



"Review: The Hammer biennial 'Made in L.A. 2012' succeeds"
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'Made in L.A. 2012' review: The Hammer biennial mixes works by younger artists and more established artists such as Channa Horwitz, Simone Forti and Morgan Fisher.

Timing isn't everything, but it is something, and the timing of the new Hammer Museum biennial couldn't be better.

Having spent much of the last year looking at L.A. art made by post-World War II generations that laid the groundwork for the city's explosive cultural ripening in the 1980s, via the multiple-museum extravaganza that was Pacific Standard Time, now we get a cross-section of recent art made a generation later.

Before, meet after.

Formally titled "Made in L.A. 2012," the biennial represents a slight shift for the Hammer. Prior invitational surveys have been thematic. For instance, "Thing: New Sculpture From Los Angeles" in 2005 — perhaps the most memorable — looked at a surge in object-sculpture, following an extended period in which room-size installation-sculpture was everywhere. "Made in L.A." has no theme.

The number of artists has also grown. "Thing" had 20, "Made in L.A." has 60.

Hammer curators Anne Ellegood and Ali Subotnick partnered with Lauri Firstenberg, Cesar Garcia and Malik Gaines from LAX Art in Culver City, where the 10th anniversary of a community art workshop by Slanguage Studio (Mario Ybarra Jr. and Karla Diaz) is being documented. (You can't miss the savvy mural on the building facade by the affiliated 777 Crew, which turns a gritty urban landscape into an array of candles both elegiac and celebratory.)

The biennial also spills over into Hollywood's Municipal Art Gallery, where installation and video art are prominent, while a performance series is also unfolding. Then, for the second weekend in July, the Venice Beach boardwalk will become a temporary venue.

My rule of thumb for a successful biennial is wanting to see a third of the work again. That might The Hammer show also coincides with the Orange County Museum of Art's decision to change its statewide biennial, in operation since 1984, into a triennial. That show, which has its premiere next summer, will encompass California and the Pacific Rim. Changes such as these reflect a welcome responsiveness to changes in the city's art ecology.

not sound like much, but the number actually eludes most such shows. The art world is now so large, the works' range so vast, that expecting more invites disappointment. The Hammer's show, where a big chunk of undercooked or derivative art can be ignored, is easily a success.

It has a dual focus that adds a certain freshness: younger artists, most born in the 1970s and early 1980s; plus notable established artists, whose work should be far better known than it is. This second group is the anchor; unsurprisingly, it's where some of the most substantive work will be found.

Channa Horwitz, who has been working since the 1960s, makes patterned Minimalist drawings that breathe, pulsate and visually warp in most un-Minimalist ways. One colored dot follows another on big gridded sheets of graph paper. Systemic logic, which sustains industrial and digital societies, visually pops and fizzes, becoming a bountiful ritual chant.