

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

The Huffington Post | By Priscilla Frank  

When thinking of bike-centric cities, Los Angeles isn't the first to come to mind. If you're intrigued, however, by the experience of pedaling through the stretched out city's traffic-laden streets without risking your life in the process, admiring the artwork of Lisa Anne Auerbach is a notable alternative.

HAVE THE STRENGTH TO GET ROUGH  
 OPEN TO NEWNESS  
 THERE IS A RESTLESSNESS ABOUT YOU  
 REMAIN AVAILABLE TO CO-CREATIONS  
 YOUR ANCESTORS GIVE YOU THUMBS UP  
 UTILIZE YOUR BREATH  
 THINGS WILL APPEAR WHEN YOU NEED THEM TO APPEAR  
 YOU'VE BEEN  
 SEE PEOPLE WITHOUT JUDGEMENT  
 YOU'RE WEAVING SOMETHING FOR PEOPLE  
 THIS FIERCE ALIVENESS  
 REMAIN AVAILABLE TO CO-CREATIONS  
 YOU'RE PARAGON  
 SOMETHING EXPANDED ENERGY PATTERN  
 A BEINGNESS BEHIND YOU  
 RIFE WITH SEXUALITY  
 RUN OUT OF  
 PSYCHIC KNOTTING CIRCLE  
 BELIEFS TO CREATE REALITY  
 THERE'S NO REAL TIME AND SPACE  
 I AM VERY MUCH HERE  
 PSYCHIC SOLDIER POWER  
 BE OPEN TO LET IT'S LIKE A TURNOVER  
 DAY ATTENTION  
 YOU DON'T JUST SETTLE  
 KEEP YOUR SOLAR PLEXUS CLEAN  
 I AM VERY MUCH  
 SPRING  
 GET READY FOR WINGS  
 EXPERIENCE YOUR OWN ENERGY  
 YOU HAVE THE STRENGTH TO GET THROUGH  
 ALLOW YOUR ENERGY BLEND WITH TREE ROOTS  
 RESURRECT YOURSELF FROM THE FLAMES  
 GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO HAVE FUN  
 EVERYTHING IS ON A POSITIVE OUTFLOW DIRECTION  
 IT'S LIKE A TURNOVER  
 UTILIZE A MANTRA  
 PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU LIKE  
 BRING THE LIGHT THROUGH HARBOR  
 A FORCE THAT'S A NON-FOR  
 THEY ARE COMING FORWARD  
 WAITING IS GOOD FOR YOU  
 EVERYBODY IS A PSYCHIC MEDIUM  
 BE OPEN TO HEALTH  
 BRING YOUR AURIC FIELD  
 ATTACHMENT  
 GET READY FOR WINGS  
 ALLOW YOUR ENERGY BLEND WITH TREE ROOTS  
 BE OPEN TO HEALTH  
 BRING THE LIGHT THROUGH HARBOR

In her upcoming exhibition at Gavlak Gallery, Auerbach veers away from the flagrantly political

in her knitted works, creating instead tapestries of psychic predictions and flattened bookshelves. Each of Auerbach's artistic projects feels like a new pocket of Los Angeles, discovered through and vaguely connected to a previous locale, yet still its own entity.

"I had been photographing these small, free-standing businesses for many years," Auerbach explained. "When I was photographing those, I was thinking about an individual space in the architecture of the city. Having a small business is a very American idea. It's the individual in the world, making your way, making a statement, being yourself -- in an architectural context. At the same time I was doing this project, I started hearing a lot about Megachurches."

A Megachurch, for the uninitiated, is a (most likely) Protestant church with at least 2,000 people in weekly attendance. The spaces themselves, which are scattered heavily around Southern California and other parts of the states, resemble monster malls more than religious sanctuaries.

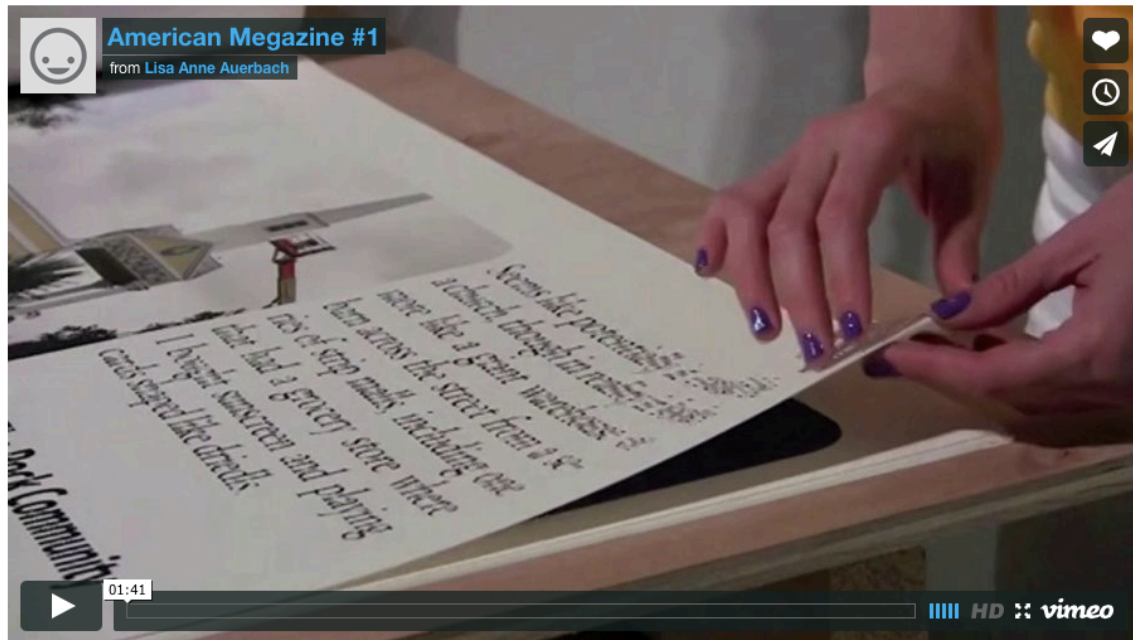
"Around 2008 in the electoral cycle there was a lot of language around individualism and commerce and being yourself," Auerbach said, "but then there were also a lot of ideas floating around about faith and family and God and being together and being unified. I felt like these two architectural elements of the American landscape were really, for me, indicative of the political language and ideas that were really floating around. It felt super American to me."

Auerbach began photographing both the Megachurches and small businesses as architectural wonders, as well as symbols for the competing American ideals of the time. Instead of hanging up her compendium of Megachurches as framed photographs, she opted for a Megazine, a super-sized zine composed of Megachurch photos and a diaristic account of Auerbach's visits there.



"There's something cumbersome about framed photographs and there's something very precious about them. I didn't want to give the Megachurches that much space, they're very corporate structures. They look like malls or casinos; I didn't want to invest in that. I have a history of making zines and I have a really large printer that prints beautiful photographs, so I wanted to make something ridiculous and oversized."

While Auerbach's sweaters brought political messages to the unconventional canvases of knitted garb, her Megazine transforms a traditionally radical medium into a bizarre tour guide through the corporate churches of SoCal.



American Megazine #1 from Lisa Anne Auerbach on Vimeo.

As a foil to her Megachurch series, Auerbach began photographing small business psychics; sites worlds apart yet still somehow related to their gargantuan counterparts. While photographing the independent psychics, Auerbach began getting readings herself, and became intrigued by the vocabulary exchanged in this interaction.

"I was interested in the language being used and this idea of an individual interpretation of some spiritual universe. In a way it felt like similar to how artists work. I felt like they were trying to convince me to see the world in a different way. And they're doing this on an individual level. I felt like there was this kinship in terms of bringing a broader idea, maybe supernatural in some way, to an audience of one."

Auerbach incorporates snippets of speech from these readings into knitted tapestries, swarming with blurbs including, "There's no real time and space" and "Beliefs co-create reality." The mantras float somewhere between inspirational, cheeky and bizarre, the cartoonish quotes offering a potential portal to a new understanding, with one foot in the world of clairvoyance and the other in the world of art.



The final portion of Auerbach's Gavlak exhibition focuses on bookshelves, both the knowledge they hold, the time they span and the signs they signify about their owners.

"I have attachments to books for reasons that are incomprehensible," Auerbach writes on her website. "I think I may 'need' to look something up in some book I haven't opened in a century or so or maybe someone I love gave it to me. Some books I can't imagine not having available to me anytime of the day or night, even if I never actually open them. They are comforting to have on the shelf, looking at me as I slumber, perhaps reminding me of another time or place or mindset. Anyhow, I don't trust anyone who doesn't have at least a few books in the house. You might not be able to judge a book by its cover but you can find a lot about somebody from their bookshelves. Or lack thereof."

"It's almost like a bookshelf becomes a self portrait of whosever's books they are," Auerbach told HuffPost. Thus the artist created a zine-like summation of all the books in her massive collection. Titled "Bookshelf," it features the title and author of each book along with details that swerve back and forth between plot summation, personal experiences and vague observations, treating the book as text and physical object.

One reads:

"I bought this book in order to learn about Kraftwerk's cycling team, but I never read it. Am saving it for a rainy day, though those are rare in Los Angeles."

Along with the zine, Auerbach also crafted knitted representations of bookshelves, dizzying black-and-white spreads of book spines with no center. "You could probably make a case for the bookshelves being emblematic of place in some way," the artist said. "There are a lot of books about LA or of LA artists or were read in grad school in LA. There's probably some LA-ness."

While the exhibition isn't consciously painting a portrait of Los Angeles, the new age influence of psychic mantras and the easy breezy pace of a bike ride certainly offer a taste of that Southern California *something*.

"Who knows if it's really an LA show? A lot of it has been influenced and inspired by riding my bike in LA," Auerbach expressed nonchalantly.

Auerbach's exhibition runs from September 13 through October 18, 2014 at Gavlak Gallery in Los Angeles, and you can get a taste of the work below.







