

## New York's L&M Arts will hang loose at its new L.A. digs

*The modern and contemporary art company sets up in a Venice outpost designed by Kulapat Yantrasast. Its first show will be sculpture by Paul McCarthy.*

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Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times

In New York, Dominique Lévy and Robert Mnuchin of L&M Arts sell blue-chip modern and contemporary art out of an impeccably appointed, impenetrable-looking Upper East Side townhouse. So you might assume their much-anticipated new gallery on Venice Boulevard, opening Sept. 25, would be a high-art compound, cut off from street life for reasons of security and visual purity both.

Try again. "From the beginning, we liked the idea of creating a garden, a garden-gallery," says Thai-born, L.A.-based architect Kulapat Yantrasast of WHY Architecture, who cut his teeth working on museum projects for Tadao Ando. "We wanted to make small, beautiful spaces for art and leave the rest of the land green for people to enjoy."

At the same time, the gallery manages to celebrate its urban location, just east of Abbot Kinney Boulevard on Venice Boulevard. A succulent garden lines the sidewalk; tall, vigilant hedges do not.

The heart of the project was the dealers' purchase of a small 1929 brick building, which used to be a Southern Edison power station. Yantrasast rehabbed that building and built a new structure across the courtyard out of salvaged bricks. The two buildings are connected visually as well as conceptually — with a glass pier of an office jutting from one to the other. Both will serve as exhibition spaces.

"I wanted to create a dance between the old and the new: The old is revived by the new, and the new lives within the old," says Yantrasast. "I was also thinking about the history of Venice as a center for art in L.A., but one that's becoming less and less visible."

Of the two, the new building has more of a wow factor. Because the space takes the shape of a diamond instead of a white cube, its skylight makes mincemeat of right angles as it dramatically frames the sky. Then there's a cut-out corner, replaced by a floor-to-ceiling glass strip offering a view of Venice Boulevard.

"They call it the sexy window," Yantrasast says, after two surfers ride by on bicycles, boards tucked under their arms. "I like the idea that you can look out and know where you are."

"It's a joy to come to work every day," says Sarah Watson, the director of L&M Arts Los Angeles who was previously a director at Gagosian in Beverly Hills. "Kulapat has given us this fabulous design that is also very versatile, with a traditional space and a more lofty, transcendent space that we can use in any number of ways." As for security concerns, she says they are being "realistic — we're not blind to it, but we're not intimidated by it either."

While Yantrasast has been designing the gallery, Watson has been building its exhibition program, largely by working with internationally known, locally based artists. (Resale is a bigger piece of the pie at L&M in New York.)

Opening in September is sculpture by Paul McCarthy, the artist's first show in Los Angeles in a decade. In mid-November, the gallery will unveil "a major De Kooning show, featuring women on paper from '47 to '54 and also paintings from the 1980s," says Watson. After that comes new work by L.A. artist Thomas Houseago, known for his larger-than-life Picasso-inspired sculptures.

So the exhibition program too mixes old and new. "That's what really interested me," says Watson, "the idea of taking this historical framework and weaving in a contemporary focus."

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