

VUE GARAGE

76 Artists Brought Out Their Witchiest Work for Laurie Simmons and Dan Nadel's New Deitch Projects Show

By ANNIE ARMSTRONG | Feb 23 2020

The artist chats with us about the joys of curation, walking in Los Angeles, and “Rosemary’s Baby.”

Earlier this month, Deitch Projects in Los Angeles opened *All of Them Witches*, a group show curated by Laurie Simmons and Dan Nadel. The sweeping exhibition features work by 76 different artists that depict a “witchy sensibility”—so obviously, ours and most of Los Angeles’ ears perked right up. The wildly popular show presents work by a myriad of artists such as Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Judy Chicago, Emily Mae Smith, Lyle Ashton Harris, Ana Mendieta, Shirin Neshat, Carolee Schneemann, and a whole lot more. Intrigued, we gave Simmons a call from New York to hear about how the opening went.



COLETTE, HOMAGE TO PAUL DELVAUX, 1974, PERFORMANCE PHOTOGRAPH/OBJECT. ALL OF THEM WITCHES, CURATED BY LAURIE SIMMONS AND DAN NADEL, JEFFREY DEITCH, LOS ANGELES, 2020. PHOTO JOSHUA WHITE

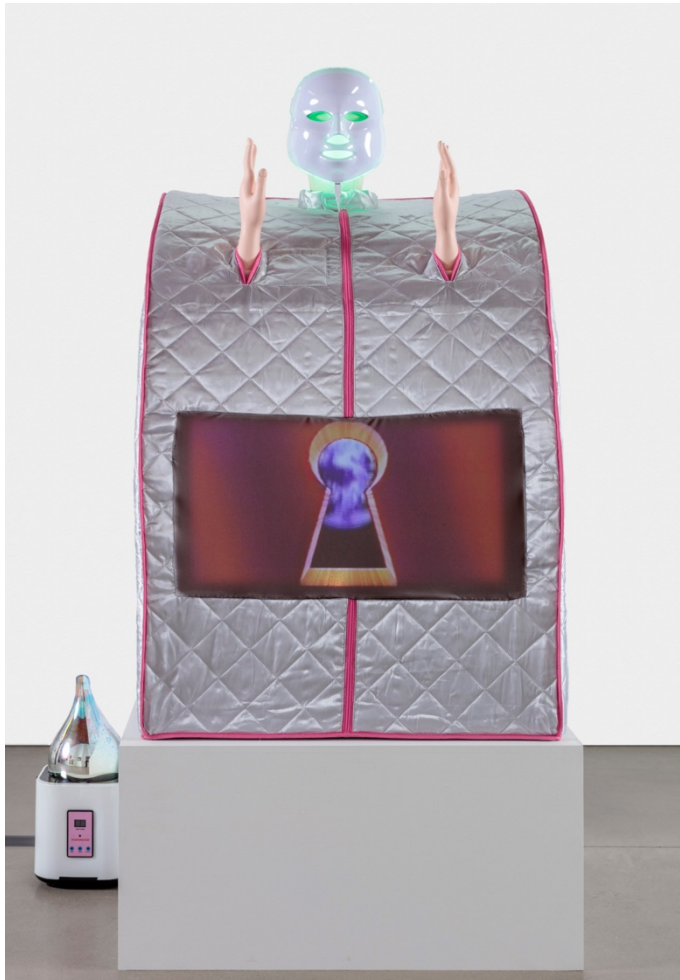
So how was the opening?

It was wild! I don’t think we were imagining anything beyond the way the works were going to hang together and who was in the show, so I really never thought about the opening and the LA art world and who might come and who might not come. Of course, a ton of people from New York came, and I knew the artists in the show, but what I really liked was walking around and not knowing most of the people. That was a refreshing change from New York! If you know a million people at your own show, you don’t really have the luxury of being a fly on the wall.

I feel like that’s such a nice thing about LA spaces too, there’s just so much more space. So even if the opening’s full, you can actually have space to see the work too. Though regardless, I’d think wrangling 76 artists is stressful—was it?

But I think once we had a list [of artists] it was a matter of taking letters of the alphabet and making words out of them, and then making sentences out of the words, and then making paragraphs of those sentences. Each time we had

a passage or relationship that worked, we remembered it. Like, I knew which things I wanted to hang near each other. Even if it was as simplistic as a “green moment” between a Marilyn Minter video and a Lisa Yuskavage painting. Or this kind of witches paraphernalia thing between like, a Robert Therrien witches hat, or Sylvie Auvray brooms. So we imagined a lot of things happening, and maintained that in the space. But there were a lot of disruptions, too.



SHANA MOULTON, UNTITLED, 2019, PERSONAL STEAM SAUNA TENT, PROJECTION SCREEN, PROJECTOR, WOODEN ARMATURE, WIG STAND, PLASTIC HANDS, LED MASK AND HUMIDIFIER. ALL OF THEM WITCHES, CURATED BY LAURIE SIMMONS AND DAN NADEL, JEFFREY DEITCH, LOS ANGELES, 2020. P

When I first heard of the concept behind the show, I had thought of the occult and witchiness as something very trendy with younger people over the last few years. But then looking over this roster of artists, it's amazing how many generations that it's crossed over. What do you think keeps this concept so interesting and fresh?

Our first title for the show was “Witchy,” which I think was more about a mood or an ether or a feeling that we couldn’t pin down. Our criteria for picking artists certainly wasn’t about finding people who had a very literal interpretation of witchcraft. What surprised me was how many people were willing to own that witchy part of their work. So many people were able to say “Oh, I’m about this, I get this.” I feel like all these things we associate with goddessness and empowerment and a kind of sexiness and adolescent magic, has existed in a certain kind of work for a really really long time. As we worked on the show, I had a growing awareness of how popular the idea of witchcraft and magic is now. Our title obviously comes from *Rosemary’s Baby*.

Oh, I didn’t realize that!

Yeah, *All of Them Witches* is the book that she reads in the movie! We owe it to the movie.

How LA.

Yes, very Hollywood.



RENATE DRUKS, *MALE CAT CLUB*, 1980, OIL AND PAPIER COLLÉ ON PANEL.
ALL OF THEM WITCHES, CURATED BY LAURIE SIMMONS AND DAN NADEL,
 JEFFREY DEITCH, LOS ANGELES, 2020. PHOTO JOSHUA WHITE

It's really wild how big LA is getting for art.

Totally. I think that if I wasn't the age I am, that it's where I'd want to live. It was so clear to me when I was a young artist that I had to live in New York, and I try to imagine what I would do now, and that's not as clear. I think [Los Angeles] is where I'd want to live.

That surprises me! I think of you and your work as so quintessential to New York.

What I'd really like to try is working there because of the corny things that artists say, like the light and the climate and just the general feeling are appealing, I'd love to see what it would do for my work to be there in the middle of that. The history of LA and the history of Hollywood is so appealing to me. We walk a lot in LA! I know that may not be typical.



ARIANA PAPADEMETROPOULOS, *THE SCARLET WOMAN*, 2020, OIL ON CANVAS. *ALL OF THEM WITCHES*, CURATED BY LAURIE SIMMONS AND DAN NADEL, JEFFREY DEITCH, LOS ANGELES, 2020. PHOTO BY JOSHUA WHITE

Yeah, I think you're the first person I've ever heard say that.

We walk a lot around West Hollywood, it's so great! You can suddenly have these very noir moments, where you're just all the sudden in some sort of film, looking at some courtyard or a tall palm tree or something that is just so evocative of the LA feeling in movies. But I'm sure that everyone who first moves to LA probably has that romance. I've been there so many times, but I still feel like a neophyte.

Did you have that romance to New York when you first moved here back when? And did it go away?

I remember living in Soho and walking down Houston Street, and the sky was *so* big and the buildings were kind of low back then. I just remember saying "I can't believe I'm here, I can't believe I'm here, I can't believe I'm here..." I was broke and lonely and making new friends like crazy. That lasted for a long time.