

Five Artsy Things to Do in L.A. This Week, Including '90s Flashbacks

By Catherine Wagley Wed., Mar. 27 2013 at 7:00 AM

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Courtesy of LACMA

View into the second gallery of "Ends and Exits"

This week, it's all about looking back: One artist revisits 1993 L.A., another borrows the palette of teen pop from 20-some years ago and a museum show features graphically bold, grittily political art of the '80s.

5. What art even is

When the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston changed its name from Institute of Modern Art in 1948, controversy erupted. One publication said the name change signaled the institute's rejection of the "cult of bewilderment" that abstract modernism represented. A group of artists, the iconic Jackson Pollock among them, went to New York to protest the institute soon after. Art historian Richard Meyer tells this story and others about the birth of "contemporary art," a designation no less bewildering than "modern art" ever was, in his new book *What Was Contemporary Art?* He'll talk about the book and that question with MOCA director Jeffrey Deitch in the museum's Ahmanson Auditorium, 250 S. Grand Ave., downtown.; Sat., March 30, 3 p.m.; free. (213) 626-6222, moca.org.

4. Pompeii east of L.A.

Artist Won Ju Lim studied architecture before she studied sculpture and began her career in the early aughts with crisp, colorful models of stacked cities and local landmarks. Her *Broken Landscape* series, which she exhibited for the first time circa 2007, felt darker. She would re-create local and not-so-local vistas -- hills inspired by Highland Park or by Hawaii -- in miniature, building small houses and making small trees. Then she might drip Pepto Bismol-colored paint down these terrains before enclosing them in Plexiglas vitrines. The effect is romantically apocalyptic. You feel you're looking through the glass at historical ruins on par with Pompeii. A group of Lim's *Broken Landscape* pieces is at Patrick Painter in her show "Vitrines." *Patrick Painter; 2525 Michigan Ave., Unit A8; through April 20.* (310) 264-5988, patrickpainter.com.

3. Didn't see the sign

In the 1993 film *Falling Down*, Michael Douglas plays former defense engineer William Foster, who is armed, irritable and walking from one end of L.A. to the other because his car broke down. Early on, after terrorizing a Korean convenience store, Foster puts on his shoes while sitting on a concrete slab in a clearing near downtown. Two Latino gangsters approach him. They say he's trespassing, "loitering, too." "I didn't see any signs," Foster replies. "What do you call that?" one gangster says, pointing to spray-painted insignias on the concrete. "Graffiti?" asks Foster. "No, man. That's not fucking graffiti. That's a sign," the gangster replies. Artist Nicholas Smith has revisited locations of *Falling Down* scenes like this one and reshot them with no actors. This weekend, as part of his exhibition at Concord Space called "The Streets Tell a Story the Stage No Longer Tells," he will lead a walk through various locations, showing how much the city has changed and how much has stayed the same.

Cesar Chavez & Alameda; Sun., March 31, 12 p.m.
concordspace.com.

2. High school flashback

Remember those cast pictures from *Saved by the Bell*, the fluffy high school show set in the Palisades of the '80s and '90s? They had hot pink, purple or teal backdrops, the color fading out at the edges, and girls wore scrunchies or sweatshirts that fell off their bare shoulders. The paintings in Brad Spence's current Shoshana Wayne Gallery exhibition, called "Of Age," look like these posters felt. All four to five feet tall, they show washes of soft pink that fades into purple, then to sky blue or aggressive teal cylinders on top of an expanse of hot pink. It's all too bold, flip and optimistic for its own good.

2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica; through April 6. (310) 453-7535,
shoshanawayne.com.

1. No more boot-licking

You have to walk through Cady Noland's Office Filter, a metal gate with a jacket hanging on one end of it, to get into the second gallery of LACMA's "Ends and Exits" show. There you'll find a yellow tarp across which Keith Haring painted his red, rambunctious characters, and the dress of white gloves artist Lorraine O'Grady made in 1980 and wore when she showed up at art openings reciting poems that attacked art-world segregation ("THAT'S ENOUGH!/No more boot-licking.../No more ass-kissing...," she said at a Tribeca opening). The show, about that decade from 1980-90 when mass media, new money and Reagan-era politics all affected art in an insidious way, feels like this throughout -- visually upbeat but irritated with the state of things.

5905 Wilshire Blvd.; through Aug. 4. (323) 857-6000, lacma.org.