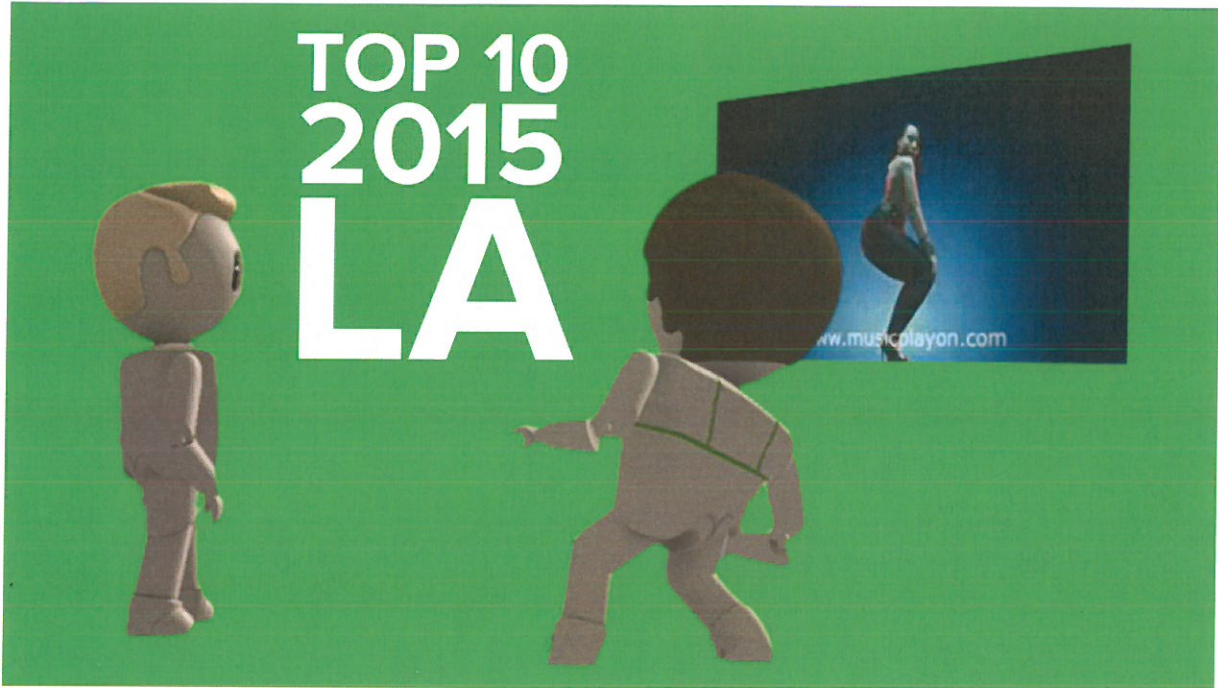


HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Best of 2015: Our Top 10 Los Angeles Art Shows

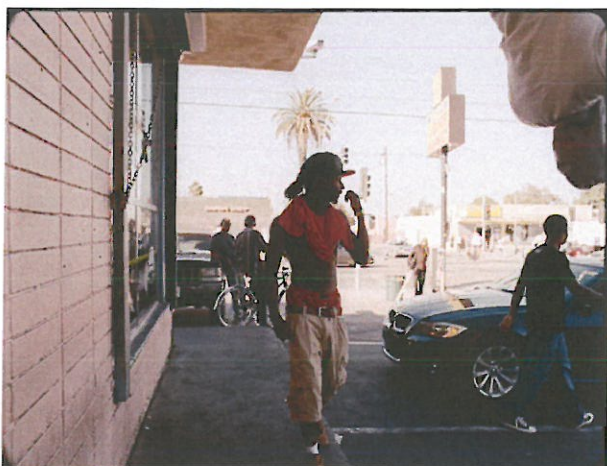
by [Hyperallergic](#) on December 16, 2015



Frances Stark, "My Best Thing" (2011), digital video, color, sound, 100:00 min (Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase. image courtesy Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York)

LOS ANGELES — From a show of ancient Greek bronzes at the J. Paul Getty Museum to Rafa Esparza's adobe brick constructions at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Los Angeles was overflowing with dynamic exhibitions this year that introduced new talents and reconsidered the old. Museums had strong offerings of both traditional shows and unconventional performance while well-known galleries and young upstarts continued to push boundaries. Here are some of our top picks from all over the city.

#1 – *Kahlil Joseph: Double Conscience* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)



Kahlil Joseph, still from the film "m.A.A.d." (2014) (photo by Chayse Irvin, courtesy the artist)

March 20–August 16

Kahlil Joseph's first museum show, comprising double-channel video "m.A.A.d.," was a collision of worlds. Kendrick Lamar — who commissioned the piece — contributed stems from his album *m.A.A.d city*, as well as a home video taken by an uncle in the early 1990s, to Joseph's original footage, making the resulting piece both music video and family memento, while remaining distinctly an art piece. Compton, California, where all scenes, whether Joseph's or Lamar's family's, were filmed, was given a place of prominence in downtown Los Angeles. And in one fell swoop, an auteur filmmaker was firmly embraced by the art world. —*Lilly Lampe*

#2 – Power and Pathos: Bronze Sculpture of the Hellenistic World at the J. Paul Getty Museum



“Seated Boxer, The Terme Boxer” (300–200 BC), bronze and copper. (Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome. Su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo—Soprintendenza Speciale per il Colosseo, il Museo Nazionale Romano e l’area archeologica di Roma. Photo Courtesy the J. Paul Getty Trust)

July 28–November 1

A majestic and very academic show, *Power and Pathos* was the type of show you expect the J. Paul Getty Museum — with its longtime fascination with the Ancient World and European art history — to mount.

The most surprising aspect of this exhibition was that roughly half the objects on display were only discovered in the last 50 years, which suggests this is a fast-changing field where new discoveries in the near future are sure to overturn established thinking on bronze sculpture.

Unlike their marble counterparts, bronze sculptures rarely survived antiquity, as people preferred to reuse the precious material rather than let it languish as a non-utilitarian object. There’s nothing like standing in a room of life-size bronzes to understand the skill of ancient artisans who continue to inspire contemporary imitators and admirers. —*Hrag Vartanian*

#3 – Let Power Take a Female Form at The Box

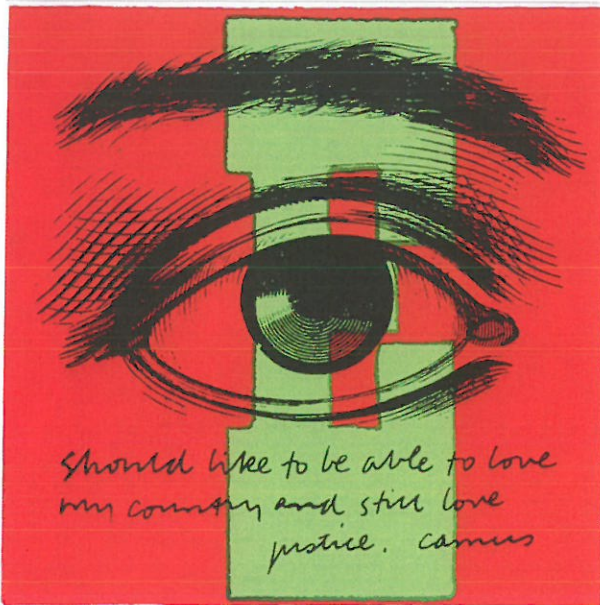


Dorothy Iannone, "The Statue of Liberty" (1977) in 'Let Power Take a Female Form' at The Box (photo by Matt Stromberg/Hyperallergic)

June 27–August 8

As has been [well documented](#), the art world is overwhelmingly male dominated, which makes the story of the Butler women all the more exceptional. [Let Power Take a Female Form](#) examined the artistic contributions of three generations of women from this Los Angeles family. The eldest, Eugenia Butler, was a pioneering gallerist and an early champion of conceptual and non-object oriented art in the late 1960s. Her daughter, Eugenia P. Butler, was an artist whose work ranged from conceptual art to sculptural furniture, and her daughter Corazon del Sol continues the family legacy, creating surreal and psychologically-loaded sculptures. The exhibition featured Eugenia Butler Gallery artists — John Baldessari, Joseph Kosuth, James Lee Byars, and Dieter Roth among others — alongside seldom-seen works by the younger Butler such as a plaque from 1969 that simply read, "A Congruent Reality." Del Sol contributed sculptures and created a video game inspired by her mother's work and her complicated family history. *Let Power Take a Female Form* brought much-needed attention to this influential, but overlooked, trio of LA women. —Matt Stromberg

#4 – *Someday is Now: The Art of Corita Kent* at the Pasadena Museum of California Art



Corita Kent, "E eye love" (1968), silkscreen print on paper, 23 x 23 inches (Collection: Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles, CA. Photo by Arthur Evans, courtesy the Tang Museum at Skidmore College)

June 14–November 1

Pop Art, progressive politics, and Catholicism are rarely associated with one another, but these three found unlikely harmony in the prints of Sister Corita Kent. *Someday is Now* was the first full-scale retrospective of the work of this LA-based nun whose lively serigraphs and screenprints paired evocative texts with vibrant blocks of color and photographic imagery. Kent found inspiration in a wide array of sources, from e. e. cummings poems, to Camus, scripture, even LA street signage and ad copy. Her prints have an accessible immediacy, but there is a nuance to her juxtapositions that begs further interpretation. From simple affirmations of love, to messages of outrage over the Vietnam War and declarations of solidarity with protest movements, Sister Corita, as she was known, created compelling visions of exuberance and hope. —MS

#5 – Rafa Esparza: *i have never been here before* at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE)



'Rafa Esparza: i have never been here before' at LACE
(photo courtesy Mario Mesquita)

July 8–September 13

If dirt is matter out of place, [Rafa Esparza's summer residency](#) brought 5,000 bricks' worth of it to the sterile, white walls of the gallery. Visitors to the exhibition stepped on dry dirt as they walked through the main exhibition hall, encircled by adobe walls rising as high as 10 feet. Esparza worked with his father (who was a bricklayer in Mexico) and other family members to build and arrange the bricks over time, making visible labor and materials not usually appreciated by the art world. The installation also hosted a number of important [conversations](#) and [performances](#) centered around race, class, and gender. While LA has seen a number of events in the past year about "decolonizing" the art world, few transformed the physical space and aesthetic values of the white box in this way.

—Abe Ahn

#6 – Killjoy's Kastle at Plummer Park



A riot ghoul at Killjoy's Kastle (photo by Matt Stromberg/Hyperallergic)

October 16–30

Not all the good art this year took place in a museum or gallery. Designed by Canadian artists Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue, *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House* took the model of the moralizing evangelical *Hell House* and turned it on its head. "We're using camp aesthetics, sculpture, installation, and performance to undermine those ridiculous stereotypes, but also to investigate some real monstrosities of queer activism and feminist organizing," Mitchell told Hyperallergic. Escorted through the Kastle by a "demented women's studies professor," visitors encountered various figures from radical feminism, like lesbian zombie folk singers, riot ghouls, and polyamorous geriatric vampires. The artists assembled the house using a variety of craft traditions like papier-mâché and crochet, adding lights, music and a slew of performers to create an experience that was irreverent, self-questioning, and above all entertaining.—MS

#7 – Noah Purifoy: *Junk Dada* at Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (LACMA)



Noah Purifoy, "Restoration" (2001), mixed-media construction (photo by Matt Stromberg/Hyperallergic)

June 7, 2015–January 3, 2016

Noah Purifoy spent the last 15 years of his life in the desert around Joshua Tree, and for quite some time, a visit to his outdoor museum there offered the only opportunity to see a large selection of his oeuvre. That is until *Junk Dada*, LACMA's sprawling retrospective of the work of this seminal assemblage artist, opened this past summer. The exhibition surveys a surprisingly diverse body of work, all made from the discarded refuse Purifoy found around him in the streets of LA, and later the desert. Featured prominently are selections from *66 Signs of Neon*, an exhibition organized by Purifoy in the wake of the 1965 Watts rebellion. This marked a turning point for him, when he realized that meaning could be gleaned from the unwanted cast-offs and detritus of life. The museum also imported eight large-scale works from the desert, recontextualizing them in the white cube of the museum and giving visitors a taste of what awaits them a few hours drive east. —MS

#8 – UH-OH: Frances Stark 1991–2015 at the Hammer Museum



Frances Stark, "Get on the fucking block and fuck. Or don't" (2008) (detail), vinyl paint, collage on rice paper backed with mylar, 2 parts, each 185 x 96 cm (photo by Matt Stromberg/Hyperallergic)

October 11, 2015–January 24, 2016

DJ Quik, chatroulette, Op Art, collage, Henry Miller, home video, PowerPoint. What do all of these things have in common? Frances Stark.

Her [mid-career retrospective](#) at the Hammer Museum was a pleasantly overwhelming yet intimate tour through the life and mind of this LA-based artist.

Drawing on a diverse range of influences from literature, music, philosophy, politics, and digital culture (her [Instagram feed](#) is a work of art in itself), the real subject of Stark's work is herself. She lays bare her dreams, fears, hopes, failures, and sexual trysts with a candid fearlessness.

Taking in the show is like thumbing through Stark's diary, inspiring both voyeuristic curiosity and an awkward sense of TMI. With the current fervor for bland, tired abstraction, Stark's rambling, vibrant, confessional works are a refreshing alternative. —MS

#9 — *All the Instruments Agree: An Exhibition or a Concert at the Hammer Museum*



Active Pass performing as part of the Hammer Museum's 'All the Instruments Agree' (photo by Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

September 26–27

It was an intoxicating whirlwind of musical performance that brought together a wide range of voices. From the emotionally poignant work by Genesis Breyer P-Orridge to the chaotic beauty of Tarek Atoui's instrumentals, **the whole event** was a showcase for the role of music and noise as part of a broader artistic practice. Listening to Martin Creed gave you a deeper understanding of his visual art, and then there were oddities like Odwalla88, and more established artists like Rodney Graham, who admitted to me he has never fully integrated his music and visual art.

Curator Aram Moshayedi says the idea for the event "came about from studio visits where the conversation shifted away from art. Many artists have side projects or other abilities that are hardly ever emphasized because there is such a preoccupation with the making of things and objects. So I wanted to bring this idea of something that's peripheral into the center, without turning it merely into entertainment or as an accompaniment to an exhibition." It was very successful. —HV

#10 – The Broad Museum



The Broad Museum (photo by Matt Stromberg/Hyperallergic)

Opened September 20

Love it or hate it, it's hard to argue that the opening of [Eli Broad's eponymous museum](#) wasn't one of the major cultural events in Los Angeles this year. Within Diller, Scofidio + Renfro's perforated (and costly) facade sits Eli and his wife Edythe's 2,000-piece collection of contemporary art. Critics have complained that the collection is too safe, with too many blue-chip artists, but just because a lot of people like a work of art, that doesn't mean it's bad. Although the museum houses the Broad's entire collection, only a fraction of it is on view at any one time, the rest located in on-site storage at the core of the building, known as "the vault." It will be interesting to see how much of the work comes out of storage as time goes on, and whether the museum will mount more challenging exhibitions that do more than just show its collection of greatest hits. Only time will tell if The Broad's artistic impact will outlast the excitement surrounding its opening.—*MS*

[Rodney Graham](#)[Martin Creed](#)[Genesis Breyer P-Orridge](#)[Frances Stark](#)[Hammer Museum](#)[Noah Purifoy](#)[Corita Kent](#)[Allyson Mitchell](#)[Pasadena Museum of California Art](#)[The Box](#)[J. Paul Getty Museum](#)[Deirdre Logue](#)[Best of 2015](#)[Museum of Contemporary Art \(MOCA\)](#)[Kahlil Joseph](#)[Eugenia Butler](#)[Eugenia P. Butler](#)[Rafa Esparza](#)[Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions \(LACE\)](#)[Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art \(LACMA\)](#)[The Broad Museum](#)[Tarek Atoui](#)[Odwalla88](#)