

11 / 21 / 2017

“ 5 Free Art Shows to See in L.A. This Week ”
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LA WEEKLY

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This week, an artist builds an Italian fruit stand that's as detailed and eccentric as the real thing, and a tiger embraces a horse in a painting hanging in Hollywood.

Ten-person hug

In 1986, when LACMA bought local collector Proctor Stafford's 235 ancient West Mexican objects, it was a coup. William Wilson, then the L.A. Times' art critic, pointed out that Stafford acquired most of these artifacts between 1940 and 1960, before the Mexican government instituted tougher laws restricting the export of its culture. Artist Gala Porras-Kim became fascinated by the museum's Stafford collection. Her current show at Commonwealth & Council, "An Index and Its Histories," includes a painting of 31 of these objects, all sitting close together on gray shelves. There's a vessel with a head and arms, a rotund figure with a child on her back, and a man in a geometric helmet and some kind of armor. The painting is carefully rendered, detailed but not clinically hyper-realistic. There's still space for the imagination, which Porras-Kim makes use of herself. The ceramic sculptures and drawings in the show take the forms of these artifacts as their inspiration. In a sculpture called *Joined Decouple* (2017), 10 figures with bodies the color of raw clay hold each other from behind. A drawing called *Future spaces replicate earlier spaces (staff/vessel)* (2017) depicts a teapotlike object holding up a geometric abstraction with a face on its left side. Stafford used to talk about how Jackson Pollock and famous artists quoted these ancient forms in their work without even knowing it; Porras-Kim knows what she's quoting. 3006 W. Seventh St., Suite 220, Koreatown; through Jan. 6. commonwealthandcouncil.com.

Dressed to kill

The dripping polyurethane monster at the center of the first gallery of Lynda Benglis' exhibition at Blum & Poe looks like a car that's been petrified, covered in stalactites and then excavated from a cave somewhere. The work seems, in other words, modern and primordial at once. Benglis, a longtime New York sculptor who protested misogyny in the 1970s by posing in an *Artforum* ad with a dildo held to her crotch, has been making ambitious pseudo-organic sculptures for decades. She would make aluminum casts

of round, blobby shapes, then install them on the floor or mount them to the wall, so that their dripping limbs leaked downward. This show features works that are all relatively new. Ambitious aluminum sculptures, some of which resemble writhing organisms, hang on the walls surrounding the polyurethane magnum opus. But not all the work is this imposing. Funny sculptures made of chicken wire and cloth hang in the final downstairs room. They're pleasantly unwieldy and are occasionally accentuated with glitter; they twist in on themselves, hang open and have playful titles. *Dressed to Kill* (2016) is a slim sculpture with accents of purple and neon orange and a scrappy skin covered with charcoal and gel. 2727 S. La Cienega Blvd., Mid-City; through Dec. 16. (310) 836-2062, blumandpoe.com.

Hugging the horse

Marianne Vitale's wooden witch hats greet you when you walk through the corridor up to Various Small Fires' entrance. That is, her circle of triangles, held up by rectangles of lumber and steel, resemble witch hats. Gallery director Sara Hantman, who curated this show, titled it *Hecate*, after the goddess of magic. The best works in the exhibit have their own internal logic, like Anna Glantz's *Traveling Horse* (2012), in which a tiger grasps tenderly onto the neck of a gray horse with especially slim legs. An army of boxy, loosely painted faces, some with extra eyes, float beneath them, as does a star and an orb. On the floor, Anna Sew Hoy's mostly soft sculpture *Circuit* (2007) spreads out its limbs, made of denim, T-shirts and foam, and all emerging from the orifice in an inviting, black, beanbaglike body. 812 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood; through Dec. 16. (310) 426-8040, vsf.la.

All the oranges

Anthony Miserendino spent two years on *Aromi*, the artwork at the center of his current exhibition at Moskowitz Bayse. It's a sculptural relief of a fruit stand, smaller than an actual stand but convincing enough that you could imagine entering it. He based his sculpture on markets he'd seen along the Amalfi Coast in Italy, and assembled it the same way a farmer-merchant might, first building the crates from clay and then tossing sculpted fruits into them. The result is that certain citrus look like deflated balls. After he built each panel in the scene (the finished work consists of five panels), he would make a rubber mold, which he then painted in clay-colored acrylic. So what we see hanging in the gallery are actually clay-colored sheets of rubber. Technically, the sheets are light but they're heavy with

irrationally complex, virtuosic detail. *743 N. La Brea Ave., Fairfax; through Dec. 23. (323) 790-4882, moskowitzbayse.com.*

Talking it out

At artist Gilbert “Magu” Lujan’s Mental Menudo meetings, participants would talk about Chicano art, the world and their lives. Sometimes the gatherings were informal, held in backyards or studios. Toward the end of Lujan’s life, they were occasionally more formal. At a Mental Menudo held at the Mexican Cultural Institute in 2006, Lujan asked artist Linda Vallejo how she defined Chicano culture, and she said it was a “Raza Cosmica, which is carried in your heart.” An extensive exhibition of Lujan’s eccentric, historically informed, cosmic and comic paintings and sculptures hangs at UC Irvine now, and this weekend, the late artist’s son, Naiche Luján, will lead the first of two Mental Menudo discussions in tribute to his dad. Anyone is invited to come and talk about art, life experiences and cultural identity. *4000 Mesa Road, Irvine; Sat., Dec. 2, 2-6 p.m. (949) 824-9854, uag.arts.uci.edu.*