

NIGHT GALLERY

Molly Elizalde, "Why is L.A.'s Art Scene So Hot Right Now?" *Sweet*, January 27, 2016.

sweet

Why is L.A.'s Art Scene So Hot Right Now?

No two ways about it: Downtown L.A. is having a major art moment. The gallerists behind one of the neighborhood's most influential spaces, Night Gallery, give us an inside look at the area's changing landscape.

By Molly Elizalde



Installation View of Anne Libby's *Marrow Into Moxie*

When Davida Nemeroff moved to Los Angeles in 2009, she was taking a big leap: she had never been to the city before, and didn't know anyone. The Canadian artist had one year left on her visa, having recently graduated with an MFA from Columbia University, and the New York landscape at the time seemed bleak, especially regarding her hopes of securing gallery representation in such a competitive market. Arriving in L.A.'s Chinatown with all her belongings fresh off the Super Shuttle, Nemeroff was in search of new opportunities. But she soon realized that because she was no longer a student, she had lost one of her most important resources: her peer group ("your greatest influencers, inspiration, teachers, and critics").

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Installation View of David Kory's *Figure Constructions*

Luckily, Nemeroff wasn't alone in L.A. It just so happened that other Columbia grads, including on-the-rise artists Samara Golden and Paul Heyer, had moved West around the same time: "We all came from the same conversation in New York, so we were able to continue that at Night Gallery," Nemeroff says.

She opened up Night Gallery in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood just six months after settling in the city; it was titled as such because it was open from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., functioning as a post-studio, salon-style space for artists to talk about the work on view and their own artistic practices. "The level of ambition was new for L.A.," says Mieke Marple who started off as a visitor to the space and joined Nemeroff as the gallery's dealer a little over a year after the project began. "If you didn't go to grad school in L.A., you were alienated. Night Gallery was a place where anyone who felt a little like an outsider could go."

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Championing local artists like Mira Dancy (last year's darling at Art Basel Miami Beach, whose work is currently on view at MoMA PS1) and Jesse Mockrin (whose latest series of baroque-inspired paintings will be up at the gallery beginning March 5), the gallery's ambitious programming soon outgrew their space.

In 2013, at three years old, Night took a leap by moving to the outskirts of downtown L.A. "The area was really on the fringe, but we wanted a standalone building and it was what we could afford," says Nemeroff. With six times the space and a parking lot that doubled as a production space for building sculptures, they managed stay true to their ethos and still make a big impression (it also meant they could operate with normal hours). "It was important to be in this space where there was a lot of freedom," says Marple. Having come from a neighborhood where crowded openings, music shows, and parties could be disruptive to neighbors, "we went to a neighborhood without a neighborhood," Nemeroff adds.

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From left: Mieke Marple and Davida Nemeroff

That quiet, industrial aspect of the area has dramatically changed in the three years since they moved downtown. Indie exhibition space 356 Mission—a project from New York gallerist Gavin Brown—opened up the same week and others followed soon after. Some of Nemeroff and Marple's favorite new neighbors include the Los Angeles Contemporary Archive, François Ghebaly Gallery, and Arturo Bandini. Stumptown coffee and a luxury food market Urban Radish have both set up shop nearby, as well. It's not just the arts crowd populating the neighborhood, though. Hopping on the downtown culture bandwagon are a slew of design firms and tech companies—notably Elon Musk's Hyperloop—and with them lots of luxury condos.

The gallery's programming has matured, too. A major turning point was with Samara Golden's 2014 immersive installation *Mass Murder*, her first show with the gallery since they moved to the new space. "We were just getting to the point where we could have any kind of production budget for artists," says Marple. "Looking back on what she was able to achieve on the meager funds we had is incredible." Since then, Golden has gone on to have a solo installation at MoMA PS1 and will show at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco this spring.

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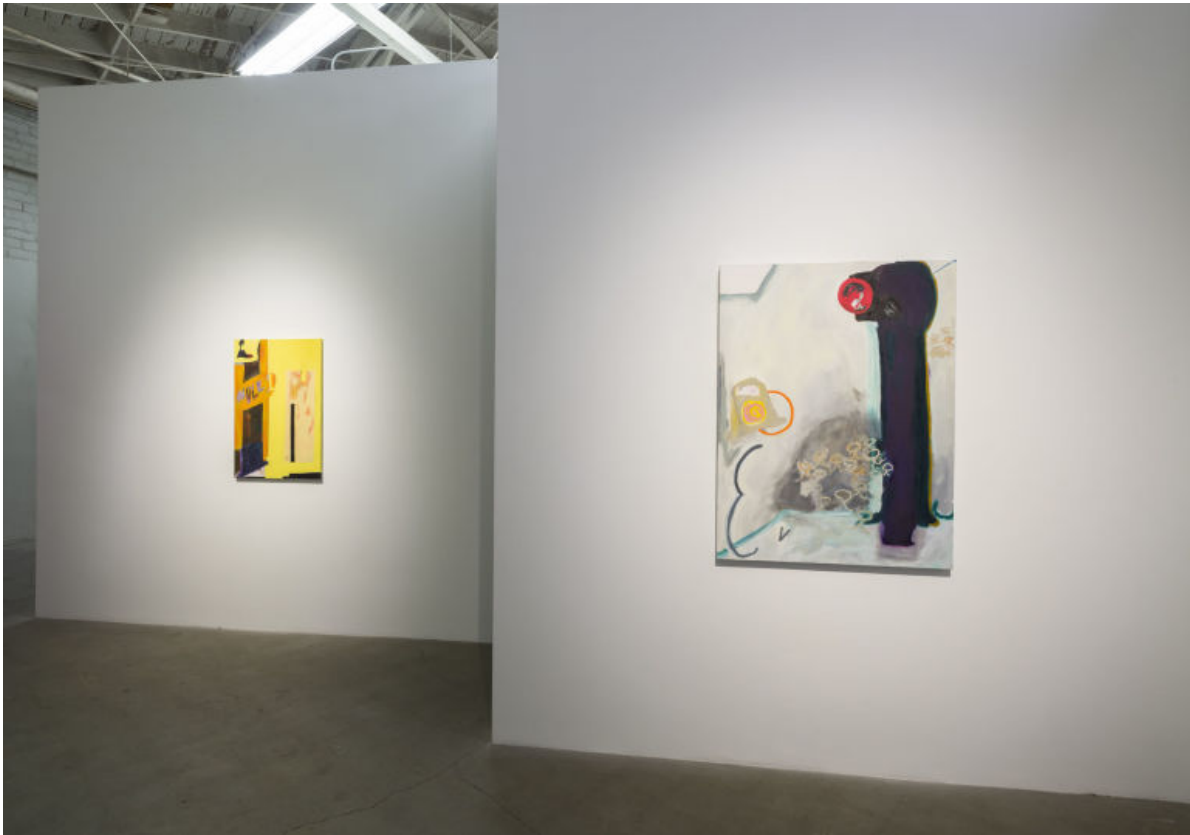


Night Gallery's most recent show with painter David Korty (his second at their new space), up through Saturday, is something Nemeroff and Marple have been working towards since the respected artist began frequenting their original space. "It feels like our level has gotten close to his level," Marple says of the show that both women call sophisticated and mature.

Also on the roster this year is their second Planned Parenthood benefit, in September. The biannual event called Sexy Beast, planned by Nemeroff and Marple, raised over half a million dollars in 2014. The fundraiser, which included a live and silent art auction, was hosted by Jack Black and attended by the likes of Diane Keaton and Marisa Tomei.

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Since migrating downtown, Night Gallery has grown up with the neighborhood that's become known as the arts district. And they wouldn't trade the experience for a thing: "In L.A. you don't become trendy overnight and then the next moment nobody cares," says Marple. "You really have time and space to work on your reputation and build it over time. It's more of a slow burn."

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