

ARTS, BUSINESS

L&M Arts Arrives in Venice

The Manhattan gallery opened a West Coast location Saturday.

By **Deidre Crawford** September 26, 2010

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Venice's brand new L&M Arts is the latest addition to L.A.'s headline-grabbing art scene, after noted collector Eli Broad was recently approved to build a new museum downtown, and as a high-profile New York art dealer took over as director of the Museum of Contemporary Art.

"Los Angeles is the place to be right now – there are so many artists living here," said Sukanya Rajaratnam, director of L&M Arts, New York.

L&M Arts, Los Angeles

(<http://www.lmgallery.com/>) opened its doors at 660 Venice Blvd on Saturday. Jeffrey Deitch, who arrived at MOCA earlier this summer, was there, as well as actor and sometimes performance artist James Franco and plenty of artists, curators and art lovers.

The modern and contemporary art gallery was founded by Robert Mnuchin and Dominique Lévy in Manhattan in 2005 and has represented works by Louise Bourgeois, Basquiat and Picasso, among others. The Venice location will feature a combination of Abstract Expressionism and contemporary art, with a focus on living contemporary artists in California.

"This is filling a vacuum of top-notch, classic, post-war and contemporary material in Los Angeles," Rajaratnam said.

The response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive, said Sarah Watson, Director of L&M Arts, Los Angeles.

"I think everyone was kind of waiting to see what would happen," she said. "There's a history of art production here and I think people are catching on more that what's good for the community is to bring art galleries back to Venice."

The gallery is housed in a red brick building, which was a power plant built in the 1930s, and on an adjacent lot, which is site of Ray Bradbury's one-time home. Both spaces were designed by Culver City architecture firm [wHY Architectur](http://www.why-architecture.com/) (<http://www.why-architecture.com/>), using old bricks from downtown Los Angeles buildings to preserve a feeling of history and continuity between the two buildings.

"Everyone's really glad they're here," said Nu Nguyen, a curator for a private collection in L.A. "It raises the bar and makes everyone have to step it up a notch."

The gallery chose Los Angeles artist [Paul McCarthy](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/paul-mccarthy/) (<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/paul-mccarthy/>) for its first exhibition. McCarthy is known for his multimedia installations and provocative works that often target symbols of innocence and popular culture, like Santa Clause, Snow White and Barbie.

Three of McCarthy's sculptures are featured in the exhibition, which runs through Nov. 6. The most notable is "Train, Mechanical," which he's been working on since 2003, and is a continuation of his works "Pig Island" and "Caribbean Pirate."

McCarthy said the idea for "Train, Mechanical," initially came from the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland. The giant installation stands more than 10 feet tall, featuring two human robots penetrating two large pigs, with a smaller pig piercing the aural cavity of one of the larger pigs.

Part self-portrait, part commentary on the war in Iraq and part commentary on the spectacle of society and the drive of human nature, the figure poses more questions than it answers.

Both human bodies sport heads that resemble former President George W. Bush, but McCarthy says the piece is not primarily political and that the head was chosen because Bush's generic features represent "everyman."

"I really didn't want the Bush head there, because for me, it wasn't going to be about Bush," he



PHOTOS (6)



explained. "I think the thing that happened with me about it is that I began to see the Bush image as 'everyman.' It's sort of just an everyman face. It's not exotic. It's not distinct."

Fashioned from platinum silicone, steel, fiber and electronics, the figures are set in constant repetitive motion along with the heads, which follow any motion in the room through camera sensors.

"It's an interaction with the character," McCarthy explained. "It's also a direction that so much of culture is going now – the technology of sensors and detection, and there's a type of voyeurism and type of surveillance with that character."

His other two pieces – "Ship of Fools, Ship Adrift," a hefty, black bronze sculpture of a ship and its child-like inhabitants, and "Apple Tree Boy, Apple Tree Girl" a large-scale aluminum take on Hummel figurines – are of even greater scale than "Train," but don't feature any robotics.

McCarthy's son, Damon, an artist and filmmaker in his own right, said he was pleased to see the gallery in Los Angeles and that the location in a primarily residential area without many businesses nearby was important.

"It's better that it's here, in this location, rather than on Abbot Kinney, because you have to succeed on who you are, like Bergamot Station," he said.

Director Sarah Watson agreed.

"It's nice to have this creative community outside our walls. It's living, breathing life."

Have you been to L & M? What do you think about their arrival in Venice? Tell us in the comments.



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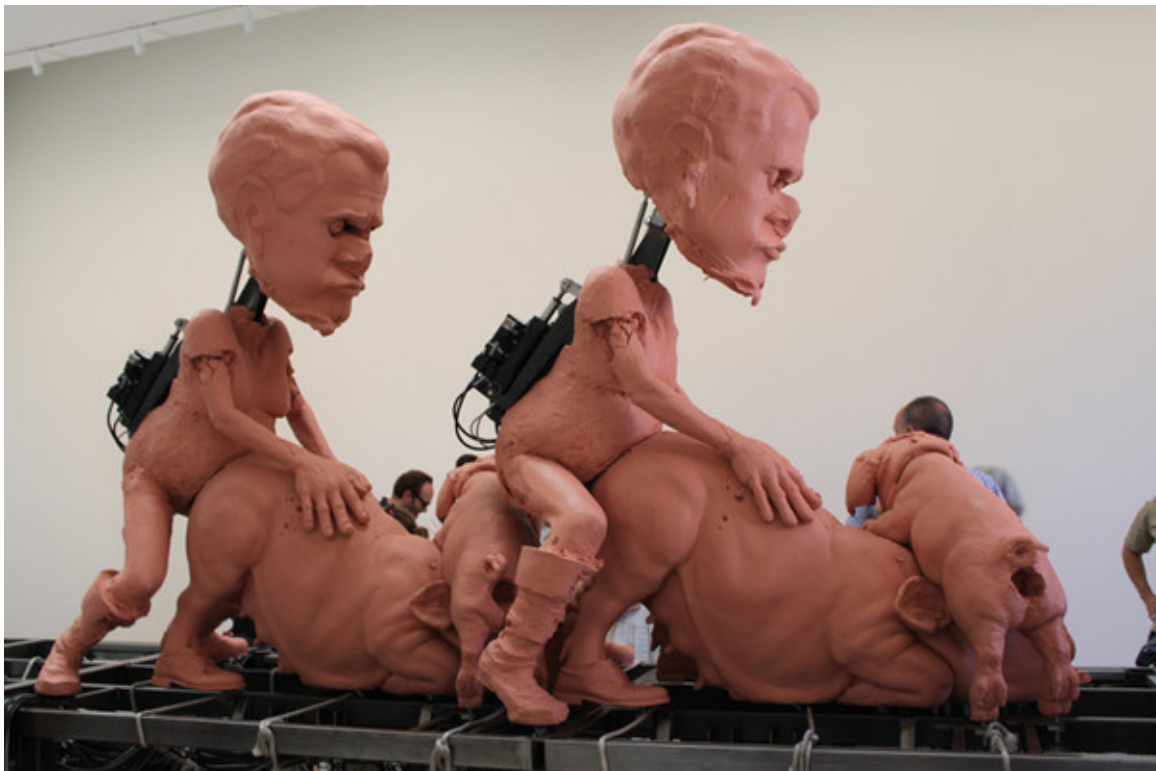
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Contemporary artist Paul McCarthy is the L & M Gallery's first exhibition in their new Venice location. Credit Deidre Crawford



Contemporary artist Paul McCarthy's piece, "Train, Mechanical," features robotic figures that are activated by motion sensors. Credit Deidre Crawford



MOCA Director Jeffrey Deitch and actor and sometimes performance artist James Franco were among many that came to see the new venue. Credit Deidre Crawford



The event was catered by local favorite Gjelina, featuring a variety of quiches, meats, soups, scones and dessert tarts. Credit Deidre Crawford



The updated building was originally an old power plant from the 1930s. A new addition was built on the site of Ray Bradbury's former home, adjacent to the original structure.
Credit Deidre Crawford



The new Venice location of L&M Arts will focus on post-war and contemporary art.
Credit Deidre Crawford