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ARTS & CULTURE

Hammer Museum's 'Made in L.A. 2014' draws on city's artful bounty

Opening in June, the Hammer Museum's second 'Made in L.A.' biennial will feature 35 artists, including Marina Pinsky, Alice Konitz and Gabriel Kuri.

By Deborah Vankin

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Installation view: Kim Fisher *Dirty Kitchen* at The Modern Institute, Glasgow, Scotland February 8 – March 22, 2014

Los Angeles is brimming with hidden treasures and at the Hammer Museum's second biennial show, "Made in L.A. 2014," some of the city's best-kept art secrets will be revealed.

Consider the selections from the Los Angeles Museum of Art — not to be confused with Wilshire Boulevard's Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Tucked down an alleyway, wedged against the steel siding of an Eagle Rock garage, the LAMOA is a tiny, 9-by-12-foot open-air wooden hut built by the artist Alice Könitz.

Artworks from LAMOA's permanent collection of local and international artists, including some of Könitz's own sculptural installations, will be on display at the Hammer's ambitious "Made in L.A. 2014."

The exhibition, which opens June 15, features emerging and under-recognized artists from the L.A. area. On Wednesday, the museum announced the lineup of 35 artists and collectives. Among them are emerging artists Marina Pinsky and Devin Kenny; AM radio station KCHUNG, which is also the Hammer's public engagement artist-in-residence; and more widely known artists who include Gabriel Kuri, Wu Tsang and Judy Fiskin.

The inaugural "Made in L.A." show, a 2012 collaboration between the Hammer and the art space LAXART, took place in three locations: the Hammer, LAXART and the Department of Cultural Affairs' Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall Park. It featured 60 artists.

This year's biennial will feature a greater percentage of midcareer artists, co-curator Michael Ned Holte says, and the exhibition — which includes painting, sculpture, video, photography, performance and installation work — will take place entirely in the Hammer, utilizing every gallery in the museum.

"We thought about the parameters and expectations of the show a little differently than last time," says Holte, who's organizing the show with Hammer chief curator Connie Butler. In addition to emerging artists and less-recognized experienced artists, he explains, "We're interested in collaborative projects and artists who are in their so-called 'midcareers,' but might be somehow in-transition — artists who are reinventing themselves or their work."

Holte points to Kuri and Kim Fisher as the type of mid-career artists the curators wanted to feature. Fisher has been working in L.A. for the last decade, but hasn't had much of a Los Angeles museum presence. Kuri, Holte says, is one of the most established artists on the list, but also the most nascent Angeleno.

"He's Mexican-born but has been working in Brussels for the past decade. We were interested in an artist like Gabriel who has such an established career and is so well known, but who would move to L.A. at this stage of his career."

The artist Harry Dodge was of interest to Butler and Holte in part because he's embracing creative transition. He's best known for his video collaborations with Stanya Kahn but he's showing drawings and sculpture in this year's Hammer biennial as a solo artist.

"There's definitely more of an emphasis on collectivity and some interest in the communities of artists and how they form in Los Angeles," Holte says.

An example is the Hammer's inclusion of Magdalena Suarez Frimkess and Michael Frimkess, ceramics artists who work both individually and together. Gerard and Kelly are recent UCLA graduates who incorporate dance and performance in their work as well as elements of art history, social engagement and activism.

There will also be three exhibitions within the exhibition from what Holte calls "micro-institutions." Beyond Könitz's picks from her Los Angeles Museum of Art, Lauren Mackler will put up a remote version of her Highland Park Museum of Public Fiction, which typically shows both performances and art exhibitions. And David Frantz, curator at USC's ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, organized the group show "Tony Greene: Amid Voluptuous Calm."

Most of the work in this year's show was created for "Made in L.A. 2014," and there are 11 new commissions.

In conceiving this biennial, Butler and Holte visited more than 200 artists' studios and art exhibitions over a year and a half in order to whittle their list to 35.

Did they see art trends, conceptually, from studio to studio?

"The representation of collaborative projects in the show reflects the large number of artists in Los Angeles working collaboratively or collectively," Holte says. "There's a history of that in L.A., but it's reaching a sort of critical mass."

Beyond that, however, says Holte, the lack of similarities studio to studio was noteworthy.

"[There was] such a diverse range of art practices in terms of process and subject matter — from Laguna Beach to Arcadia, it would be a totally different experience."

Which is exactly the point of "Made in L.A." — to give voice to the city's artistic diversity — and which is why no two Hammer biennials are exactly alike.

"When we initiated this series focused on L.A. we knew each incarnation would be uniquely different and that the vast and varied artist community in this city could absolutely sustain a large-scale ongoing biennial," Hammer Director Ann Philbin said in a statement. "Michael and Connie have ... only scratched the surface."

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'Made in L.A. 2014'

Where: The Hammer Museum, Westwood

When: 11 a.m.-8 p.m., Tuesdays-Fridays; 11 a.m. -5 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays. Closed Mondays.

Tickets: Free

Information: (310) 443-7000 or <http://www.hammer.ucla.edu>