

The L.A. Art Show reinvents itself again — with help from major museums



Eugenia Vargas-Pereira's "Talking Head Transmitters" will be presented by the Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center at this year's L.A. Art Show. (Eugenia Vargas-Pereira and L.A. Art Show 2017)



By **Deborah Vankin**

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Every few years in January, as if on the heels of a fresh set of New Year's resolutions, the [L.A. Art Show](#) tweaks its identity, unfurling across the Los Angeles Convention Center with renewed gusto and a slightly revised mission.

When it debuted in 1995 at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium featuring just 14 U.S. galleries, the event focused on historic American and European work. As the L.A. contemporary art scene began to swell, the show, too, became decidedly more contemporary, more international and bigger. This year the show will host more than 100 galleries from 18 countries, and it expects about 70,000 visitors.

But not without reinvention — again.

The 2017 L.A. Art Show, which opens Wednesday night, will for the first time feature on-site programming from eight SoCal art institutions: the Broad, the Getty, the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#), the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Autry Museum of the American West, the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach and the Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center in Anaheim, as well as the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. The show will dedicate a 50,000-square-foot space for these cultural groups to stage performances and installations as well as live art talks as part of the daily “Dialogs L.A.” series.

“Los Angeles is elevating in the world of arts, and the contemporary art world is really looking towards L.A. We wanted to say, ‘Look at the diversity of museums in L.A., and the programming they’re doing, and what’s happening in the fall with the PST initiative,’” said Kim Martindale, the L.A. Art Show’s general manager and partner, referring to Pacific Standard Time programming at museums across the region that will explore the Latin American influences in the history of L.A.’s art scene. “It’s to try and have a voice for these museums in L.A. at the show. And I’m excited and honored that they’re participating.”

Further sharpening its focus on postwar and contemporary art, the L.A. Art Show will reduce the number of its historical dealers to nine, compared with last year’s 40. They had been featured in an adjacent show-within-a-show called the Los Angeles Fine Art Show. The new, smaller “curated” section, called “Roots,” will feature primarily 19th and early 20th century painting, prints and drawings.

There will still be an additional 150,000 square feet for galleries to feature work for sale. But the co-existence this year of a commercial section side-by-side with a dedicated space for museum exhibitions is key, Martindale said.

“I want to see people engage in art and enjoy the art,” Martindale said. “Is there a commercial side, and do we want to see these galleries sell their work? Yes, that’s a component as well. It’s so you can see and enjoy them both at the same time. The hope is you have an overall complete art experience.”

Many of the institutions will be highlighting Latin American art.

LACMA will stage “Fragments From Home,” which includes performance and installation pieces by two artists, New York-based Raphael Montañez Ortiz and L.A.-based Ramiro Gomez. Montañez Ortiz’s installation, “Couch Destruction: Angel Release (Pennies From Heaven),” and his performance, “Shred Your Worries,” address political and religious concerns while his installation “Piano Destruction Ritual: Cowboy and Indian, Part Two” looks at how we construct and deconstruct our lives. Gomez’s cardboard installation, “Cut-Outs,” creates a portrait of what the artist sees as a contemporary Latin American service community of gardeners, housekeepers, caregivers and others. Both artists are participants in LACMA’s program for “Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA.”

The Museum of Latin American Art will present “In My Floating World,” an installation by Dominican-born artist Scherezade Garcia, curated by Tatiana Flores. The work is a wall made of blue life preservers wrapped in electrical tape. It will also show as part of MOLAA’s program for “Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA.”

The Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center will stage part of an upcoming exhibition, “Deconstructing Liberty: A Destiny Manifested,” which is curated by Marisa Caichiolo and examines patriotism, citizenship and community through paintings, photography, video and performances by Latin American artists. The piece on display at the L.A. Art Show, “Talking Head Transmitters,” is by Eugenia Vargas-Pereira. It’s an interactive radio project and passersby can peek into the pop-up radio station, which will stream commentary from the L.A. Art Show online.

As part of the show’s “Dialogs L.A.” series, [MOCA](#) Director Philippe Vergne will appear in conversation with Martindale to discuss “The Making of Jeff Koons’ ‘Balloon Dog.’” Another panel will feature Idurre Alonso, associate curator of Getty Research Institute’s Latin American Collections, moderating “A Conversation on Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA.”

This sort of museum programming “opens up the L.A. Art Show to a different sort of engagement with the arts community and the general public,” said Caichiolo, who curated “Deconstructing Liberty.” “For the museums, too, it’s great exposure, especially because some of the museums involved aren’t as well known as museums like LACMA.”

“L.A. is really growing, culturally, and the fair should reflect that,” Caichiolo added. “We’re hoping this will spark a dialogue between the city and the fair, between visitors and the artists, the curators and the institutions.”



L.A. Art Show

Where: Los Angeles Convention Center, West Hall, 1201 S. Figueroa St., L.A.

When: Opening party 7-11 p.m. Wednesday; show 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: See website

Information: www.laartshow.com

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