

**Laura Owens  
at the Wattis  
Institute  
(L.A. in S.F.)**

**April 28–  
July 23, 2016**

The current Laura Owens solo exhibition, *Ten Paintings*, at the Wattis Institute in San Francisco, is a perplexing visual poem. What are the “paintings,” and how are they paintings? The walls in the first room are plastered floor to ceiling in 70 clay-coated, silkscreened, drawn and painted-on sheets of paper. Throughout the space, there are architectural nods to both Owens’ studio space and the exhibition space itself. Overt and implied optical illusions abound, but Owens never regresses to impressing, and this is perhaps what is ultimately most impressive. The show has been rigorously conceived as a totalized environment, filled with repurposed works and reclaimed spam emails. It reveals hints of intimacy,

**Keith J. Varadi**





and digital, the real and virtual, the personal and professional with egotistical dexterity and assumed vulnerability. In an extremely tenuous election year, in which galleries are closing, auction houses are scrambling, artists are being taken advantage of, and another recession looms as a real possibility, alternatives seem to be the only source of hope. Owens here, at the top of her painting game, in a city presently so sure of solutions, proves once again, with "paintings," that alternatives must be sought and (can be) found.

1

*Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947–2016* (Installation view) (2016). Image courtesy of the artists and Hauser Wirth & Schimmel. Louise Bourgeois: Art © The Easton Foundation/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Photo: Brian Forrest.

2

Carl Cheng, *Supply & Demand* (1972). Venus flytrap, insects, plastic case, humidifier, wiring, grass, wood pedestal, grow lamps, 47 x 24 x 18.6 inches. Image courtesy of Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles. Photo: Jeff McClane.

3

Joan Snyder, *Spring* (1971). Oil, acrylic, and spray enamel on canvas, 78 x 108 inches. Image courtesy of Parrasch Heijnen Gallery.

4

Eleanor Antin, *Margaret Mead* (1970). Umbrella, chair, binoculars with case, thermos, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist and Diane Rosenstein, Los Angeles.

5

*Performing the Grid* (Installation view) (2016). Images courtesy of Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design. Photo: Chris Warner.

6

Laura Owens, *Untitled* (Installation view) (2016). Acrylic, oil, Flashe, silkscreen inks, charcoal, pastel pencil, graphite, and sand on wall paper. Image courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York; Sadie Coles HQ, London; Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne. © Laura Owens. Photo: Johnna Arnold.

## Review Contributors

Hana Cohn lives and works in Los Angeles.

Eli Diner is the US editor of *Flash Art*. He has written for numerous publications, including *Art Forum*, *Book Forum*, and *Bulletins of the Serving Library*, and has curated a number of fine shows. In 2015 he initiated the project-space, sculpture garden, and serialized novella *Hakuna Matata*.

Claire de Dobay Rifelj is a curator, writer, and art historian based in Los Angeles. She has produced exhibitions for CalArts, the Hammer Museum, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Williams College Museum of Art, and her writing has appeared in exhibition catalogs, the *LA Weekly*, and on *ForYourArt.com*. She focuses on postwar modern and contemporary art, in particular considerations of temporality, ephemerality, spectatorship, and narrative, and she completed her doctorate at New York University in 2015.

Katie Bode is an Independent Curator who lives and works in Los Angeles. She is a contributor to *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles (Carla)* and is the Managing Editor of *Psychiana Magazine*.

Molly Larkey is an artist and writer based in Los Angeles.

Keith J. Varadi is an artist, writer, poet, performer, and curator, who has mounted solo exhibitions at Night Gallery (Los Angeles), Cooper Cole (Toronto), and Et al. (San Francisco) this past spring. His writing has appeared in *Art in America*, *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles (Carla)*, *Kaleidoscope*, *LEAP*, and *Spike Art Quarterly*, among other publications. Additionally, he has recently released a book of poetry and photography (Maga Books) and a limited edition seven-inch record (Night Gallery).

## Exquisite L.A. Contributors

Claressinka Anderson has worked as an art dealer, advisor, and curator in Los Angeles for the past 10 years. Originally from London, England, she is the owner of Marine Projects and a published writer of fiction and poetry.

Joe Pugliese, a California native, specializes in portraiture and shoots for a mixture of editorial and advertising clients. He has recently completed projects for such titles as *Wired*, *Vanity Fair*, *Men's Journal* and *Billboard* magazines, as well as advertising campaigns for Netflix, Sony, and AMC. His images have been honored by the Society of Publication Design, *American Photography*, and *Communication Arts*. He lives and works in Los Angeles.