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Another Year in L.A.'s "New" exhibit »

11:54 AM PT, July 21, 2010



Cathy Stone is sitting on the patio in front of the Pacific Design Center. Her wispy blond hair takes flight in the breeze, and yellow cat-eye sunglasses suggest a whimsy and fashion sense of someone younger than her years. Her partner in art, David Stone, is in all black, squinting behind Ray-Bans in the bright July light.

The husband-and-wife team moved to Los Angeles from Sacramento in 2004 to launch the "One Year in L.A." project, a 12-month series of David's work, which involved installations including a tumble of used paperback books and photos of L.A.'s dilapidated landscape. They're still getting accustomed to Southern California but have become a vital part of the art scene here. After their yearlong project wrapped, they continued to run their live/work gallery space in Glassell Park for six years. But late last year, they pulled up stakes. They're reopening later this month in the Pacific Design Center. The first exhibit in the space, a group show with five artists, opens Thursday and is aptly titled "New."

The only complication? They'll have just 72 hours to install the entire show. "That's OK. I've been known to walk on water," Cathy jokes.

Their new gallery occupies space B267 in the Pacific Design Center's labyrinth of design showrooms and galleries. Last year, under the curatorial direction of Helen Varola, the PDC

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launched a program called Design Loves Art, drawing galleries and artists to exhibit in the glimmering blue building by offering yearlong leases and free rent — on the condition that 10% of gallery sales go back to the center. As a result, competition to exhibit within the Pacific Design Center is fierce.

“We’re really trying to mesh the two kinds of dynamics that make the art world what it is and design world what it is,” said Varola recently by telephone. Of “Another Year in L.A.,” Varola says, “They represent some very good artists, they have critical mass and I respect them very much.”

“We’re very lucky because she’s been inundated with people who wanted to have a space here,” David Stone says. “And not to brag, but we seemed to have passed muster.”

They’ll be in good company. MOCA has an exhibition space within the Pacific Design Center, and Carl Berg Projects, Den Contemporary, See Line and Mastodon Mesa have also set up shop. In September, Patrick Painter Gallery will open a space, and a yet-to-be-announced museum-curated film screening series will launch later in the fall.

For their “New” exhibition, “Another Year in L.A.” will present work from Joe Amrhein, Linda Day, Richard Haley and Jacob Melchi in a range of media, including photography and paintings on vellum. They’ll also exhibit smaller pieces by Stephen Kaltenbach, a Sacramento artist who installed a behemoth concrete sculpture of a disembodied head in the Design Center’s lobby in March.

In an effort to draw more art patrons, many of the galleries will leave their doors open for an experience that Cathy Stone likens to the walkability of Chinatown or Santa Monica’s Bergamot Station. After being in northeast L.A. for many years, in a remote space that David Stone says was “out in the middle of nowhere,” they’re looking forward to the foot traffic, especially in a time that’s been rough for galleries.

Varola, however, seems to see the economy as a temporary stumbling block. “I’ve been through another recession in the early 1990s. And when the economy starts challenging us, that’s when we start getting really creative. It keeps things interesting.”

Another Year in L.A.’s “New” exhibit, Pacific Design Center, 8687 Melrose Ave., Suite B267, Los Angeles.

Opening reception July 22, 5 - 8:30 p.m.; show runs through Sept. 10. Free

--Alie Ward

Photo: Stephen Kaltenbach, "Crowned Head," ceramic. Courtesy of Another Year in LA.

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