

M+B



The Distinct Californication of Paris Photo L.A.

By Steffie Nelson
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With nearly 200 art fairs on the international cultural calendar, it's no surprise that art-world denizens have a case of fair fatigue. Paris Photo L.A., however, seems to have the cure for what ails them. Expecting 20,000 people for its third year at Paramount Pictures Studios in Hollywood this weekend, it is an art fair that feels like entertainment, with a location that strikes the magic balance between convention center and amusement park.

Dozens of exhibitors have traditional booths inside some of Paramount's biggest soundstages (big enough to have once contained the Enterprise, of "Star Trek" fame), while others set up shop in the storefronts of the legendary "New York Street" backlot, bringing these imaginary blocks to life. ArtBook/DAP is in their regular spot at the "café," offering an impeccable selection of new and rare publications for sale ("Chloë Sevigny"; back issues of "Visionaire") plus book signings; rising L.A. galleries Mama and Gusford inhabit a "tenement" on the Lower East Side; M+B holds down a "SoHo" corner with LeRoy Grannis's iconic surf shots; and Printed Matter's showcase of Roger Steffens's "The Family Acid" photographs can be found in a space just big enough for a fortuneteller and her crystal ball.

Inside the soundstages, one comes across everything from the Native American documenter Edward Sheriff Curtis's original copper plates (Bruce Kapson), to David Benjamin Sherry's chromatic landscapes (OHWO), to collages by Bettina Hubby that mine Paramount's golden age (Klowden Mann). In keeping with one of the stated goals of Paris Photo's new directors, Florence Bourgeois and Christoph Wiesner, to "anchor" the fair in California, one stage is devoted to young galleries and artists; the new Highland space LAM teamed with Zoe Crosher to present her complete "Out the Window (LAX)" series, centered on the Los Angeles International airport, in Los Angeles for the first time.

The biggest buzz surrounds "California Unedited!," a remarkable collection of late-19th-century portraits curated by Anthony Lepore from an archive of the photographer R. J. Arnold's glass plate negatives that were donated to a Central California historical society — and painstakingly restored by volunteers. The new prints depict people of all ethnicities in a size and quality we aren't accustomed to seeing, giving them a startlingly lifelike luminosity.

The actual people-watching isn't bad, either. At a preview on Thursday, Drew Barrymore and Will Kopelman and their daughters wandered around discreetly, as did Judd Apatow and some friends, while Jamie Lee Curtis was hard to miss in a white suit with parasol and camera in hand. Should the dreaded fatigue strike, there are food trucks, champagne bars and coffee stations seemingly around every corner, and, just like in New York, there's always a stoop to sit on.



LeRoy Grannis, "Palos Verdes Cove," 1964, on view at the M+B Gallery booth. Courtesy of M+B Gallery



R.J. Arnold, "Glass Plate 034-17," circa 1886-1898, on view at the "California Unedited!" booth. Courtesy of El Paso de Robles Area Historical Society and Paris Photo L.A.