

GO BIG OR GO HOME: COLA 2016

Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall

by Beverly Western ·

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Last weekend we threw on our LA Sunday best and attended the opening of **COLA 2016** at the **Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery**. If you've never been that's probably because you didn't realize there was a gallery (a good one at that) tucked away in the mini man-made forest that is Barnsdall Park in Hollywood.



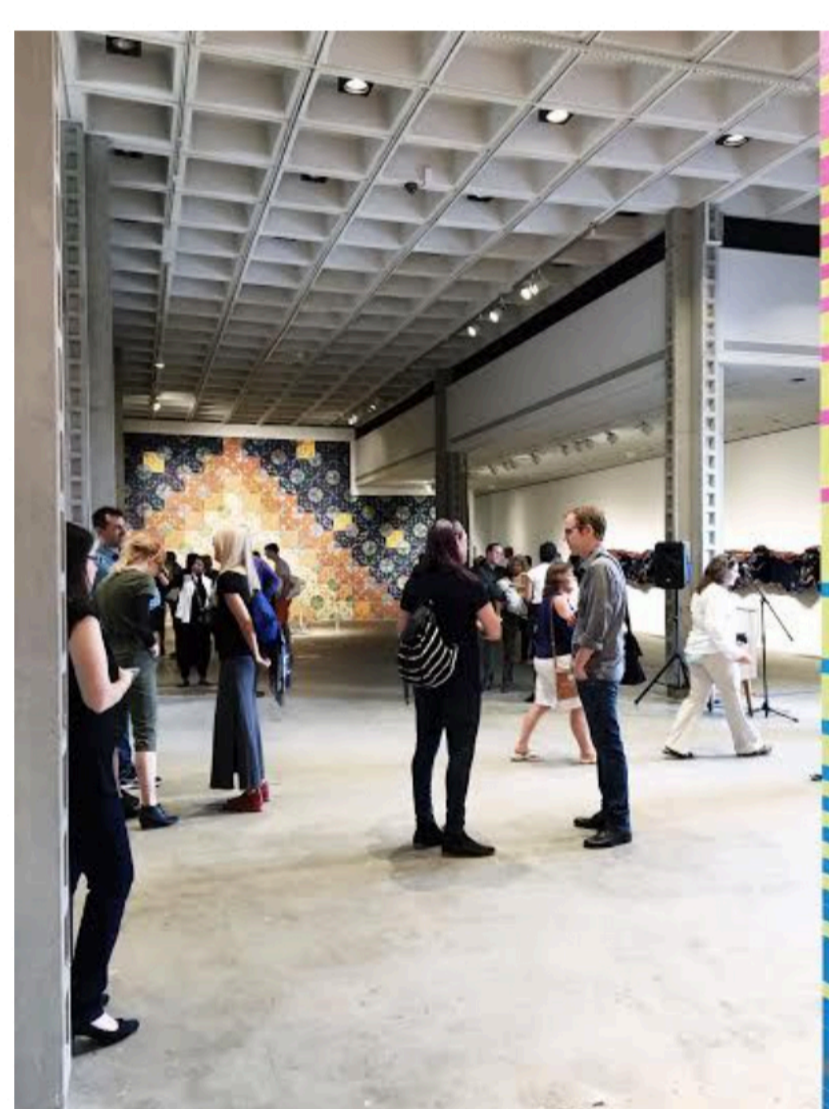
Entrance to LAMAG

Each year The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) awards 12 bad-ass mid-career artists whose achievements enhance our dynamic and diverse city. In fact, it's one of the rare municipal programs to directly fund artists in the United States. *Holla!* Artists are awarded a C.O.L.A Fellowship of about 10k of support to create new work that is then showcased in a non-thematic group show.

Does the phrase “non-thematic group show” make you cringe? The thought of important works thrown together in a room all loosey-goosey with no regard for their important artwork neighbor? Yeah us too. But we were pleasantly surprised by the serendipitous combination of works brought to the table by **Paolo Davanzo, Marsian De Lellis, Keiko Fukazawa, Megan Geckler, Won Ju Lim, Blue McRight, Sandeep Mukherjee, Christine Nguyen** and **Jim Skuldt**.

Despite the lack of theme there was an undeniable sense of “go big or go home” that ran through the show, unintentionally binding the works in their Instagram-ability. Large-scale installations, ambitious paintings, and even a particularly unsettling performance piece by De Lellis—which made one pretty puzzled woman get down on the floor and stare at it upside down.

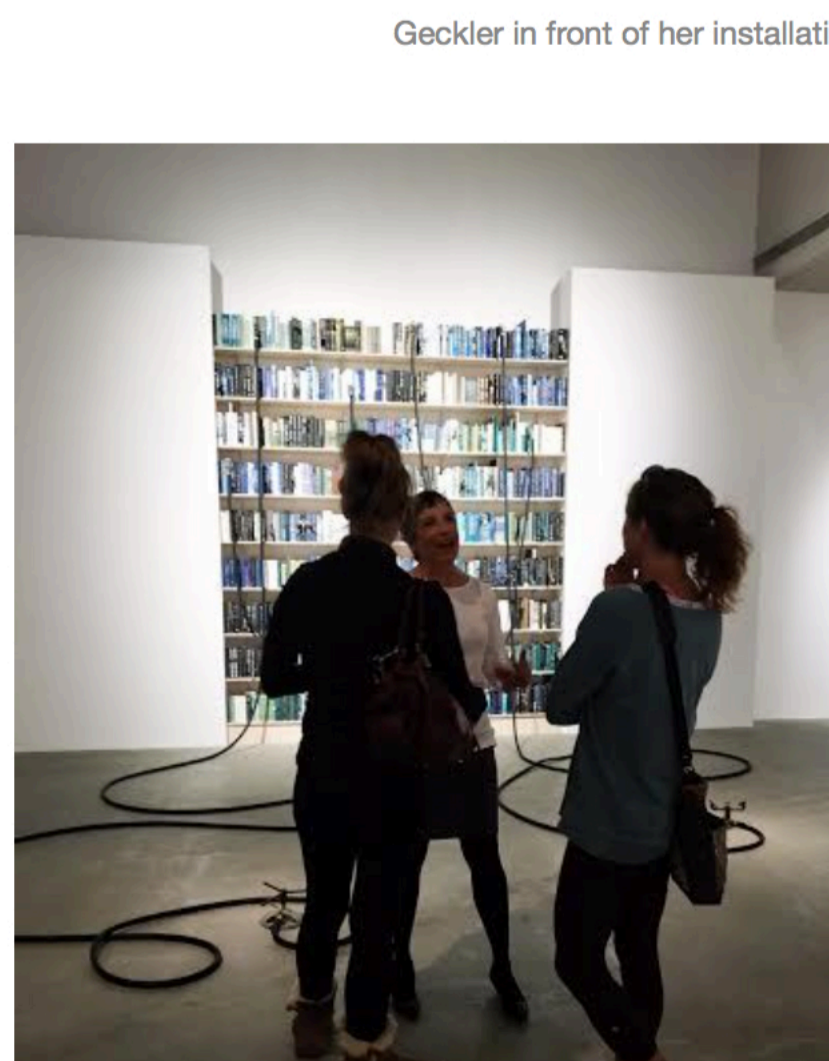
The energy in the room reflected the momentous nature of the work and the occasion. Limited schmoozing, lots of hugging, smiling and congratulating. **Eva Chimento** and **Samuel Freeman** came out to support their artists; Megan Geckler ran around excitedly taking people on tours of her work and popping in and out of her “Your escape from patterns your parents designed” architectural installation, and Blue McRight continually answered questions about her “The Book of Rain” piece with enjoyment.



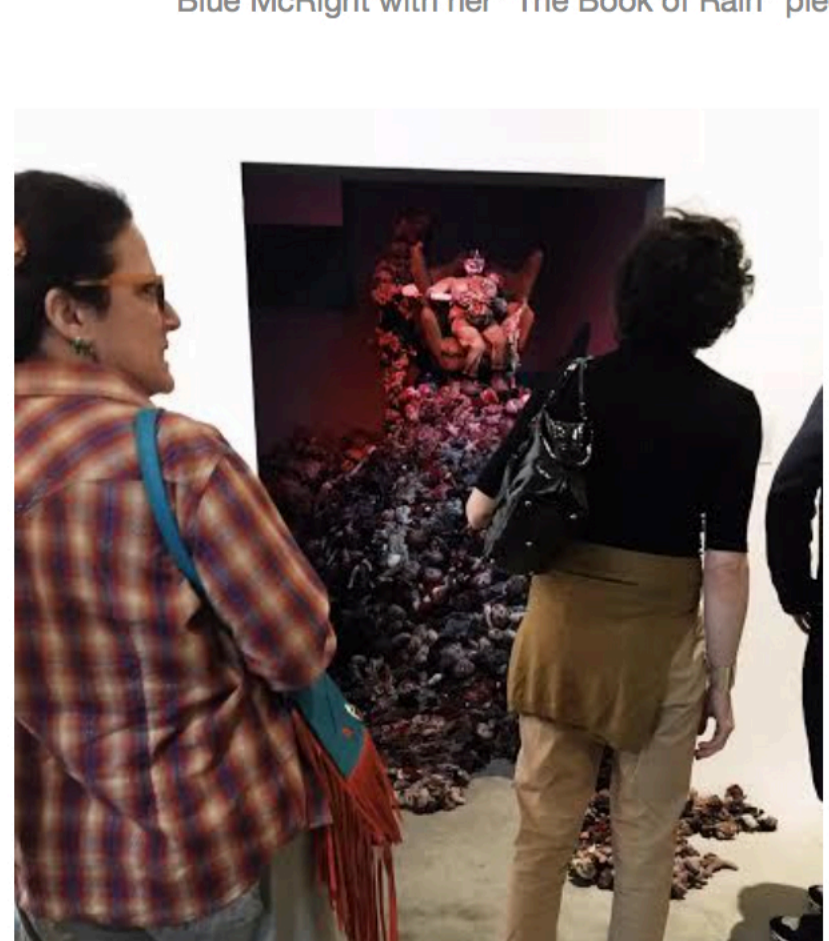
LA Municipal Art Gallery



Geckler in front of her installation



Blue McRight with her “The Book of Rain” piece



Marsian De Lellis' creepy installation

After making our rounds a few times we wandered out to the back patio, grabbed a water (no alcohol at the event, besides it was 3 p.m.), and looked out over Los Angeles, feeling a tinge of pride in our city and our artists and wishing every opening felt as inspired as this one.

COLA 2016 will be on view at LAMAG until July 3rd.