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# Los Angeles Times

## Culture: High & Low

With Carolina A. Miranda

### Datebook: Cuba photography, a fictional TED talk, Chicano portraiture

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Liz Magic Laser often manipulates newspaper articles and other public texts into compelling video and performance works. At Various Small Fires, she transforms a Dostoyevsky passage into a TED talk delivered by a 10-year-old. (Liz Magic Laser / Various Small Fires)

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It is a busy start to the art season in Los Angeles, with openings all over the sprawling, concrete-covered mass (mess?) we call home. This includes wry video by Liz Magic Laser, the blobby forms of Alma Allen, David Stork's dreamy images of Cuba in the '90s, and Roberto Chavez's brilliantly colored portraits. Plus there's painting, giant steel sculptures and a group show devoted to ethereal light. Here's what we've got in our Datebook:

**Liz Magic Laser, "The Thought Leader," and Anna Sew Hoy, "Face No Face," at Various Small Fires.** The year kicks off with a highly intriguing pair of exhibitions at VSF. Laser, a multimedia artist known for transforming the meaning of texts by restaging them in funny or absurd ways, has created a fictional TED talk out of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's "Notes From Underground." Meanwhile, Sew Hoy will be showing sculptures that create strange voids while employing material (such as denim) in wry and unlikely ways. Verrrry excited about these shows. *Opening reception 6 p.m. Saturday. Runs through Feb. 21. 812 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood, vsf.la.*

**Alma Allen, at Blum & Poe.** Allen's sculptures are heavy — made from materials such as marble, bronze, travertine and wood — but you wouldn't guess that by looking at them. His bulbous and amoeboid pieces have a suppleness and buoyancy that seem to defy gravity and the materials from which they are made. *Opening reception 6 p.m. Saturday. Runs through Feb. 28. 2727 S. La Cienega Blvd., Culver City, blumandpoe.com.*

**Sadie Benning, "Fuzzy Math," at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects.** Vielmetter's entire gallery space will be turned over to the New York-based artist, who produces puzzle-like paintings that mix bold, bright color with graceful texture. *Opening reception 6 p.m. Saturday. Runs through Feb. 14. 6006 Washington Blvd., Culver City, vielmetter.com.*

**David Stork, "10 Block Square: Havana 1999," at Couturier Gallery.** This L.A.-based photographer lived in Cuba as a young man in the 1980s when his father served as Dutch ambassador. And it's clear that he's never lost his affection for the place — a sentiment that is captured in this series of photographs, from the late 1990s, when Stork returned and documented a 10-block square section of Havana in the midst of a profound economic crisis. He captures the city's surreal, frozen-in-time feel, but also provides glimpses of everyday people who simply want to make it through to the next day. *Opening reception 6 p.m. Saturday. Runs through Feb. 14. 166 N. La Brea Ave., Hancock Park, Los Angeles, couturiergallery.com.*

**"Roberto Chavez: Portraits," at Glike Gallery.** Chavez is one of those wondrous stories that emerged out of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time series of exhibitions. He's a longtime educator and artist who produced a compelling body of painting over the course of his life, but his career was overlooked by the art establishment until it was resuscitated for a PST exhibition at the **Autry National Center** in 2011. Last fall, he was the subject of a full-on retrospective at the **Vincent Price**

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**Art Museum.** If you missed that show (which contained some terrifically **mordant-funny canvases**), now's your chance: this new Culver City gallery space is showing Chavez's portraits. *Opening reception 7 p.m. Friday. Runs through Feb. 22, 5890 Blackwelder St., Ste. B, Culver City, [glikegallery.com](http://glikegallery.com).*

**"Space Program," a group show, at Steve Turner.** Turner is debuting his new Hollywood exhibition space Saturday (until recently he was on Mid-Wilshire, across the street from the L.A. County Museum of Art). "Space Program" is a group show featuring works by his stable of artists — including sculpture by Yung Jake, paintings by Deborah Grant and a behemoth 20-foot collaged work by the always-intriguing Camilo Restrepo. *Opening reception 6 p.m. Saturday. Runs through Feb. 7. 6830 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, [steveturner.la](http://steveturner.la).*

**"The Heart Is the Frame," at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions.** A thoughtful group exhibition gathers a wide range of video, photographic and sculptural works for a look at the ways in which art can penetrate everyday life. *Through Feb. 14. 6522 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, [welcometolace.org](http://welcometolace.org).*

**"Three Painters: Walpa D'Mark, Barbara Kaleta, and Ian Pines," at Coagula Curatorial.** Works by three emerging Los Angeles painters collectively touch on everything from psychedelia to landscape to the visceral bits of the human body. *Opening reception 7 p.m. Saturday. Runs through Feb. 14. 974 Chung King Road, [coagulacuratorial.com](http://coagulacuratorial.com).*

**"Elemental: Seeing the Light," at Descanso Gardens.** This gallery puts on exhibitions that examine the materials that can make a garden come to life, such as clay and water. On this go-around, they take on the subject of light in a group show that looks at the ways in which artists — from light and space stalwart Larry Bell to photographer Nancy Macko — are inspired by ethereal rays. *Opening reception 3 p.m. Sunday. Runs through April 5. 1418 Descanso Drive, La Cañada Flintridge, [descansogardens.org](http://descansogardens.org).*

**Christine Corday, "Protoist Series, Selected Forms," at the L.A. County Museum of Art.** Corday, an artist known for producing massive torch-cut sculptures, will have a pair of works on view in LACMA's public areas. This includes "UNE," a bendy three-ton steel work that was once displayed under Manhattan's elevated High Line park — a piece whose mass doesn't sacrifice a certain element of playfulness. *Through April 5. 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-City, Los Angeles, [lacma.org](http://lacma.org).*

**"In Focus: Play," at the Getty Museum.** And because it's nice to start the New Year on a light note: The Getty Center has gathered a series of 20th century images that capture humans of all ages in acts of gaming, carousing, celebration and vacation. *Through May 10. 1200 Getty Center Drive, Brentwood, Los Angeles, [getty.edu](http://getty.edu).*

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## ONGOING EXHIBITIONS:

**"The Contenders," a film series, at the Hammer Museum.** A collaboration between the Hammer and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, "The Contenders" is showcasing the most influential and innovative films of the last 12 months. This includes a screening Thursday night of Richard Linklater's *"Boyhood,"* followed by the final screening, next week, of Ana Lily Amirpour's terrific vampire flick, *"A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night."* *"Boyhood" screens tonight at 7:30 p.m. The series runs through Jan. 13. 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood, [hammer.ucla.edu](http://hammer.ucla.edu). For full screenings list, visit [hammer.ucla.edu/contenders](http://hammer.ucla.edu/contenders).*

**Josef Koudelka, "Nationality Doubtful," at the Getty Center.** A retrospective on the important Czech-born photographer gathers more than 180 works from throughout the artist's six-decades-long career. *Through March 22. 1200 Getty Center Drive, Brentwood, [getty.edu](http://getty.edu).*

**"Nature and the American Vision: The Hudson River School" at the L.A. County Museum of Art.** Forty-five paintings by the best-known artists of the American landscape movement, including Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt and Frederic Edwin Church. *Through June 7. 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire, Los Angeles, [lacma.org](http://lacma.org).*

**"Pierre Huyghe" at the L.A. County Museum of Art.** The hallucinatory retrospective of the French conceptualist, who is better known for his experimentations (a site-specific sculpture made out of a beehive) than the production of serial objects. Be sure to read our handy, [unsanctioned guide](#) to the show. *Through Feb. 22. 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire, Los Angeles, [lacma.org](http://lacma.org).*

**"World War I: War of Images, Images of War" at the Getty Research Institute.** On the 100th anniversary of World War I, the exhibition gathers art about the experience including propaganda and vernacular pieces. *Through April 19. 1200 Getty Center Drive, Brentwood, [getty.edu](http://getty.edu).*

**Rhonda Lieberman, "The Cats in Residence Program," at 356 Mission.** Because there's no such thing as too many cats, Lieberman is staging a gallery "purrformance" with lots of feline players as well as an interspecies lounge/installation designed by Freecell Architecture and Gia Wolff. *Runs through Jan. 25. 356 S. Mission Road, downtown Los Angeles, [356mission.com](http://356mission.com).*

**"When It Is Dark Enough" and "Lucien Shapiro: The Wore," at CES Gallery.** "When It Is Dark Enough" is a group show of hallucinatory and augmented images of people. A smaller exhibition displays Lucien Shapiro's masks, crafted from discarded items such as bottle caps. *Runs through Jan. 24. 709 Mateo St., downtown Los Angeles, [carlesmithgallery.com](http://carlesmithgallery.com).*

**"Sink or Swim: Designing for a Sea Change," at the Annenberg Space for Photography.** An exhibition of photographs shows the ways in which humans have been

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contending with the rise of sea levels around the globe. *Through May 3. 2000 Avenue of the Stars, Century City [annenbergspaceforphotography.org](http://annenbergspaceforphotography.org).*

**Gillian Wearing, "Everyone," at Regen Projects.** Wearing is known for creating riveting video pieces that play with ideas of truth and lies. A new video, "Fear and Loathing," is Wearing's first produced in the United States. *Through Jan. 24. 6750 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, [regenprojects.com](http://regenprojects.com).*

**Joanne Mitchell, "All the Hallways," at Proxy Gallery.** The gallery in a box has a new show up by L.A. artist Mitchell consisting of all the hallway scenes from Chantal Akerman's 1975 drama "Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles." *Through Jan. 31. Otis Graduate Studios, 10455 Washington Blvd., Culver City, [ospace.otis.edu/proxy\\_gallery](http://ospace.otis.edu/proxy_gallery).*

#### FINAL WEEK:

**Richard Misrach at Marc Selwyn Fine Art.** In his "Scrubs" series, the influential photographer captures tight details of desert vegetation in ways that render the plants abstract. *Through Jan. 17. 9953 S. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills, [marcsewynfineart.com](http://marcsewynfineart.com).*

**Ben Berlow at Farago.** A new gallery space shows paintings by the L.A.-born/New York-based Ben Berlow, who often works with bits of found paper as his canvas. *Through Jan. 16. 224 W. 8th St., downtown Los Angeles, [farago.xyz](http://farago.xyz).*

**Find me on Twitter @cmonstah.**

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