



## L.A. Art 2013: The Year in Review

By Catherine Wagley  
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A little more than a year ago in Kassel, Germany, artist group Critical Arts Ensemble set up a big glass window, as part of dOCUMENTA (13), the 100-day exhibition that happens every five days, and anyone could sign up to talk. At one point, dOCUMENTA (13)'s curator, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev talked about the complications of fundraising for the festival, though the house was far enough away that she could not hear.

Christov-Bakargiev mentioned her visit to the free speech zone when she spoke in L.A. two months ago. She urged for transparency and honesty, the difficulty of exposing the truth about things that are kept hidden. Frustrations remain unheard for now — were the issues of the year in L.A. art. Opacity characterizing the year, confounding, art-relevant stories, some about high-profile fumbling and resigning, head butting, and others about

Meanwhile, the artists' projects that felt exciting, even when flawed, tried to make the relationship between art and life a little less murky.

### Related Stories

#### Philippe Vergne Chosen as MOCA's New Director

Following the tumultuous tenure of gallery guru Jeffrey Deitch, who officially left in September, the L.A. Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) announced tonight that Philippe Vergne has been chosen by its board to be the institution's next director. See also: Jeffrey Deitch Leaving MOCA. The former chief of the Dia Art Foundation in January 15, 2014



#### Disney Hall, Frank Gehry's Gift to Wedding Photographers

When the late L.A. Weekly classical music critic Alan Rich gave his grumpy assessment of the Walt Disney Concert Hall in December of 2003, aside from calling out the scalding reflections of the building and positing that the parking garage has better acoustics than the Hall itself, he noted, semi-sarcastically,



The two lists that follow are better described as "most interesting" and "most surprising." One is of headline-making stories and the other of art that was not widely discussed.

### The stories:

**1. The collector and the law:** SAC Capital, founded by Steven Cohen, was first implicated in insider trading the same month as the end of 2012. Cohen owns Picassos and Warhols, but that he stuffed a shark in a formaldehyde-filled glass case (he called it "The Shark") is something of a metaphor. It's a work that plays into the game of high-priced one-upmanship. Now, eight Columbia University students must pay a \$1.2 million fine for allowing a culture th

October 25, 2013

**On Doug Aitken's Art Train, You Agree to Be Filmed, And Happy Hour Starts at 5:01**

"I'm not cutting, just getting a photo," said a tall man in a white button-down shirt with iPhone poised, sliding between me and my view of No Age last Thursday night. The duo was playing at Union Station, in the courtyard, leaning over a drum set and sound boards and



October 3, 2013

**Best Camouflage Storefront**

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October 3, 2013

**MOCA's Appointment of New Director Philippe Vergne Gets Mixed Reactions**

After five years of turmoil - during which the museum battled near-fatal financial troubles while enduring the widely criticized tenure of mismatched director Jeffrey Deitch - MOCA needed to score a perfect 10 in the long awaited hiring of its new director. With faith in the organization so seriously eroded, January 17, 2014



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managed to give at least \$1 million to MOCA this spring depleted endowment. Gary Sernovitz's smart essay also suggests a commonality between Cohen and the artistic mercury, racing to be first to an edge before it disappears.

**2. The resignation:** MOCA director Jeffrey Deitch, after years of entertainment, stepped down in July, three of his five years that surprising — MOCA's curatorial staff had dwindled and upcoming exhibitions remained unannounced. But there has been a feeling of alienation and confusion over the past few years. Why fire the chief curator? Why let the education program go? Why Mercedes-Benz? Since no new director has been appointed, it has changed the fact that we're all asking, "What's happened?"

**3. The proposal:** LACMA proposed a \$650 million renovation of the Americas and Ahmanson buildings, which will have been designed by Peter Zumthor, known for fairly elegant buildings, designed with glass walls and solar panels: "The tar pit amoeba but it also curves to make room for the La Brea Tar Pit. It was an unusual move, the museum exhibited Zumthor's model. It was not approved by the board or funded. Visitors could have seen the exhibition seemed more like show-and-tell than open house."

**4. The architects-in-the-museum fiasco:** First out, then he was back in MOCA's "A New Sculpturalism" exhibition. Christopher Mount, proposed that West Coast architect Frank Gehry build a new building. The show first had to be delayed because

erupted over its framing — Gehry worried the term "sculpturalism" would make it sound like the style and look of his buildings. Then architect Thom Mayne more or less took over, convincing Gehry to fund the building and finish the installation. Despite the drama, the show itself was pretty staid, and the building more self-conscious than exciting.

**5. The art train:** Artist Doug Aitken's "Station to Station" project involved rented, vintage train cars from the East Coast to the West, stopping to stage events throughout, picking up new musicians along the way. The train itself felt great — there was a kitchen, a bar, work spaces and a very American feel. But you weren't ever quite sure which of the people passing through the cars with cameras belonged.



to the sponsor, Levi's. Plus, so many press people rode the train and write-ups came out in so trek that you could hardly tell where the promoting stopped and the project began, which ma way, as if it were complicit in — or at least turning a blind eye to — its own blurriness.

## **The projects:**

**1. The fountain saga:** In Liz Glynn's April performance, *The Myth of Getting it Right the Fi* columns that make up Alexander Calder's fountain, built for LACMA before its opening in 196 colored paddles, so that they spin in the wind, and the performers held similarly colored padd be carried multiple times on and off the stage in LACMA's Bing Theater, as Glynn's cast acted Before Calder even built the work, titled *Three Quintains (Hello, Girls)*, he had to deal with fu plumbing. And then there was the wind damage, the years it spent in storage, the times the m borrowed it, all efficiently and elegantly portrayed.

**2. The privilege project:** Artist William Kaminski and curator Eve Ruether wanted to talk — of scraping by to do what you love while brushing up against the art world's glamorous, mo Privilege Show" to get at how this feels, including 10 artists. One of my favorites was Kaminsk house with a pool in Alhambra Heights for an afternoon and enlisted a few young actors. He v such as you might see in a show like *The Hills*. In the final, not-at-all satirical edit, you can tel a-silver-spoon types, but they've totally immersed themselves, for the moment at least, in the

**3. The French connection:** Ceci N'est Pas, the multiple-month series of art collaborations French Embassy, treated L.A.'s art scene like an entirely level playing field. You might see the art fair afterparties and then again sitting on the floor at alternative spaces, like Machine Proj January, artist Nicholas Boulard debuted a series of cheeses he'd made using molds inspired l

**4. The doughnut creature:** David Snyder's sculpture *Portrait of a Nugose*, which appeared looked kind of like weeping willow covered in a thick coat of melted, burnt marshmallow. Ma close, making clanging and radio noises, and if you looked through a peephole on its wall-faci an unwieldy, dysfunctional, opaque thing that wanted to invite people in but didn't know how

**5. The open storage:** Liz Diller's firm's design for billionaire philanthropist Eli Broad's new across from MOCA, seems like it might just work. Diller has talked about wanting her buildin man's collection, to be transparent about its subjectivity. It sounds impossibly idealistic, but t vault where the Broad Collection is stored might at least generate the right curiosity-piquing v