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Fairs

 

-
- HOME
 - NEWS
 - SPECIAL REPORTS
 - ART MARKET
 - FEATURES
 - COMMENT
 - SHOWS & EVENTS
 - SISTER PAPERS
 - ARCHIVE
 - JOBS
-

FAIRS

Paris Photo Los Angeles loses its international accent

The latest West Coast edition of the French fair is more Californian than ever—a threat to its future

by JORI FINKEL



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In the spirit of Art Basel Miami Beach, the very name Paris Photo Los Angeles has a time-zone-defying, jet-set ring to it. Then there's the ersatz glamour of the art fair's Hollywood location—a cluster of pseudo-New York brownstones and ready-to-be-reinvented sound stages on the Paramount film studios lot. Unfortunately, scratch the photo-emulsion surface and this event proves less international than when it began just three years ago, not a good sign for its sustainability.

The biggest galleries that participated in the earlier Los Angeles editions of the French fair, from photography specialists like Fraenkel in San Francisco and Yossi Milo in New York to contemporary operations like Gagosian and Emmanuel Perrotin, have not returned. And the fair feels more local as a result—with the strongest work, new and old, made by California artists and shown by California galleries.



Highlights included ACME gallery's presentation of Amir Zaki's supersized and magnified compressions of ocean waves, a way of digitally toying with the sublime, and Zoe Crosher's Out the Window (LAX) series at the booth of the new Hollywood gallery LAM. Presented for the first time in full, Crosher's series consists of 31 colourful photographs taken through the windows of cheap motels

(think Stephen Shore territory) near the airport, each of which frames a distant glimpse of an airplane landing.

On the historic end of the spectrum, artist Anthony Lepore stepped into the role of curator for the first time to present an exhibition of prints produced from meticulously restored glass plate negatives by the little-known 19th-century California-based photographer R.J. Reynolds. Lepore learned about the artist from his aunt, who runs the El Paso de Robles Area Historical Society and received a donation of thousands of these negatives in 2011. The portraits are striking for their intimacy and diversity, with Latino, Native American and Asian sitters, including children, among the mix.

Two works by California conceptual-art pioneers were also mesmerising: a 1990 assemblage by Paul Kos at Paule Anglim and a 2012 installation by Allan Ruppersberg at Marc Selwyn Fine Art. Kos has embedded a tiny slide of a massive mountain, the Eiger Nordwand of the Swiss alps, in the center of an oil painting that evokes the Swiss flag. A magnifying glass is mounted to the wall so that the mountain can grow in size before your eyes: a wonderful way of bringing the age-old issue of scale in art-making into relief.

For his part, Ruppersberg has upended the notion of a visual art

object. At first glance, his six pairs of photos lined up on the shelf looked like an homage to Ed Ruscha's classic Every Building on the Sunset Strip. But these images were not designed as photographic prints or pages of a book but printed onto the vinyl of record albums. A video next to the shelf shows the photos being used as records on a turntable, playing tunes like I Love LA by Randy Newman.

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