

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

'Made in L.A.' at Hammer Surveys State of the Arts

Stephen West · Thursday, October 9th, 2025

The Hammer Museum at UCLA has just opened the latest edition of “Made in L.A.,” its biennial survey of Los Angeles-area art, and it’s a mixed bag, intentionally so.

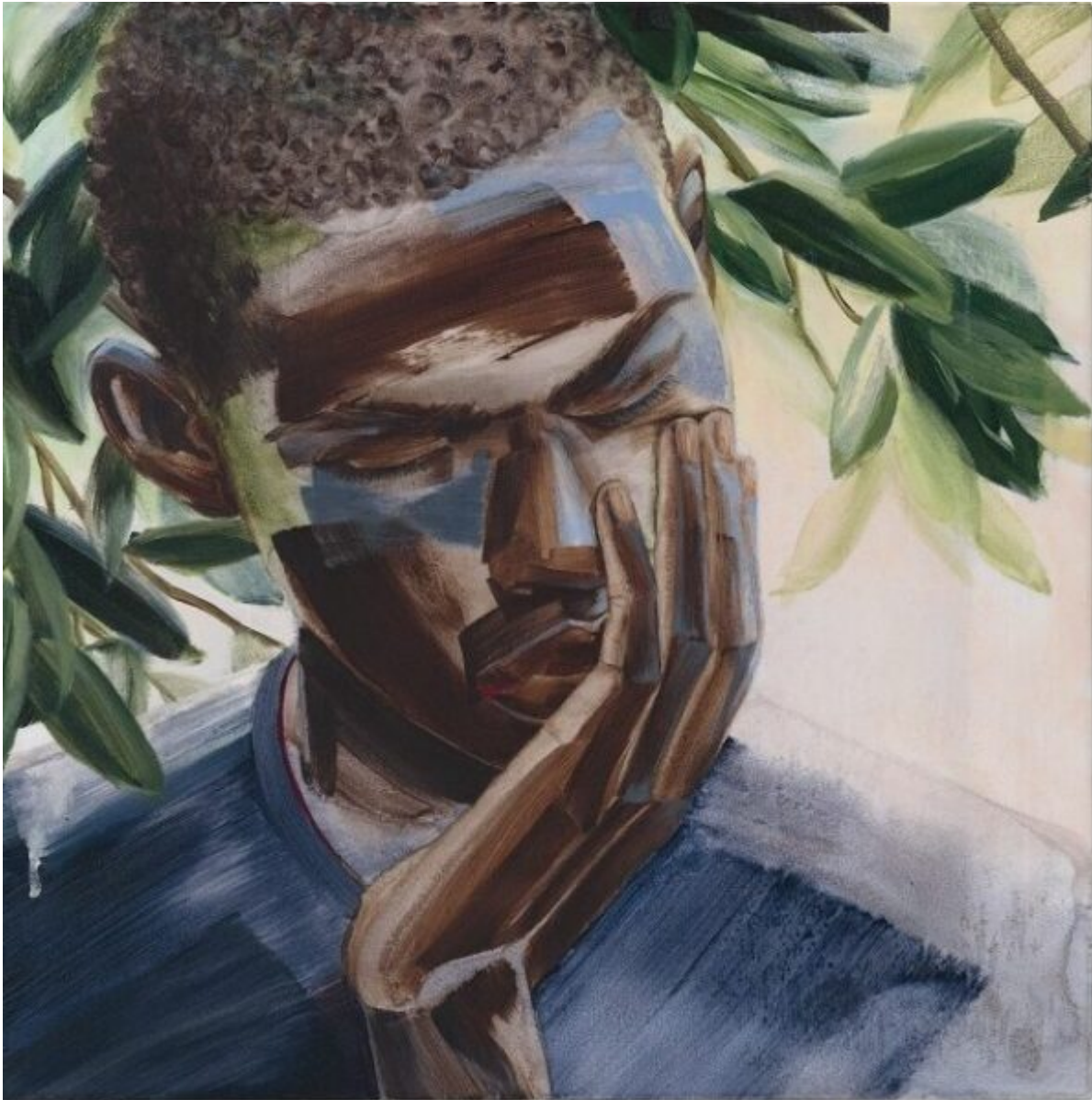
There are serious portraits along with cartoonish ones. There are carefully crafted, highly finished paintings and sculptures along with casual, almost slapdash ones. While most of the artists in the show are under 40, with works made in the past few years, there’s a handful who are now in their 80s and are represented by work going back as far as the 1960s. All in all, it’s definitely worth a visit.



Alake Shilling, *Buggy Bear Crashes Made in L.A.*, 2025, nylon inflatable; courtesy of the artist; photo

© by Sarah Golonka.

The fact that the exhibition doesn't take itself too seriously is apparent even before you enter the museum. Outside the Hammer's building is Alake Shilling's enormous inflated sculpture *Buggy Bear Crashes Made in L.A. of 2025*. Buggy is driving his red sports car on top of a strawberry-like hill decorated with white daisies with smiley-face yellow centers. Despite the relentless cheerfulness of the hill, Buggy looks concerned. Is he thinking that when he zooms down the hill he'll land in the middle of Wilshire Boulevard traffic?



Greg Breda, *Here I Am*, 2025, acrylic on polyester canvas; courtesy of the artist and Patron, Chicago; photo by Brice Wilcox.

Greg Breda's *Here I Am* of 2025 presents a much more serious image, a head-and-shoulders portrait of a young African-American man in a blue sweater. Eyes closed, he raises his left hand to cradle his head as if in deep thought. In the background are the dusty green leaves of an olive tree. Like a German Expressionist painting from a century ago, Breda's loose, confident brushwork applies colors in unusual ways — using the green of the leaves, for example, as shadows on his face. It's an impressive work.



Patrick Martinez, *Battle of the City on Fire*, 2025, stucco, cinder blocks, neon, acrylic paint, spray paint, and latex house paint on scorched panel; installation photo (detail) © by Sarah Golonka.

A huge mural gone wild, *Battle of the City on Fire* of 2025, by Patrick Martinez, decorates three crumbling sections of a cinder block wall. At the top of the 30-foot central wall, a large blue bird painted in a vaguely Aztec style attacks a smaller brown one. In the center, a bougainvillea with orange flowers spreads across the wall. At the bottom, a golden dragon with brown spots and bared teeth seems to be moving toward his unseen prey to the right. There are fragments of spray-paint graffiti, broken and smoke-covered cinder blocks, a general feeling of chaos. It's a lot to take in.

REMAINDERS

While many of the works in the exhibition are figurative, if not exactly realistic, there's also a strong group of abstract images on view. Kristy Luck's *Remainders* of 2025, for example, divides a large square canvas between a fairly realist bundle of greenery on the left and a mysterious image on the right. The blue and white curvy blobs, set against a brown background, almost seem to contain a face, or maybe they depict some sort of microscopic battle. Then again, they're probably just abstract shapes.

For me, the star of the show is the 86-year-old Pat O'Neill, who is probably best known as an experimental filmmaker (and teacher at California Institute of the Arts). He's represented in the Hammer show by a strong series of photographs and several highly polished sculptures.

CAR AND TREE

O'Neill's *Los Angeles*, from the 1960s photo series *Cars and Other Problems*, is a model of clarity. A big white Cadillac with fins and a huge gash in the front end apparently has crashed into the palm tree to the right. The rear of the car has been jacked up, making it look as if the car dived into the earth from the sky. There are no people in the picture, no clouds, no other features in the flat landscape. The car seems to have come here to die, so the title of the series carries a double dose of irony.

CUP AND PICKLE

While most of O'Neill's sculptures in the exhibition are completely abstract, his Pop Art-style *Safer Than Springtime* of 1964 is clearly about something: a green pickle leaning against an overturned yellow drinking glass that's spilled a red liquid (wine? tomato juice?) on the sculpture's low platform. If you look closely, though, the glass isn't really a glass; it's closed off at both ends. So how did the red liquid get spilled? It's a mystery. And why is the sculpture called "Safer Than Springtime?" What's clear, though, is that the work is flawlessly made and demands your attention.

Made in L.A. runs through March 1, 2026, at the [Hammer Museum](#), 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles. Admission is free. A catalog of the show is published by DelMonico Books.

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Top image: Alake Shilling, Buggy Bear Crashes Made in L.A., 2025, nylon inflatable; courtesy of the artist; photo (c) by Sarah M. Golonka.

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