

UNDER-THE-RADAR GALLERY SHOWS TO CHECK OUT IN LA DURING FRIEZE WEEK: OUATTARA WATTS AT KARMA

by Paula Mejía



Ouattara Watts, *Spiritual Gangster 01*, 2023. Photo : Courtesy the artist and Karma

Los Angeles has been in the throes of a gallery boom for a few years now, with major blue-chip players opening outposts throughout the city, from mega-galleries like Hauser & Wirth, David Zwirner, and Pace Gallery to top New York galleries like Marian Goodman, Sean Kelly, and Lisson. But smaller and more upstart galleries continue cropping up at a steady clip, too, and brim with ambitious art, ranging from large-scale installations to daring painting shows. If you prefer more intimate galleries to the crowds at the likes of Frieze and Felix, get to stepping to these shows while they're still open.

Ouattara Watts at Karma

It's not unusual for an artist to meld a variety of seemingly disparate influences in their work. But none of them have quite done it like Ouattara Watts, a multi-disciplinary artist based in New York by way of Côte d'Ivoire who's been active in the art world for over half a century. In his first LA solo show, Watts imbues his practice of creating wall-hung acrylic paintings made using drop cloths onto which she adds found materials to forge works that are absorbing in scope and feeling. Numerology, music, rituals, and ciphers—@ and Pi, among others—are not just symbols discernible in his work but also studies that are inextricable from Watts's creative process. "There are a lot of codes in my work: figures, numbers, alchemy," he once told an interviewer. "Spontaneity leads to creation, creation leads to research. We fall into science. Science and art are complimentary."