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Art History 25

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### Exhibition Review: Made In L.A.

The 2023 *Made in L.A.* exhibition at the Hammer Museum in West Los Angeles captivates audiences by featuring artworks from 36 different L.A.-based artists. Each artist uses unique mediums and eccentric lenses to showcase Los Angeles culture through a different lens. This three-month exhibition showcases art that is integrated and immersed in the Los Angeles lifestyle and history. Featuring a diverse range of artists from Young Joon Kwak to Jackie Amezquita coupled with approachable descriptions and unique LA-isms, *Made in L.A.* is truly a love letter to Angelenos and L.A.'s thriving culture.

One of the most important characteristics of *Made In L.A.* is the variety of artists highlighted in the exhibition. The Hammer Museum described the exhibition as an “expanded field of culture that is entangled with everyday life; community networks; queer affect; and indigenous and diasporic histories.”<sup>1</sup> As stated above, there are thirty-six different artists included in the exhibition. These artists work under environmental lenses, social justice, gender identity and sexuality, the breaking up of LA, etc. Two artists who exemplify the variety are Young Joon Kwak and Jackie Amezquita. Young Joon Kwak's installations include three fully rhinestone canvases and three casts (*Fig. 1*). A cast of a masculine chest, a feminine torso, and the torso of a pregnant person art covered in glass rhinestones resembling the skin of a chameleon. Through their work, Young Joon Kwak explains the idea of blending one's identity

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<sup>1</sup> *Made in L.A. 2023: Acts of Living* | Hammer Museum. (2001, October 1).

to match societal expectations, and the beautiful natural ability of the chameleon that people develop in their lives.

Jackie Amezcuita's work, *El Sueno Que Nos Alimento (The Dream that Nourishes Us)*, features 144 earthwork sculptures on display (Fig. 2). Amezcuita sourced soil from 144 different neighborhoods in Los Angeles and then wrapped each square in bronze foil to paint the Los Angeles context. This piece functions as a reminder of the culture integral to LA and the history of Latino communities in Los Angeles. While focusing on environmental and immigration issues, Amezcuita creates an installation that depicts sections of LA to appreciate the land and natural resources that are part of Los Angeles communities. These two artists are drastically different and while they both focus on aspects of the environment in relation to human experiences, these artists are working under completely different assumptions and modes of creating art. However, this fact is one of the reasons the exhibition is successful. It shows that the Los Angeles art community is diverse, welcoming, engaging with many issues, and experimenting with a plethora of materials and mediums. Each artist's work provides input into the story of Los Angeles that the exhibit collectively tells.

An exciting feature of *Made in L.A* is the accessible labels. For this exhibition, the labels and descriptions were posted in English and Spanish. The dual description is not available for all exhibitions at the Hammer and was included because of the large Latino community in Los Angeles. The Hammer Museum does offer Assistive Listening devices, large print texts, and other forms of accessible tools for visitors but these accessibility tools do not include access to other languages. While I believe the Spanish descriptions should be present at all exhibitions, I do appreciate that it helps Latino guests be able to value the artist's descriptions and titles the way other visitors do. It's a small addition that enables hundreds, maybe even thousands, of

viewers to connect more and have a deeper understanding of the art featured in the exhibit. It would be helpful to have other ways to see the labels in other languages but adding Spanish descriptions is one step towards inclusivity and demonstrates an appreciation for the other cultures essential to Los Angeles culture.

Many of the works featured in the exhibition show parts of LA culture that are deeply understood by Angelenos. There are several works included in the show that depict specific parts of Los Angeles that are identifiable for people who are native to Los Angeles or have lived in the city for an extended period. I noticed this very quickly when I attended this exhibit with an Angeleno and they were immediately telling me where these settings were, what memories they had there, or what events had been held there in the past. For example, Joey Terrill's paintings are portraits of Gay men in Los Angeles with their names and locations stated on the photo during the AIDS epidemic. Terrill paints people in Los Angeles locations like *Chris Miller on Melrose Ave*. People I was with immediately recognized the Los Angeles Eyeworks behind Chris Miller and recalled their memories of the area. This is such a special interaction to see and to be able to have in a museum setting. It creates a space close to the hearts of people in Los Angeles and a rare conversation where a visitor feels engaged, appreciated, and intertwined with the artist and their work. Museums in general have a history of being inaccessible and unapproachable to many people so to be able to identify with the art you see is extraordinary and valuable.

Overall, this exhibition was entertaining and successful. Throughout the exhibition, I was engaged and excited to see what was next. The diversity in artists, accessibility in labels, and the intrinsic LA characteristics in the pieces allowed the exhibit to function as an inside look at Los Angeles culture and the community that surrounds it. The variety of artists shows how inclusive and diverse LA is and how the art community is a reflection of the culture. Having Spanish

labels acknowledges the Latin and Hispanic communities that are deeply rooted in Los Angeles culture. Finally, the LAisms help place the exhibit in the heart of all Los Angeles visitors and create a special bond between the visitors and the artist. Each of these reasons shows how successful the exhibit is and its effects on the community that surrounds the Hammer Museum and the people who are a part of it.



*Figure 1. Young Joon Kwak installation at The Hammer Museum. Los Angeles, California 2023*



*Fig. 3 Joey Terrill, Chris Miller on Melrose Ave, The Hammer Museum. Los Angeles, California 2023*



*Figure 2. Jackie Amezcua, El Sueno Que Nos Alimento (The Dream that Nourishes Us) The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California 2023*



### Works Cited

*Made in L.A. 2023: Acts of Living* | Hammer Museum. (2001, October 1).

<https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2023/made-la-2023-acts-living>