

FRIEZE

Essence Harden's "Ecologies" of the Present at Frieze Los Angeles 2024

Curated for the first time by Essence Harden, this year's *Focus* section explores the intimate, environmental and urban dimensions of ecologies, with new work by Javier Ramirez, Akea Brionne and Lilian Martinez

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Across all Frieze fairs, Focus is a space dedicated to galleries founded within the last 12 years. The section continues to be supported by Stone Island as its Official Partner, who provides bursaries to assist young galleries' participation. This year's Los Angeles edition is under the new curation of Essence Harden (Visual Arts Curator and Program Manager, California African American Museum) and comprises 12 galleries, five of which are making their Frieze fair debut: Babst, Dominique, Quinn Harrelson, Shulamit Nazarian and pt.2 Gallery. With the majority of participating spaces based in LA, Focus is a celebration of the city's vibrant and evolving art community.

Harden centers Focus this year on "ecology". The section brings together a diverse span of artists who explore what the term means to them. The artists draw different boundaries between and within individuals and environments to map ecologies of the environment, community, urban landscape and labor systems.

Harden said: "I'm honored to curate the 2024 Focus section. I was deeply interested in the possibility of stretching the term to include position, geography, material and theoretical concerns within art-making. The presentations chosen for this year's section reflect that winding impulse."

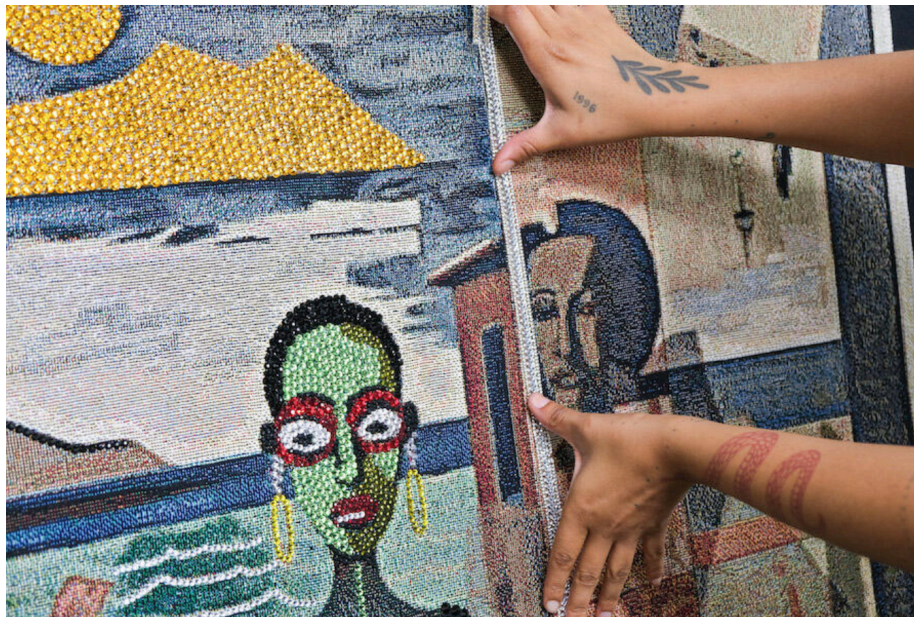
Six takes on "ecologies" from Focus at Frieze Los Angeles

Muzae Sesay's practice is driven by his relentless commitment to understanding our relationship to space, memory and community. His latest work, presented by pt.2 Gallery, tests the rigidity embodied by the architecture and design of our built environments. Reducing space and shape to rudimentary forms and harmonious planes of color, Sesay's paintings question the dimensionality of the urban setting and how we encounter it.



Muzae Sesay, *Bonding Hour Balcony*, 2022. Oil, oil pastel, vinyl emulsion and colored pencil on canvas, 1.5 × 1.5 m. Courtesy the artist and pt.2 Gallery

Lyles & King presents new textile works by **Akea Brionne**. Working from her archive of family photographs, Brionne uses a digital loom to weave diaristic tapestries that chart her ancestral history, everyday experience and Black identity. She collages memories, both visual and audio, with images of the environments she inhabits, alongside found objects. The resultant combination is tinged with surrealism, as Brionne questions our grip on truth and narrative.



Akea Brionne working in her Kansas City studio, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Lyles & King

Brionne's ecology of the self is also pursued by **Kent O'Connor** in his solo booth at Matthew Brown. O'Connor responds to the historical conventions of the still-life genre in his "table paintings", which record items strewn across his studio work surfaces. He manipulates scale and perspective to make way for a new mode of symbolism in which all artefacts, from the practical to the uncanny, exist on the same plane.



Kent O'Connor, *The Month of March (The Second Coming)*, 2022. Oil on canvas in artist's frame, 1.3 × 1.5 m. © Kent O'Connor; courtesy the artist and Matthew Brown; photo: Ed Mumford

Sculptor and land artist **James Perkins** is the subject of a solo presentation at Hannah Traore. Perkins begins with stone and wood structures that frame silk-stretched canvases, which he then buries in the sand outside his Fire Island studio. Here, they are subjected to wind, rain, ocean spray, investigation by animals and the bleaching of the sun, embedding a dimension of natural ecology within the pieces themselves. The works shift in color and texture as Perkins plays with site-specificity, rotation, washing and time.



James Perkins, *Purple Rain*, 2022. Silk, sun, sand, salt, wind, wood, ocean and bay water, 224 × 91 × 10 cm. Courtesy Hannah Traore Gallery

The Los Angeles-based **Lilian Martinez** presents new works with Ochi. Martinez navigates the leisure spaces of museums, homes and gardens, looking at how brown women might inhabit these environments. These recent acrylic paintings envision spaces in which women feel safe, free and inspired to move slowly through their days. Through color and mood, Martinez explores an ecology of everyday pleasure, one that speaks to a collective desire to overturn how brown bodies have historically been visualized.



Lilian Martinez, *Without Airs (Paradise Is Paradising)*, 2023. Acrylic on canvas, 1.3 × 1.7 m. Courtesy the artist and Ochi; photo: Deen Babakhyi

Sow & Tailor presents a solo booth by painter and sculptor **Javier Ramirez**, whose work tells a specifically Californian story of immigration. Ramirez explores the gardening practices of Japanese and Latino workers who have shaped Los Angeles's cityscape and suburban sprawl, monumentalizing these undervalued labor communities by positioning his sculptures on pedestals that recall bonsai display, while his box-like presentations are modeled on Catholic shrines in Latinx households



Javier Ramirez, *La Puerta 1939*, 2023, acrylic, graphite, solid marker on canvas, 1.5 × 1.2 m. Courtesy: the artist and Sow & Tailor

Participating Focus Galleries, 2024

Babst Gallery, Los Angeles

Matthew Brown, Los Angeles

Dominique Gallery, Los Angeles

Quinn Harrelson, Los Angeles

Lyles & King, New York

Make Room, Los Angeles

Micki Meng, San Francisco, New York

Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles

Ochi, Los Angeles; Ketchum, Idaho

pt.2 Gallery, Oakland

Sow & Tailor, Los Angeles

Hannah Traore Gallery, New York

Stone Island is the Official Partner of Focus at Frieze fairs globally, offering grants to galleries to aid participation.

Frieze Los Angeles is at Santa Monica Airport, February 29–March 3, 2024.