

"Gallery Visits and Bible Study," by Scarlet Cheng for Artillery magazine, November/December 2020 issue.

artillery

SHOPTALK

BY SCARLET CHENG

The Art Economy

Inquiring minds want to know how galleries are faring during the pandemic. As you know, a number have opened up with limited hours, reservations and timed entry. More than once I have found myself the only person visiting a gallery, which made me feel pretty safe. Other times I have seen people drop in, and the galleries usually are not so full that they refuse entry. But given the considerable rents they have in commercial areas or buildings, how can galleries survive? Some have remained closed, and sadly, some experts estimate that one out of three commercial galleries will close for good.

In a very informal survey, I asked several galleries whether they have been able to get adjustments in rent. One in a DTLA space said, simply, no. Another in a midtown location was reportedly offered a 7% reduction. Two galleries happily reported that they were able to negotiate a 50% reduction; one is on a month-to-month, and the other managed to shorten their rather long lease—good going! This is a moment when galleries that own their own buildings, like L.A. Louver, must be especially happy they had the foresight and wherewithal to purchase when they could.

Speaking of L.A. Louver, a big congrats for their 45th Anniversary—being celebrated with the show "45 at 45" through Jan. 16. It's featuring 45 artists, natch, with regulars like Gajin Fujita, David Hockney and Alison Saar. But also some surprises, artists they don't usually show, such as Carmen Argote, Nick Cave and Liza Lou. All the best to founder Peter Goulds and staff—we're looking forward to the 50th, man!

Okay, we've been expecting grim news on the arts employment front, and we got it in an interim report, part of the Otis Report on Creative Economy, released Oct. 22 and prepared by Beacon Economics. In September, California's unemployment rate hit 11.0% (15.9% in Los Angeles), while the nationwide average was 7.9%. Overall, 1.6 million fewer Californians were employed in September than in February, just before the pandemic shutdown. The creative industries lost 284,000 positions since February 2020, but that definition includes people in motion picture and fashion industries. Narrowing it down to "fine arts," there was a 38.7% loss in jobs—this number includes art schools, galleries and museums, and performance spaces.

Congratulations!

Last month Studio Museum's Director Thelma Golden announced that LA multimedia artist Cauleen Smith was winner of the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize. This prize is a substantial one, \$50,000 cash, and honors an African American artist for "great innovation, promise and creativity." Smith's first NYC exhibition, "Mutualities," is on view at the Whitney, and she was in the Whitney's 2017 biennial. Congrats, Cauleen!



Gallery Visits and Bible Study

Fortunately, I continue to be impressed by what I'm seeing on my (limited) gallery rounds. Moskowitz Bayse just finished a sold-out show of Eleanor Szwed, "Earth Signs." Szwed's oil paintings offer up witty, thought-provoking worlds of myth and metaphor, with the aid of plump figures floating through fanciful landscapes. In the large painting *Salomé* (2020), a rotund *Salomé* holds up a tray with the mashed head of John the Baptist, against a gridded background. Ever curious, Yours Truly decided to look up the original accounts in the Bible—which tell of a girl dancing for Herod, then asking for John's head at the prompting of her mother, Herodias, whose marriage to Herod had been opposed by John. Did you get that? I had to read the passages a couple times myself. The dancer was not named in the accounts by Mark and Matthew, and her motive was not, as I had gleaned from popular lore, because she was angry at John's rejection of her. No, she was not a woman scorned, but rather a woman who listened too well to her embittered Mom.

GAVLAK seems to be on a winning streak presenting the exceptional work of emerging young artists. "Wisdom Embedded in the Treads" is the first solo at the gallery for Kim Dacres, a Jamaican-American artist based in Harlem. It features 11 busts made out of recycled bicycle and automobile tires, with head and facial features made from wrapping, twisting and combining parts of tires, then screwing them together. Especially fascinating is how the artist uses tread patterns to recreate dreadlock, braiding and other hair ornamentation. These sculptures, some of them inspired by people the artist knows, have an undeniably powerful presence.



(Top) Installation view, Kim Dacres: *Wisdom Embedded in the Treads*, 2020. Image courtesy of the artist and GAVLAK Los Angeles / Palm Beach. Photography by Ed Mumford.

(Inset) Eleanor Szwed, *Meeting of the Flat Earth Society*, 2020, oil on canvas, 63 x 77 in. Courtesy of the artist and Moskowitz Bayse, Los Angeles.

Grant Alert!

Artists, see if you're eligible for the LACE Lightning Fund, a new regional regranting fund underwritten by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. In this first round, the Fund offers emergency relief grants for LA-based independent visual artists with financial hardship related to COVID-19. That could be quite a few of you out there, so this is going to be competitive, but there will be 50 grants of \$1,500 awarded. APPLY BY NOVEMBER 20!

Who will decide? A panel of local cultural workers, artists and LACE staff will review the applications, weighing factors of eligibility, application content, demonstration of financial need, active artistic practice and a commitment to equity. They're encouraging applications from artists whose communities may be traditionally underrepresented in the areas of "visual art opportunities, economies and funding streams. Strong consideration will be given to Black, Indigenous, POC, elder, LGBTQ+, disabled, immuno-compromised and migrant artists."

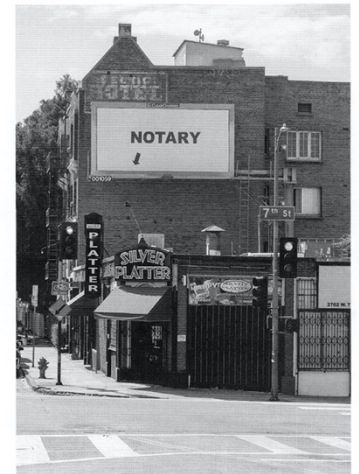


Kahil Joseph, *BLKNWS*, 2018–ongoing. (Top) Two-channel *fugitive newscast*. Courtesy of the artist. Installation view, "Made in L.A. 2020: a version," Hank's Mini Market, Los Angeles. (Bottom) Two-channel *fugitive newscast*. Courtesy of the artist. Installation view, "Made in L.A. 2020: a version," Sole Foks, Los Angeles. Photos: Jeff McLane.

Delayed in LA

The much-awaited "Made in L.A. 2020: a version" was scheduled to open this summer, but the Hammer Museum and The Huntington, co-sponsors of the exhibition, haven't been able to reopen due to state and county COVID regulations. Institutions, schools, restaurants, etc., are reopening, depending on COVID stats and what category they've been slotted into. Why museums were grouped along with gyms is a mystery to me. This summer "Made in L.A." looked forward to September openings, but September has come and gone, and LA has been one of California's worst-hit COVID. It appears now we're looking to next year....

In the meantime, two of the intended artist projects can already be seen. Larry Johnson's billboards are featured at five sites in the MacArthur Park neighborhood, and Kahil Joseph's installations of *BLKNWS* are taking place at six accessible locations, including a coffee shop and a mini-mart. For full details go to <https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2020/made-in-la-2020-version> or <https://www.huntington.org/made-in-la-2020>

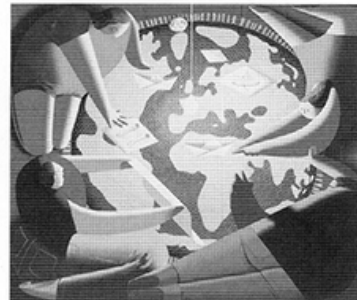


Larry Johnson, *Notary*, 2020. Billboard at S. Rampart Blvd. and W. Seventh St., Los Angeles 90057 (facing north, 144 x 288 in. Courtesy of the artist, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, and 303 Gallery, New York. Installation view, "Made in L.A. 2020: a version." Photo: Joshua White / JWPictures.com



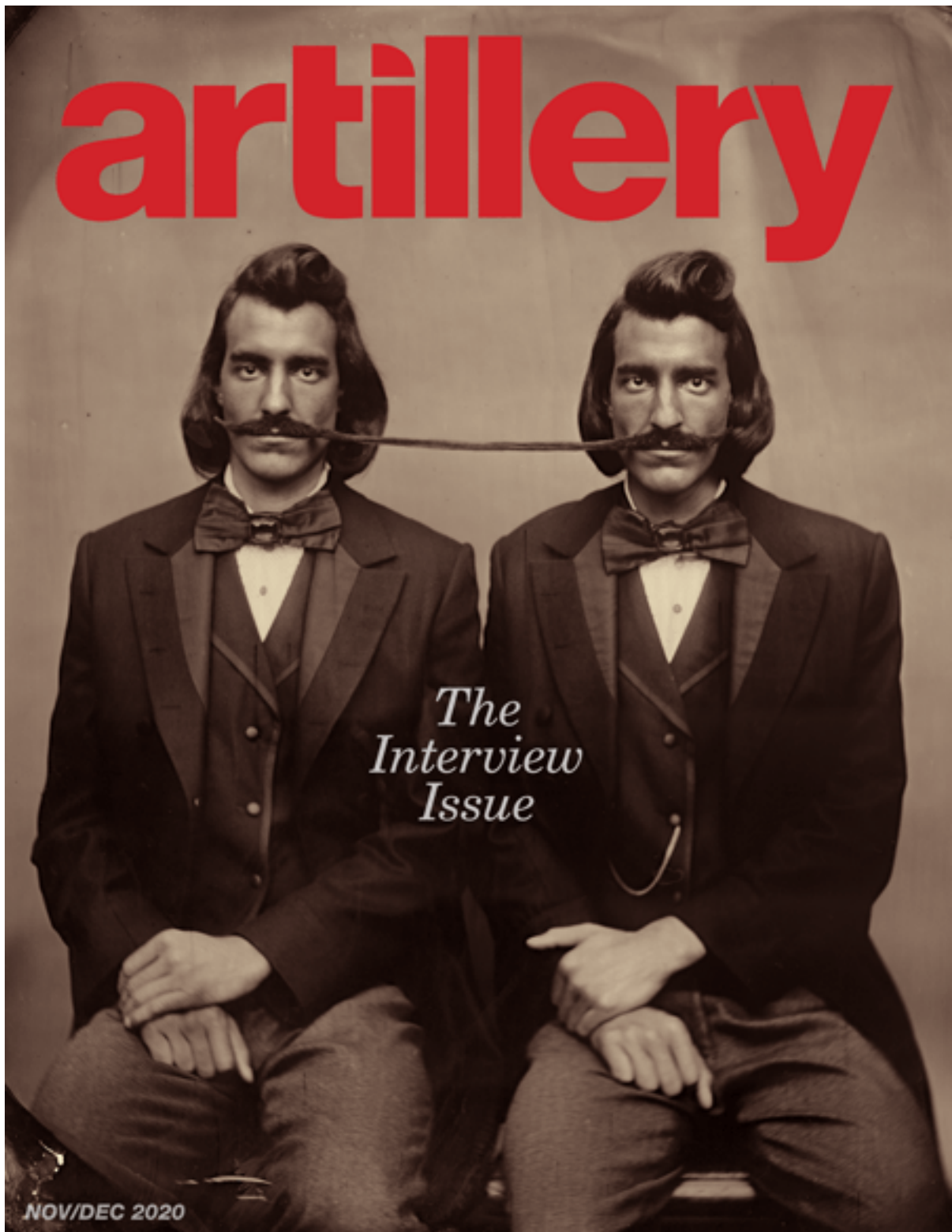
Gallery Visits and Bible Study

Fortunately, I continue to be impressed by what I'm seeing on my (limited) gallery rounds. Moskowitz Bayse just finished a sold-out show of Eleanor Swordy, "Earth Signs." Swordy's oil paintings offer up witty, thought-provoking worlds of myth and metaphor, with the aid of plump figures floating through fanciful landscapes. In the large painting *Salomé* (2020), a rotund Salomé holds up a tray with the mashed head of John the Baptist, against a gridded background. Ever curious, Yours Truly decided to look up the original accounts in the Bible—which tell of a girl dancing for Herod, then asking for John's head at the prompting of her mother, Herodias, whose marriage to Herod had been opposed by John. Did you get that? I had to read the passages a couple times myself. The dancer was not named in the accounts by Mark and Matthew, and her motive was not, as I had gleaned from popular lore, because she was angry at John's rejection of her. No, she was not a woman scorned, but rather a woman who listened too well to her embittered Mom.



GAVLAK seems to be on a winning streak presenting the exceptional work of emerging young artists. "Wisdom Embedded in the Treads" is the first solo at the gallery for Kim Dacres, a Jamaican-American artist based in Harlem. It features 11 busts made out of recycled bicycle and automobile tires, with head and facial features made from wrapping, twisting and combining parts of tires, then screwing them together. Especially fascinating is how the artist uses tread patterns to recreate dreadlock, braiding and other hair ornamentation. These sculptures, some of them inspired by people the artist knows, have an undeniably powerful presence.

GAVLAK
LOS ANGELES | PALM BEACH



1700 SOUTH SANTA FE AVENUE, SUITE 440 LOS ANGELES, CA 90021 +1 323.467.5700
340 ROYAL POINCIANA WAY, SUITE M334 PALM BEACH, FL 33480 +1 561.833.0583
GAVLAKGALLERY.COM INFO@GAVLAKGALLERY.COM