

# CULVER CITY ART CRAWL

An industrial stretch of L.A. has blossomed into America's most exciting mini art mecca, where young collectors party with anti-snoot artists and freewheeling gallerists—and everyone's invited. Here's how to shop it

There used to be absolutely no reason to pass through the run-down concrete stretch north of Culver City on La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles unless you were speeding to make a flight at LAX. Then, three years ago, the trendsetting gallery Blum & Poe fled Santa Monica with their A-list roster in tow (including Takashi Murakami) and set up in a 5,000-square-foot brick building. Now nearly two dozen galleries, drawn by cheaper rents, sprawling spaces, and proximity to the influential UCLA MFA arts program, have taken the leap.

"There's no history here," says Lauri Firstenberg, a former curator

at Artists Space in New York City who moved west to open the nonprofit LAXART last March. "We're free to invent ourselves."

For you budding collectors, that's code for "loads of young talent and more-affordable prices." For you penniless travelers, it means great, still-unpretentious opening parties. So we asked the area's unofficial ambassador, Justin Beal, the cute 28-year-old co-owner of the scene's first watering hole, how to navigate. Flip your Thomas guide to map 632 and find your way to La Cienega and Washington Boulevard. First stop, Beal's bar, the Mandrake, for a fortifying cocktail (the prices aren't *that* low, thanks to the continuing art-buying mania).—JULIA CHAPLIN

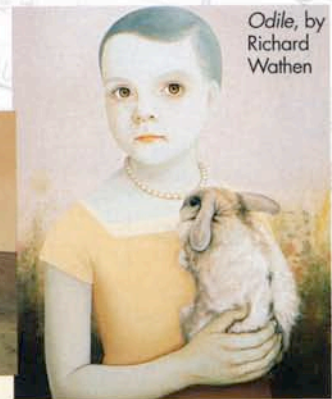


## our guide

**Justin Beal:** As the man who pours the art world their drinks at his wood-lined watering hole, the Mandrake, he's got the inside scoop.



Birch 4x4x4, by Anthony James



Odile, by Richard Wathen

### THE ESTABLISHMENT: Blum & Poe

"It's the watermark of the neighborhood's potential," Beal says about B&P, known for its taste and market intuition. The young 'uns (both under 35) they love: Matt Johnson—his solo show of sculpture, paintings, and drawings is up until October 14 (pieces sell for \$10,000 to \$75,000); and Florian Maier-Aichen, who makes trippy digital landscapes (\$5,000 to \$30,000). Anthony James, creator of urbane organic sculpture, and Richard Wathen, whose paintings are endearingly neohistoric (prices on request), have also shown there. 2754 S. La Cienega Blvd., 310-836-2062, blumandpoe.com



### START WITH A DRINK

Order the Mandrake's signature cocktail:

#### Mandrake Julep

3 mint sprigs (one each of spearmint, peppermint, and ginger mint harvested from the bar's backyard garden)

1 tsp. natural cane sugar  
2 oz. Knob Creek Kentucky Bourbon  
¼ tsp. minced ginger  
Splash of club soda

Muddle mint leaves and sugar. Add ice and bourbon. Shake. Pour into Collins glass. Stir in ginger. Top with club soda and garnish with a young mint sprig.

2692 S. La Cienega Blvd., 310-837-3297



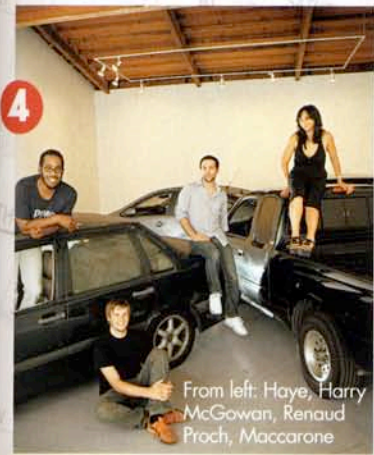
Aqua and Silver Ghost-head, by Mindy Shapero



Bouquet for an Insomniac, by Emilie Halpern

### ART SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: Anna Helwing

This gallery is the pipeline for recent grads from UCLA and Cal Arts. Tim Blum, co-owner of Blum & Poe, has his eye on French expat Emilie Halpern, a 30-year-old multimedia artist whose solo exhibit last spring, "White Nights," featuring thermoplastic lightning bolts and romantic photographs, got raves. Tip: At press time, the last copy of her sumptuous C-print *Bouquet for an Insomniac* was available for \$1,800. Andrea Feldman Falcione, Michael Ovit's collection curator, likes Mindy Shapero, 31. "The fantastic, elegant forms she creates from mundane material are unlike anything else around right now," she says. 2766 S. La Cienega Blvd., 310-202-2213, annahelwinggallery.com



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From left: Haye, Harry McGowan, Renaud Proch, Maccarone

**THE NEW YORKERS: MC**

Hip New York gallerists Michele Maccarone (Maccarone Inc.) and Christian Haye (the Project) went bicoastal in May 2005 with this nontraditional gallery that fights the obsession with fresh-out-of-art-schoolers by trumpeting midcareer artists such as Martin Creed, who moved a giant wolfhound and a teeny chihuahua into the space for two months (they got regular walks). Pick up an MC tchotchke-size multiple: They're priced in the hundreds rather than the thousands. 6086 Comey Ave., 323-939-3777, mckunst.com

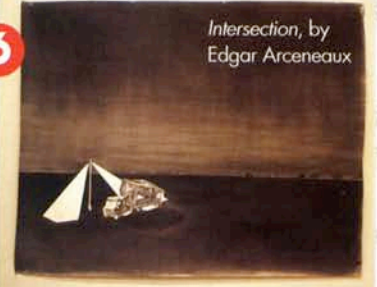
**STATEMENT-MAKERS: LAXART**

Covered in black text, with billboards overhead commandeered by local artists and demonic laughter emanating from two speakers mounted near the entrance (a sound installation by Gino De Dominicis), this non-profit provides arty stimulation even for car-bound Angelenos. Smart buy: limited-edition artist-donated prints like Edgar Arceneaux's 1968. Copies of this series of 30 sell for \$1,500 a pop. "It's a beautiful image of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination-meets-the starship Enterprise," Lauri Firstenberg says. 2640 S. La Cienega Blvd., 310-559-0166, laxart.org

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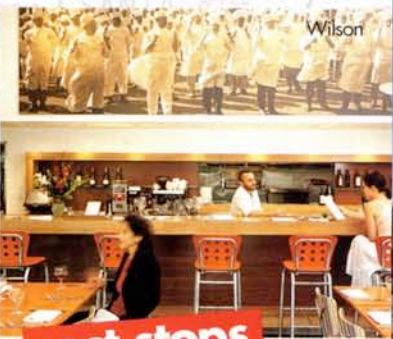
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Intersection, by Edgar Arceneaux

**BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS: Susanne Vielmetter, Los Angeles Projects**

"My gallery reminds me of a David Hockney painting," says Susanne Vielmetter, who moved into her squat 1960s office building two years ago. Check out the work, up October 21, of Cal Arts MFA grad Edgar Arceneaux, 34, a rising star whose drawings go for \$4,000 to \$12,000. 5795 W. Washington Blvd., 323-933-2117, vielmetter.com



Wilson



MoDAA

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**PURE ENTERTAINMENT: LightBox**

Hit one of veteran gallerist Kimberly Light's raucous openings. She stocks the parking lot with taco trucks, performance artists, and lots of booze. This winter, when Franz Ferdinand's guitarist, Nick McCarthy, curates a show of Glasgow artists, he'll perform there with his side band, Box Codax. "In Los Angeles, art openings are a night out," Light says. 2656 S. La Cienega Blvd., 310-559-1111, lightbox.tv



Kimberly Light

**rest stops**

**Wilson**

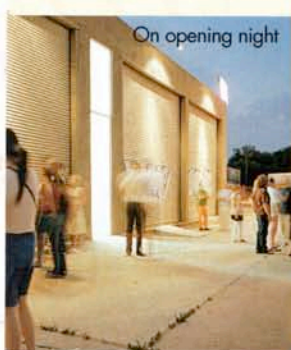
Break bread with gallerists and collectors at Wilson, co-owned by chef Michael Wilson, son of Beach Boy Dennis, on the ground floor of the Museum of Design Art and Architecture (MoDAA), a mixed-use building made of colorful cement fiberboard panels. 8631 Washington Blvd., 310-287-2093

**Teaforest**

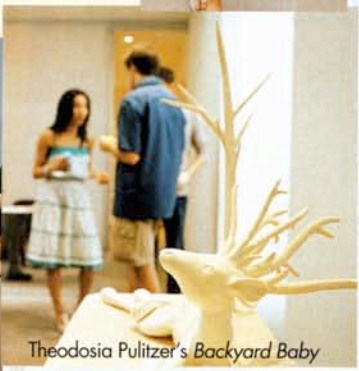
When your knees start to buckle, join the rest of the artsies for an afternoon fix or a salami-and-provolone on pretzel bread at this Zen-modern tea and coffee shop. 8686 Washington Blvd., 310-815-1723

**Ford's Filling Station**

It's worth getting back in your car for the quick drive to L.A.'s first official gastropub (fresh food, pub vibe), run by Harrison Ford's son Ben. 9531 Culver Blvd., 310-202-1470, fordsfillingstation.net



On opening night



Theodosia Pulitzer's Backyard Baby



Ford's Filling Station



Chef Ford

MC AND LIGHTBOX: DANIEL HEINISCH; FORD'S FILLING STATION: COURTESY OF GALLERIES AND SUBJECTS

RECREATION