

From 200 Studio Visits to 32 Names: Curator Anne Ellegood on Choosing Artists for the Hammer's 'Made in LA' Biennial

A full two-thirds of the exhibition's artists are women.

Sarah Cascone, February 15, 2018



Anne Ellegood. Photo courtesy of Andre Vippolis.

If the current political climate is weighing heavily on LA artists, you might not know if from their disposition. According to Anne Ellegood, co-curator of "[Made in LA 2018](#)," the Hammer Museum's biennial art show, the mood among the city's artists these days is surprisingly optimistic—even as much of their work in her upcoming exhibition wrestles with a fraught, unpredictable world.

"To do a biennial right now, we wanted to showcase artists who were grappling with the world that we're living in right now," Ellegood told artnet News. "But even while many of them are taking up, in some cases, very heavy subject matter, I feel

there's also this real sense of possibility. There's a kind of sci-fi, futuristic optimism that's in the work."

Now in its fourth edition, "Made in LA" was started in 2012 as a way to highlight the work of the city's vibrant artistic community. Fast forward six years, and "we see the exhibition not just as arguing for the relevance of LA, because I don't think that's an argument that still needs to be made, but rather as putting the spotlight on a really great group of artists, and bringing visibility to their work," said Ellegood.



Linda Stark, *Self Portrait with Ray* (2017). Courtesy of the Hammer Museum and the artist.

To that end, Ellegood and co-curator Erin Christovale made 200 studio visits with local artists over the course of the last year in preparation for the show, in addition to checking out gallery shows and studying up on artists online. The final selection of 32 artists—most of whom will make new pieces for the show—reveals a diverse group, both demographically as well as in the type of work they are making.

"The artists' range in age is pretty dramatic," Ellegood said, pointing out that they've included 28-year-old Diedrick Brackens as well as 97-year-old Luchita Hurtado, who was married to Los Angeles artist [Lee Mullican](#) (1919–1998). A studio visit with the nonagenarian, who still paints every day, revealed a lifetime's worth of work, most of which had been packed away for decades and had never been shown.



Luchita Hurtado, *Untitled* (1970). Courtesy of the Hammer Museum/the artist.

“It was kind of a revelation,” Ellegood said. The curator was so impressed she decided to include a selection of Hurtado’s drawings from the 1970s in the exhibition. Ellegood had known Hurtado was an artist but didn’t know her work until Hurtado’s artist son, Matt Mullican, was included in a Hammer exhibition and introduced the two. “I think a lot of people will see this work and want to learn more about her,” she said. “She really is like an emerging artist at the age of 97.”

As with any large group show, some names are more well-known than others. You might have spotted Celeste Dupuy-Spencer in the 2017 Whitney Biennial in New York, or Carmen Argote at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art’s Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA exhibition “Home—So Different, So Appealing.” Candice Lin and Patrick Staff had work in New York at the New Museum’s “Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon,” along with Christina Quarles, who was also included in group shows at the Studio Museum in Harlem (“Fictions”) and in Miami (Larry Gagosian and Jeffery Deitch’s “Abstract/Not Abstract”).



Christina Quarles, *I Wake With Yew in Mourning* (2017). Courtesy of the Rubell Family Collection, Miami/David Castillo Gallery.

“Some are people who Erin or I have been following over the last few years, and this is the perfect opportunity to work with them,” Ellegood said. They also selected a number of older, more established artists who work at local art schools and have been major influences on the younger generation, such as UC Irvine professor Daniel Joseph Martinez and Linda Stark, who teaches at Los Angeles’s Occidental College. The list is also predominantly female—a full two-thirds of the artists in the show are women. Part of that comes down to “a commitment that both Erin and I have to diversity, and wanting to support women artists,” Ellegood said. “I think that anyone

who claims they can't find enough good women artists around any subject or theme isn't doing the research."



Flora Wiegmann, *Wandering* (still), 2012. Courtesy of the Hammer Museum/the artist.

"There's no reason why a show of artists based in LA shouldn't be diverse," she added. "We had a moment where the list was over 75 percent women and we were joking that we had to find more men!"

While Ellegood and Christovale were careful not to put together an exhibition of work responding directly to Donald Trump, the actions of his administration can't help but weigh on LA artists. According to Ellegood, the issue of climate change, for instance, is especially pressing in a state dealing with the fallout from drought, wildfires, and mudslides.



EJ Hill, *Pillar* (2017). Courtesy of the Hammer Museum/the artist.

“Because the national landscape feels a bit chaotic and unpredictable, people are re-rooting themselves in their local communities,” Ellegood said. “I think it’s going to be a show that has a lot to offer in terms of the conversation.”

“Made in LA 2018” is on view at the Hammer Museum at UCLA, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, June 3–September 2, 2018.