

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

LA Times

Frieze Los Angeles will use Paramount backlot to explore truth, lies and Hollywood

Deborah Vankin

17 December 2019

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You may remember the psychic art advisor counselling eager collectors in a New York-style brownstone. Or the hand-painted laundry dangling on clotheslines over the rain-slick streets of what appeared to be Manhattan but really was the Paramount Studios backlot.

Frieze Los Angeles, which debuted in February, was not your typical art fair. Sure, there was the 62,000-square-foot tent featuring 70 galleries drawing artists, collectors, celebrities and lookie-loos daily. But the fair also had Frieze Projects, 15 site-specific installations, most by California artists, scattered throughout the backlot.

So what to expect next year?

Frieze, which returns to Paramount Feb. 13 to 16, announced Tuesday the artist lineup for Frieze Projects 2020. Los Angeles County Museum of Art curator Rita Gonzalez and Vincent Price Art Museum Director Pilar Tompkins Rivas are organizing this portion of the fair with an eye toward more national and global artists, Gonzalez said. The projects, she added, will address issues of representation, identity and myth.

“We found [Frieze Projects] really compelling last year, and being on the backlot, there’s a real allure and magic to it,” Gonzalez said. “But given our own interests as curators, we also wanted to bring in aspects of what Paramount and the media industry are going through right now. We’re all talking about representation — of women, people of color, LGBTQ — there’s a lack of representation, still, in the 21st century, from our media-makers. And that’s true, as well, in the visual arts.”

Frieze Projects 2020 will include 16 site-specific performances, sculptures and installations. New York artist Tavares Strachan, who grew up in the Bahamas, will show a free-standing neon sculpture that reads “Sometimes lies are prettier.” It will appear “smack dab in the middle of the backlot,” Gonzalez said, addressing not only Hollywood and its fictions but also the national political landscape and conversations around truth.

Three artists — Gabriella Sanchez, Channing Hansen and Vincent Ramos — mined Paramount’s archives. Sanchez created a billboard and other signage throughout the backlot that incorporates film imagery portraying barrio culture; the work riffs on Chicana graphic identity. Hansen will stage a “durational performance” that involves textile weavings inspired by “Star Trek” episodes filmed at Paramount. Ramos’ work, an installation shown with drawings and zines, explores Mexican and Mexican-American/Chicano representation in Paramount films and elsewhere in Hollywood dating back to the silent film era.

Israeli-born Naama Tsabar will stage a feminist-minded sonic performance, “Untitled (Double Face),” that riffs on a certain kind of testosterone-infused, rock ‘n’ roll guitar solo — think Jimi Hendrix or Eddie Van Halen. Three times a day, she and another female performer will move in unison around the backlot while playing a sculpture Tsabar made of two guitars grafted together, face to face.

L.A. artist Sayre Gomez created a realistic-looking cellphone tower, the type meant to be disguised as a palm tree. His sculpture speaks to the legacy of prop making and how heavily Los Angeles has been impacted by stagecraft and fantasy, which has found its way into urban planning.

Gary Simmons is reviving a work from 1992 in which he set up his paintings in outdoor locations around New York, such as a basketball court in Harlem. He then took Polaroids of passersby posing in front of them. Visitors to Frieze

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L.A. will do the same. The work, Gonzalez said, “is part of a longer investigation of African American visual culture and representation.”

Showing immersive, site-specific works on the Paramount backlot, Frieze Los Angeles executive director Bettina Korek said, “is again responding to this curious context of a set built to look like another type and era of city altogether, right in the heart of Hollywood.” Addressing representation, she added, “is acutely important to Los Angeles as a city and as the global seat of the entertainment industry.”

In March, after seeing through Frieze Los Angeles, Korek will assume the role of chief executive of the Serpentine Galleries in London. Frieze said her replacement has not yet been named.

Frieze Los Angeles is moving forward with its plans, which include more than 70 galleries in its tent. A new section called “Focus LA” will be curated by Gonzalez and will showcase 13 Los Angeles galleries that opened within the last 15 years.

But the backlot, Tompkins Rivas added, is the part of the show that remains unique.

“There are so many layers provided by that setting that different artists can riff on and respond to,” she said. “And it’s a chance for us to think about new ways that art produced in L.A. can intersect with global conversations.”

The other artists participating in Frieze Projects 2020:

Will Boone

Tania Candiani

Patrisse Cullors

Jonathas de Andrade

Jibade-Khalil Huffman

Barbara Kasten

Lorna Simpson

Mungo Thomson

Mario Garcia Torres