



MJ  
Style

## L.A.'S NEW COOL SCHOOL

*After decades of East Coast dominance, the art-world axis has finally tilted west — with competitive galleries, world-class museums, and a crop of young artists making L.A. pop.*

**It feels like we've been waiting forever**, but now, at last, a world-class art scene thrives in Los Angeles. Good art has always been here: Ed Ruscha mined the Sunset Strip for a photographic masterpiece, Robert Irwin's spatial investigations took hold in Venice, and it was West Hollywood where Warhol's soup cans first went on display. These are all seminal parts of the American modern and contemporary canon, and they couldn't have happened anywhere else. But the center of the American art world has long been New York, with its galleries and museums, its insistence on making artists look rich and rich people look artsy, and its army of young artists, every one of them willing to lop off an ear for a little bit of wall in a group show.

But lately the balance of power has begun to shift west. Maybe it was Jeffrey Deitch, the big-time SoHo gallerist who closed up shop last year and took the helm of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Or maybe L.A.'s current surge of artistic energy has something to do with the art folks feeling as if they can position the center of things anywhere. And who wouldn't want that nucleus to be in a place where studio space is affordable and the sun shines 300 days a year? Thus a happier art world has emerged, from Abbot Kinney to La Cienega to downtown. Deitch's MOCA has raised the bar for the other museums. The Hammer, the Getty, and LACMA are all putting up inspired, first-rate shows. Artists are churning out fresh, compelling work. Galleries are killing it. Now, when Los Angelenos talk about openings, they mean art, not movies. It's about time.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
**JULIAN BROAD**

FASHION BY  
**PATTI O'BRIEN**

TEXT BY  
**HOWIE KAHN**



Yahnker wears a lambs-  
wool sweater by A.P.C.,  
\$210; "Humble Tee"  
henley shirt by Acne,  
\$150; cotton trousers by  
Diesel, \$175; gray flannel  
Bellmore hat by Billy  
Reid for Stetson, \$155.

## ERIC YAHNKER

Yahnker, 34, wants you to laugh at his work. A former animator, Yahnker uses pencil and paper, even guacamole — "whatever the funniest material is." He credits Jewish humor as his primary influence, making his work a kind of Mel Brooks-Raymond Pettibon hybrid — except his jokes are raunchier and his drawings are bigger. "I do a lot of Los Angeles-centric work," he says. "I grew up here. Commercial imagery is part of me. But I come at it from a comedic angle. It's as much from my grandfather as it is from watching *Blazing Saddles*."

Hence, a strangely erotic, photo-realistic drawing of gefilte fish — part of a larger series featuring digitally stimulated foods.

Says Yahnker: "I've been wanting to finger a jar of gefilte fish for as long as I can remember."



#### GRANT SHUMATE

Grant Shumate's new video work is the result of layering multiple images on top of one another using a computer, making those superimposed shapes throb and pulse, and then setting them to Afro funk. The hypnotic, kaleidoscopic end products are like what would happen if Agnes Martin made a psychedelic crunk record with James Turrell. "It's more about assaulting the senses than getting some story out of it," says Shumate, 27, who grew up in Orange County. "I choose my images because of color or some textural quality, not because the girls in them are pretty or any of the other usual things you'd judge a photo by." For now, Shumate's videos can be downloaded on the internet or bought on DVD. He's planning a larger showing at the end of the summer in a warehouse in downtown L.A. "It'll be big, 30 feet by 30 feet in HD, with a DJ," he says. "I try to work outside the galleries as much as I can. The gallery spaces can be a little bit sterile."

*Shumate wears a cotton check flannel shirt by Burberry Brit, \$250; New Standard denim jeans by A.P.C., \$175; leather desert boots by Clarks, \$99.*



**KORINEWKIRK**

"Before I came out here," says Newkirk, 41, "I thought all the art would be Pepto pink with lots of neon. But it's not. It's very sophisticated." Newkirk was born in the Bronx and moved to L.A. in '95. Since then he has become a bona fide art star, showing in the Whitney Biennial and having a

10-year retrospective of his beaded curtains, self-portraits, and mixed-media pieces at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Notions of race, beauty, nature, and male identity inform his practice, as do science fiction and spaces that are particular to L.A. Last summer Newkirk did a show

at Country Club, a gallery in an iconic Rudolf Schindler modernist dwelling. "I couldn't turn down that house," he says. "I didn't think I'd ever have another opportunity to play in a house like that. You can never own one of those houses. A house like that is always going to own you."

*Newkirk wears a navy wool crewneck sweater by Band of Outsiders, \$350; 501 jeans by Levi's, \$60; shoes by Converse Chuck Taylor All Star, \$46.*





## RY ROCKLEN

"In Los Angeles, there's not enough space where things can just sit around," says Ry Rocklen, 33. "The abundance of secondhand shops and junkyards — things just sit outside here without being destroyed. Their surfaces become more interesting over time." Rocklen, who was born in L.A. and studied at USC, uses castaway objects like bed frames, wind socks, or the hundred old trophies he found to

construct works that comment on the original while transforming them into something grander. "The things achieve exalted status," says Rocklen. "I'm going to turn these trophies into a seven-foot-tall mega trophy. I found them all together. It was like striking gold." Like Duchamp's readymades and Rauschenberg's combines, Rocklen's pieces elevate the things we use every day and take for granted.

*Rocklen wears a wool crewneck sweater by Gant Rugger, \$148; plaid shirt, vintage Gant; 501 jeans by Levi's, \$50; suede desert boots by Clarks, \$99.*

Fashion editor: BRYNN CARHART. Grooming by ERIN LEE SMITH at Tracey Mattingly. Set design by ANDREW TROSMANS at The Magnet Agency. Casting by AUDREY LANDRETH. Production by TYLER DUURING at Portfolío One.