



The Lynda and Stewart Resnick Exhibition Pavilion at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Resnick Pavilion designer Renzo Piano



"Olmec: Colossal Masterworks of Ancient Mexico," installation view, at LACMA's new Resnick Pavilion



"Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700-1915," installation view, at LACMA's new Resnick Pavilion

SPACE INVADERS by Tiff Chalmers

In his 1976 essay on the "white cube," critic and artist Brian O'Doherty pointed out that that "we have now reached a point where we see not the art but the *space* first."

Thirty-four years later, the Los Angeles art community is celebrating a pair of opening events which confirm that it is still "now" as far as O'Doherty's observation about art spaces is concerned, though the budgets have grown exponentially.

This weekend in Los Angeles, museum favorite **Renzo Piano** officially unveiled his newest "machine" for viewing art, the vast and dramatically louvered Lynda and Stewart Resnick Exhibition Pavilion, his second for the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art** (the 2008 Broad Contemporary Art Museum was the first).

Meanwhile, across town, Tadao Ando protégé Kulapat Yantrasast of **why Architecture** debuted his "garden-gallery" for the West coast outpost of New York power-dealer **L&M Arts**. And in this lucky week that boasted a rare **Super Harvest Moon**, temperatures climbed from tepid to hot, closely mirroring the variable quality of exhibitions on view in the city's new temples of esthetic delectation.

Refreshed and energized, LACMA is in top form under the stewardship of Michael Govan and his supportive board. The black-tie gala on Saturday night, Sept. 25, 2010, which had as its coy theme "The Unmasking" (masks were optional), captured the attentions of that elusive mistress known in L.A. as **The Industry**.

With a guest list that reads like a slow news day at TMZ, the Resnick Pavilion has achieved notoriety from birth, no matter what confusing things pesky *Los Angeles Times* architecture critic **Christopher Hawthorne** had to say (he did observe the curiosity of the pavilion's floor remaining polished concrete, despite the historical pilasters and wallpapers decorating the gallery walls above).

As for the "exhibition machine" notion, Piano displayed nothing but supreme confidence. "You could do anything with this space," he said, adding, peculiarly, "except bomb it. . . I guess." (Could he have been referring to Jeffrey Deitsch's planned "street art" show, which promises to bring graffiti to LA MOCA?)

Inside the vast hall, nearly an acre in size, three pointedly diverse and soon-to-be-forgotten exhibitions -- ancient Olmec masterworks, European costume 1700-1915, and paintings, sculpture and decorative arts from the Resnicks' own collection -- barely register as disappointments given the overall triumph of design and atmosphere.

Outside is **Robert Irwin's Palm Garden**, a fortunate companion piece (gardens are one thing L.A. art spaces have that their New York brethren lack). The grid of palms set in low "planters" of rusted Cor-Ten steel works well against the Resnick Pavilion's travertine-encrusted exterior walls and fire engine red HVAC extrusions, a pleasant partnership of artist and architect.



"Eye for the Sensual: Selections from the Resnick Collection," installation view, at LACMA's new Resnick Pavilion



Robert Irwin's *Palm Garden* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art



L&M Arts, Los Angeles



Paul McCarthy at the new L&M Arts in Los Angeles

Miles away in once-funky Venice Beach, the space that *W Magazine* recently called the "hottest new gallery in Los Angeles" opened to an enthusiastic crowd of 200 art world luminaries with a guaranteed spectacle: Paul McCarthy's "Three Sculptures," his first Los Angeles solo exhibition in a decade.

With discreet charm, the staff of L&M Arts cheerfully guided those-who-need-no-further-introduction -- Deitch, DeWoody, Franco, Greenberg Rohatyn -- through the rather unusually laid-out galleries while serving brioches and a signature champagne cocktail called "The Visionary."

L&M L.A. occupies a gutted former power station and a separate gallery space of salvaged brick, the two separated by a driveway, with an intimate garden area at one end of the property. Visitors must walk outside to move from one space to the other, but given the temperate location it is only a minor inconvenience.

L&M Arts founder Robert Mnuchin personally handled the landscape design, volunteering that it is "the great hobby of my life."

McCarthy's works, one to a space, easily dominate their surroundings. In the garden is *Apple Tree Boy Apple Tree Girl* (2010), an aluminum idyll of Adam and Eve reborn as 18-foot-tall "uberkinders," a work that is sure to spawn some confused rubbernecking along Venice Boulevard.

Inside is *Ship of Fools, Ship Adrift* (2010), a dystopic nautical scene spun from eight tons of cast black bronze, in which several blind, disfigured, doll-like Aryan youth "float in a void, just like we do [in life]," according to the solemn yet bemused McCarthy.

And whistling every few moments in perverse kinetic delight, *Train, Mechanical* (2003-09) is the unstoppable counter-narrative to the puppet master's hopeless homage to Gericault's drifting raft. Two pink figures (clearly modeled on George W. Bush) and twice as many pigs swivel, wriggle and engage in creative acts of synchronized bestiality, their impressive electrical components exposed beneath a long steel platform.

The net effect is that of an energetic caboose to a train you may or may not want to behold in full, and many visitors did not remain long for the experience.

Prices for the sculptures, which are made in editions, are said to start at around \$3,000,000.

McCarthy is so skillful that hitting all of the correct notes in an art exhibition almost seems an afterthought for him, and fortunately for the art viewing public of Los Angeles, he now enjoys the support of tasteful arbiters Mnuchin, Dominique Levy and local favorite Sarah Watson, head of this new venture.

Asked what he would work on next, the artist alluded to amusement rides that the public would be able to experience first-hand. If and when these works are completed, one can only hope that they appear at the Resnick Pavilion, which is rather closer to the L.A. art scene than Disneyland.

"Olmec: Colossal Masterworks of Ancient Mexico," "Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700-1915," and "Eye for the Sensual: Selections from the Resnick Collection," Oct. 2-Jan. 9, Mar. 6, and Jan. 2, 2011, respectively, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, Ca. 90036.

"Paul McCarthy: Three Sculptures," Sept. 25 – Nov. 6, 2010, at L&M Arts, 660 S. Venice Boulevard, Venice, Ca.

660 S. VENICE BOULEVARD, VENICE, CA.

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Paul McCarthy, *Apple Tree Boy Apple Tree Girl*, 2010, at L&M Arts, Los Angeles



Paul McCarthy, *Ship of Fools, Ship Adrift*, 2010, at L&M Arts, Los Angeles



L&M Arts partner Dominique Levy, with Paul McCarthy's *Train, Mechanical* (2003-09)



L&M Arts director Sarah Watson