

HYPERALLERGIC

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THIS YEAR, FRIEZE LOS ANGELES FEELS GRAND,
CELEBRATORY, AND ACTUALLY KIND OF FUN
by Matt Stromberg



Will Boone, *The Three Fates*, 2020, bronze and enamel.

Frieze Los Angeles is doing away with minimalism. This year's iteration drives painted sports cars into the showroom, disguises booths as furnished apartments, and even houses a James Turrell skyroom.

Situated in Paramount Studios and its backlot — a grand imitation of New York City with palm trees sneaking into the skyline — Frieze juxtaposes a traditional enclosed art fair, stuffed with blue chip galleries exhibiting living and late superstars like Jeff Koons, Anish Kapoor, and Jean-Michel Basquiat, with a sprawling outdoor festival that celebrates Los Angeles's history of artist-run spaces.

Inside the main tent, colorful figurative paintings, motion works on large LCD screens, and bright neon slogans ("Look at Them Look at Us" cries out a piece by LA-based artist Genevieve Gaignard) compete for attention. Some galleries turn their entire booths into an immersive experience, like at Anat Ebgi, where Greg Ito's paintings of California wildfires line the walls of a dining room slowly flooding from rising tides that protrude from the baseboards. Other booths, like Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, stuff their space with a wide sampling of who they represent. Bonakdar showed off works from 12 artists, including Olafur Eliasson, Kelly Akashi, and Sandra Cinto.

Outside, on the Frieze Backlot, pop-up reading rooms, shops, and bars are moved into Paramount's brownstones, giving you a rare chance to see New York through the same eyes as *Ally McBeal*. The backlot's highlight is Frieze Projects, curated by Rita Gonzalez and Pilar Tompkins Rivas, a set of 18 recontextualized or newly commissioned, site-specific art pieces and performances by 16 artists. Lorna Simpson's two-channel video installation, "Momentum" (2011), shows Black ballet dancers perpetually spinning, their bodies painted gold like prized Oscar statuettes. Will Boone's life-sized sculpture, "The Three Fates" (2020), depicts three witches conspiring over a cauldron, their cartoonish figures evoking oversized merchandise from a Disney film. And Patrisse Cullors leads a silent disco, inviting fairgoers to put on synced wireless headphones and side-step to the electric side.

With such grandiose artworks dominating Frieze Los Angeles, the fair caters to the Instagram age more than ever before. But not every booth — especially the LA contingent — lets a photo op overpower substance. Look for Calida Rawles's gorgeous paintings of Black swimmers at Various Small Fires (one of these paintings is the cover of Ta-Nehisi Coates's newest novel), Jaime Muñoz's modern take on pre-Colombian art at the Pit, and Gaignard's flowery demands for gallerists — or anyone — to sell to Black collectors at Suzanne Vielmetter Los Angeles.