

Spigot Does LA Art Week, Part I

Inimitable Nora Turato, undocumentable stanley brouwn, the fairs and a lot of parties. Plus the highs and lows of two trendy natural-wine bars

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Felix Art Fair, Roosevelt Hotel, Los Angeles, 2024

I've heard from Angelenos—and have sensed myself—that much of the time the city's art scene can feel a little sleepy, a little drab if you're not dragging your dick through piles of hundred-dollar bills at Jonas Wood's poker table. But in the last week of February in the year of our lord Mammon 2024, with the art fairs open for business, people in the City of Angels were in holiday mode.

Too much to cover in just one Spigot; expect more in a soon-to-appear part two.

Wednesday

Art fairs should not have DJs. Unfortunately Felix, as an event held around a swimming pool at a boutique hotel—a pool that no one ever stops reminding you was décoré by local hero David Hockney—does by default. Thus the wandering in and out of cabana rooms in which half the fair was staged involved regular bursts of kitschy classic hip-hop and kitschy contemporary electro-soul.

Felix had infelicitously split the show into chunks, with half the galleries on the ground floor and the other half on the eleventh and twelfth floors with a long line for the elevators. To be honest, I skipped

the upstairs. To be honest, I skipped Frieze entirely, which I realize is a little too on brand.

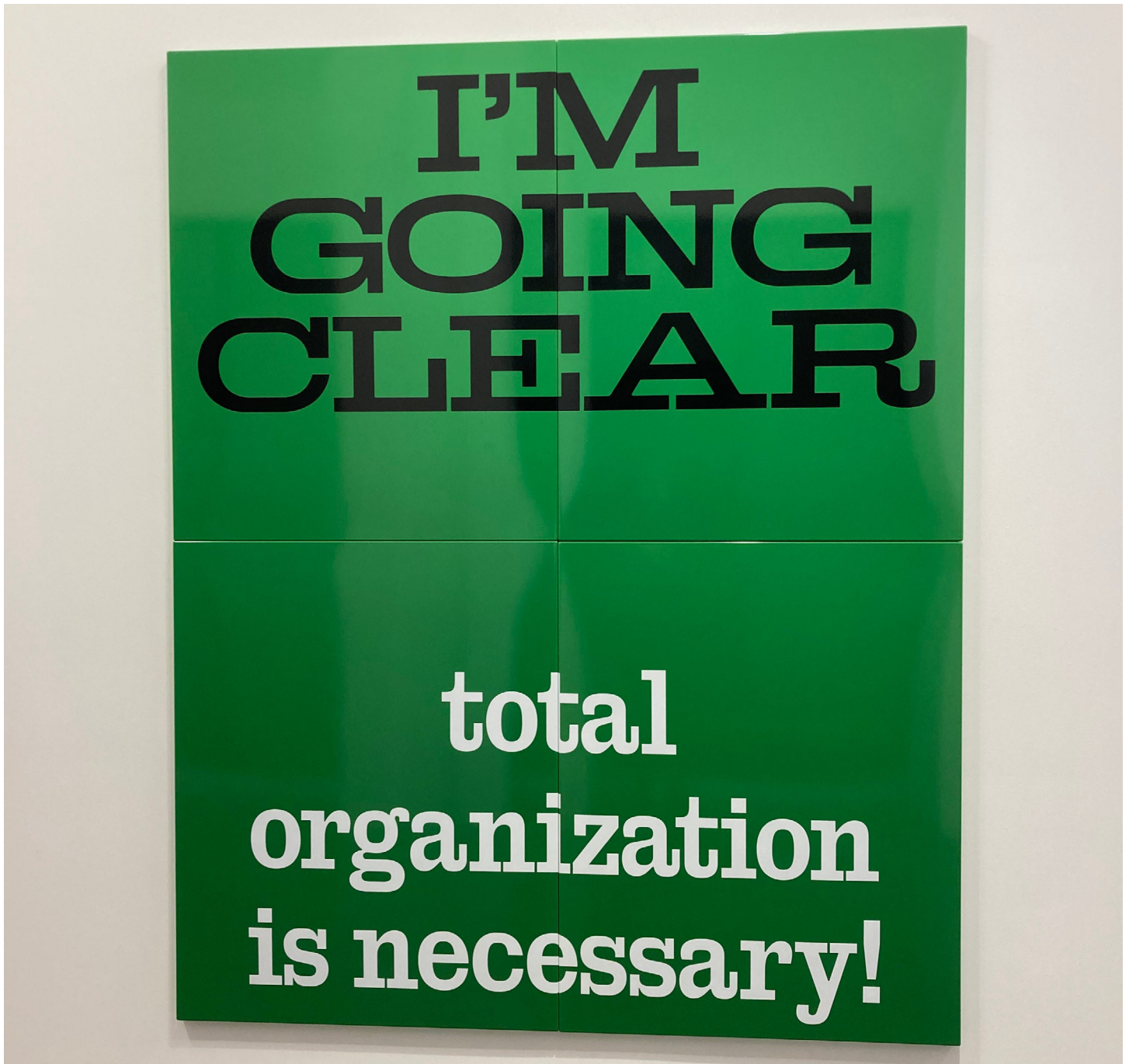
Wandering through the Roosevelt, I liked Bel Ami's booth, though I'm a fan of their program, I suppose, having written about them last summer. I was especially struck by the work of Isabelle Frances McGuire, which entailed a music video she shot at a WWII reenactment, complete with Panzer tanks; a child-size funerary figure of Napoleon with a 3D printed version of his death mask; and a miniature bomb hung over the toilet inscribed *2024*: this big explosive turd of a year ready to plunge into the toilet.



Isabelle Frances McGuire, *Death of Napoleon*, 2024. 9 x 55 ½ x 15 ½ inches. Installation view, Bel Ami booth, Felix Art Fair, Los Angeles, 2024

Tanya Leighton, a good gallery I rarely get to visit, had a framed photo of John Baldessari's crossed legs, cropped tight around the corduroyed knees like a fashion ad, a tribute to the late master by the underappreciated conceptual artist Alejandro Cesarco. Theta had a great little work by an artist opening a show there this Friday, Christopher Baliwas, whose technique involves image transfer via packing tape.

For a jaunt through an art fair, the viewing was pretty enjoyable. Of course there was bad panting, but not a tedious amount. The people however were cartoonish, the drink prices also cartoonish, and I suddenly understood why I have never gone to Miami Basel.



A painting by Nora Turato at Sprüth Magers, Los Angeles

Tuesday

Worked all day trying to clear my editing schedule for the week. This strategy, coupled with ignoring emails, turned out to work perfectly. That night I caught a performance by Nora Turato at her opening at Sprüth Magers.

Turato's piece was a version of her gig last year at Performa, but the script seemed improved subtly, tightened, and in an actorly sense, she was utterly in her bag this time around. In her work, Turato metabolizes self-help bilge into comic yet unsettling mash-up monologues. At the New York Society for Ethical Culture, her tone had been cool, keeping the strangeness of it all less high contrast. In LA, she was more energetic, more standup even, shifting her vocal pitch and delivery, gesticulating, feeding off the crowd. Her energy sometimes even steamrolled her speech; whereas the delivery in NYC was practically pristine, here she misspoke a handful of times. She seemed almost to take pleasure in each slight correction; the accidents made what she was saying seem urgent, even when it was about the forever chemicals in LuluLemon pants and decalcifying your pineal gland. In New York, Turato had performed onstage in a proper theater but here she was on the same ground as us, and I have a hunch that being literally on the same footing—and literally barefoot—energized her performance. We were all in the palm of her hand.

A ripple of anxiety did wash over the crowd, however, when amid the discussions of “manifesting” and positive visualization and the consumption of Roganish supplements she referred to “going clear.” In the showroom a painting using that phrase was tucked in an inconspicuous corner.



A polite request in the restroom at the Mid-City Yacht Club, Los Angeles

Thursday

The week's best party was at a place called the Mid-City Yacht Club, a vaguely mythological venue of questionable legality. They had a cop running security though, and the presence of law officers always guarantees that everything is on the up and up!

As tends to occur in these situations, an ad hoc crew befitting an ill-scripted heist movie assembled for the car ride: painter pivoting to music video, drug-addled critic, mysterious musician, the queen of Los Angeles Gracie Hadland, and a young Estonian Pamela Anderson lookalike about to break two months of sobriety at the most debauched party of the week. The organizers: Lomex, Gaylord Apartments, and O-Town House. There were brawny strippers, which I missed, and apparently a physical altercation involving a notorious asshole, which I also missed. (You may be able to read more about it in Gracie's column for Interview.) There was a room with a ping-pong table and another room with a shag carpet, which I also missed. Apparently I spent the entire party within a radius of ten feet, running into old associates on the way to the bathroom, doing poppers, and meeting Larry Johnson, who was an absolute pleasure.

The single other room I did get to experience was the shower, which a couple of partygoers had apparently been using as a toilet, when I was slung into it by my friend Maria. She coaxed me into going live on Instagram and then turned on the literal Spigot, dousing me in cold water and rinsing the urine from my shoes. We departed at three or four, leaving the woman who had been sober since 2023 pouring herself something behind the bar.



Entrance to *stanley brown*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

Saturday

The Stanley Broun show at the Hammer was gorgeous in the economy of its imagination. Some people might find the work dry but I found it exceptionally rich. The work—which you are famously not allowed to photograph—is primarily text or otherwise made of paper. The result, even when the sentences are mathematical equations, is pure poetry that with slender means gets at enormous questions: the standardizing imprint of culture, the standardization of one's self, folk wisdom, travel, the gap between fantasy and reality, the foundations of logic, the metaphoric finding of one's place in the world, the way society is knit together in invisible ways—all accomplished by invoking various and obsolete units of measure, or by proposing a distance between one city and another. All the curators deserve enormous props for matching the presentation perfectly to the work.



The view from Café Triste, Los Angeles

Wine

Because I'm now known as a wine prick, LA friends took me to two trendy natural boîtes, Café Triste and El Prado.

Café Triste is one of those one-of-each places that's just so sure of its tastes that you have to take whatever single red, white, or sake they happen to be pouring that day. An Ikea bowl of potato chips passes for a "small plate." It gave me real nanny-state fascist-health-nut glazed-with-dreampop Southern California vibes.

At El Prado, on the other hand, the menu is lengthy and the bartenders are indulgent of oenophile

conversation even on a busy Saturday night with a DJ blaring house music. There I grabbed a bottle of vermentino that was, unusually, from France, Roussillon to be precise, called La Caves Apicole Tangerine. Vermentino is a grape grown mostly in Sardinia, Liguria, and the Piedmont. The Italian ones are a little oily and more fruity. This Gallic one was crunchy and lemony—the same general profile of the wines I guzzle all the time, basically. We closed the place and at last call they put on *There's a Tunnel under Ocean Boulevard*. The response from the straight women at my table confirmed something I'd been hearing all week, that dating is very difficult in Los Angeles.



Claire Patelin Côtes de Gascogne 2022. The bottle I enjoyed most all week, however, was one I bought at Trader Joe's, a Côtes de Gascognes, that I split with my delightful host Alex on my last night in town. For some reason Côtes de Gascognes is a white that flies totally under the radar. At Trader Joe's it cost me a jaw-dropping \$5.99. It tastes like a super clean lemon-water Riesling but with the sexy tinge of a sweaty beach day. I have sentimental attachments to Gascognes, the reason for which a certain Spigot reader will recall, but it's genuinely the best cheap wine you can buy. Get a case for your next opening, fundraiser, or children's birthday party.

Gratitude

The feeling, not the formerly chic vegan restaurant. Thank you Eleanor for inviting me to see the Cady Nolands at Maison d'Art. (It was the one word-of-mouth, appointment-viewing thing that had a little buzz over the week.) Thank you Kate for driving me all over town while playing *Blue Banisters*. Thank you Alex for showing me the mirrored McCracken in the garden. Thank you Gracie for keeping me in the loop. Thank you Paul Pfeiffer for making a show at MoCA so powerful and intelligent that it

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brought tears to my eyes. I'd love to write about it at length. Editors, hit me up.

Music

I know everyone thinks of me as a Swiftie but I also love, in a different and perhaps more profound way, her *object petit* a Lana Del Rey. I missed a chance to meet her at the Serpentine party and am honestly so pissed.