

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

The Hammer's Impressive Group Portrait of L.A.

Stephen West · Saturday, October 7th, 2023

The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles has just rolled out its latest [biennial survey](#) of Southern California art, and it's a sprawling, impressive, and occasionally baffling show.

Made in L.A. 2023: Acts of Living features more than 250 works by 39 artists, and their styles range from contemporary realism to creepy surrealism to cartoon-like scribbles, from highly polished abstract sculptures to drawings made in mud. It's a lot to take in.



Jesse Homer French, *Urban Coyotes*, 2023, oil on canvas; courtesy of the artist, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles/Dallas/Seoul, and Massimo DeCarlo, Milan, London, Paris, Beijing and Hong Kong.

At first glance, Jesse Homer French's *Urban Coyotes* of 2023 (above and detail in top image) looks like a conventional landscape, with a pack of coyotes in the foreground, a strip of green hills behind them, and the high-rise towers of downtown Los Angeles in the hazy distance.

But there's something sinister about these animals. One guards some cubs in the brown grass and bares her teeth as a warning. Another looks out directly at the viewer, as if to say *don't get any closer*. And yet all of this takes place within a mile or two of downtown. Welcome to L.A.!



Paige Jiyoung Moon, *Nap Time With Mia*, 2022, acrylic on wood panel; courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner, Los Angeles.

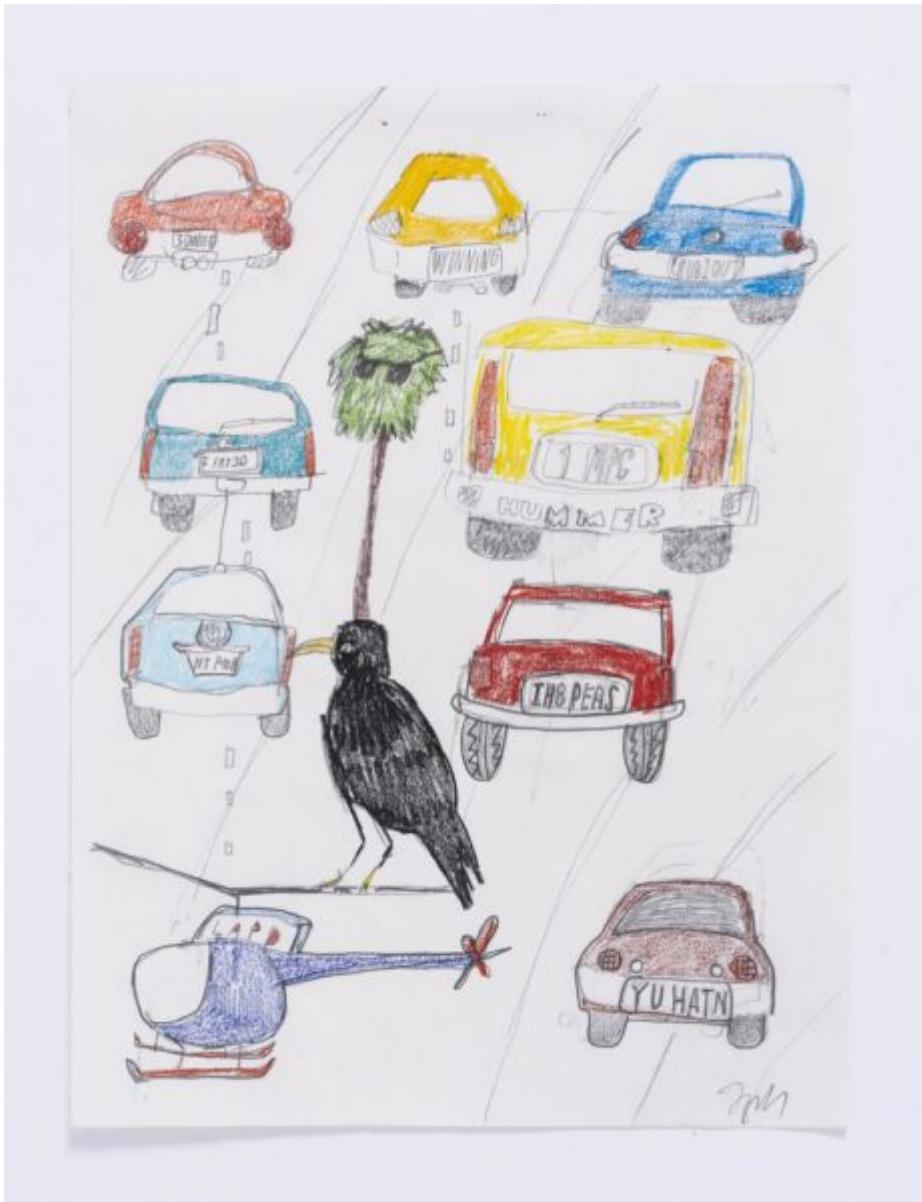
Paige Jiyoung Moon's *Nap Time With Mia* of 2022 presents an entirely different view of life in the city. The artist lies in bed with her baby in a tiny apartment, surrounded by toys, books, a crib, and one chair. It's meticulously painted, and despite the cheerful colors of the child's playthings cluttering the room, seems almost heartbreakingly sad.

Some of Moon's carefully composed paintings do show that she gets out of the house. *Rose Bowl Loop* of 2023 lays down a gravel trail with half a dozen hikers across the bottom of the horizontal frame, topped by a hilly landscape of grass and trees behind and a cloud-flecked blue sky above. Other scenes depict a printmaking workshop, a freeway curving through the brown and green hills outside Los Angeles, and a group of tents pitched below a rocky hill at Joshua Tree.



Marcel Alcala, *Midnight at La Poubelle*, 2023, oil on canvas, courtesy of the artist and Night Gallery, Los Angeles.

Marcel Alcala's characters in *Midnight at La Poubelle* of 2023 are definitely not stay-at-home types, more like descendants of 1920s Berlin. The woman on the left, eyes closed and clutching a bottle of beer on the table, tilts her white mask-like face. The couple next to her — a man groping a half-naked woman — also sport faces that would be at home in Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. The two men in the back, nose to nose, can't contain their lust for each other. Altogether it's a remarkable scene, though in its surreal way perhaps as realistic as *Nap Time*.



Jibz Cameron, *Traffic, Am I Right?*, 2019, colored pencil and graphite on paper, courtesy of the artist.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the meticulous style of Moon's landscapes is the offhand sketchiness and surrealism of Jibz Cameron's *Traffic, Am I Right?* The small drawing of an L.A. freeway features, in addition to the expected cars and trucks, a gigantic blackbird sitting on the rotor of an LAPD helicopter. There's also a palm tree wearing huge sunglasses and some jokey license plates: IH8 PEAS on one car, 1 MPG on a Hummer.



Installation view of Ryan Preciado sculptures, including *New Feeling (Baby Blue)* of 2023 (above left) and *Pope Cabinet* of 2021 (above center); photograph by Stephen West.

The sculptures in *Made in L.A.* range in styles just as much as the paintings and drawings. Ryan Preciado's work combines the craftsmanship of a master furniture maker with the visual ideas of a Pop artist. The flawless, shiny finish of the blue egg in *New Feeling (Baby Blue)* of 2023 (above left) recalls the *Balloon Dog* sculptures of Jeff Koons, or the Finish Fetish work of 1960s L.A. artists like Larry Bell. Preciado's *Pope Cabinet* of 2021 (above center) looks like a giant keyhole when closed; when it's opened up it's a functional small closet.



Installation view of *Inertia-Warn the Animals*, 2023, by Ishi Glinsky and contributors, photograph by Stephen West.

A completely different kind of sculpture is Ishi Glinsky's *Inertia-Warn the Animals* of 2023. From the front it looks like a gigantic Halloween mask from the *Scream* movies, made of turquoise-colored tiles; from the side it's a grab bag of Native American dancers' ornaments, including oversized metal bells and sculptures of butterflies and other creatures.



Joey Terrill, *Portrait by Her Brother*, 1983, acrylic on canvas, private collection.

For my taste, though, many of the most impressive works in *Made in L.A. 2023* are the visually quiet pieces that show us the world as it is. Joey Terrill's *Painted by Her Brother* of 1983 uses a Pop Art style of flat, outlined shapes and bright, undifferentiated colors to create a surprisingly moving depiction of his sister sitting at the breakfast table.

Not much is going on in the painting. To the left is a potted plant, and to the right, looking away from the viewer, is a young man in a white shirt, possibly the artist himself. The central figure of the sister, with curly black hair, blue blouse, and arms resting on the table, leans forward with an ambiguous expression. We don't know what she's thinking, but she comes across as a serious and modern woman.

Made in L.A. 2023: Acts of Living runs through December 31 at the Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Boulevard at Westwood Boulevard. Admission is free. For more information, see <https://hammer.ucla.edu>.

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Top image: Jesse Homer French, Urban Coyotes, 2023, oil on artist canvas; courtesy of the artist, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles/Dallas/Seoul, and Massimo DeCarlo, Milan, London, Paris, Beijing and Hong Kong.

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