy answers, but the questions it raises will stay with you long after you've taken off the VR headset. —MS

## Honorable Mentions:

### ***Sam Durant: Build Therefore Your Own World at Blum & Poe***



Sam Durant "Transcendental (Wheatley's Desk, Emerson's Chair)" 2016, Painted wood, 53 3/4 x 34 1/4 x 34 1/2 inches, installed at Blum & Poe (photo by Jennifer Remenchik/Hyperallergic)

January 7–February 18, 2017

Sam Durant's now-infamous "Scaffold" project at the Walker Art Center and the explosive controversy that surrounded it largely overshadowed [his solo exhibition at Blum & Poe](#). From the massive room-sized installation "Every spirit builds itself a house, and beyond its house a world...Build therefore your own world" (2017), to the delicate wall pieces of the *Dream Map* series (2016), the exhibition examined the complicated relationship between transcendentalism, slavery, and American history, conveying deft political insight through the use of historically weighted references and materials. Ironically, the quality that made *Build Therefore Your Own World* successful is the same one "Scaffold" so desperately lacked: a deeply felt sensitivity towards

his subject matter. —Jennifer Remenchik

### ***John Hulsey and Johanna Breiding: break down, re source at the Los Angeles Contemporary Archive***

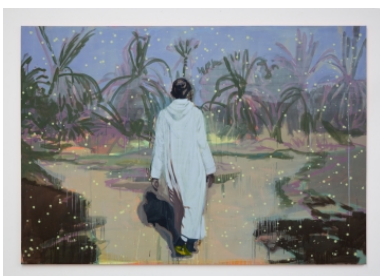


John Hulsey, The Land Under Iron (DTLA), 2017, HD video still. Image courtesy of the artist.

December 1, 2017–January 6, 2018

With [break down, re source](#), two artists — John Hulsey and Johanna Breiding — both reflect upon geography and land use in the American West and the colonizing desires that have historically driven speculation and development. Hulsey's video installation "The Land Under Iron" depicts a highway sign with repurposed text that interrupts a site of construction in Downtown Los Angeles and a former site of naval conquest at San Pedro's Fort MacArthur. Breiding's photograph "End of the Line" shows a rubbing of a historical marker in the town of Keeler, which figured in the California Water Wars and the history of analogue photography. Her sensual use of *frottage* speaks volumes: in a city experiencing an urgent housing and homelessness crisis — in which the art world has been implicated — *break down, re source* revisits the narratives and scrutinizes the underlying desires that have scarred and shaped this stolen land. —HNK

### ***Claire Tabouret at Night Gallery***



January 27–March 4

In [this show](#), Claire Tabouret slyly flipped tropes associated with Orientalist imagery (for example in Delacroix, or Matisse's Moroccan paintings) in order to [depict artists and writers who disappeared into foreign lands to be absorbed rather than to colonize](#). Her paint-handling is unforgettable for its soft luminosity, savvy layering of colors, and bravura brushwork. To stand