Yinka Gets Romantic

Soulful L.A.-based artist prepares for EP release

By Brett Callwood
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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VOTE TO CONSIDER NEW GUN LAWS IN L.A.

As a direct response to the Lunar New Year mass shooting in Monterey Park last month, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors have passed a series of motions aimed at new gun regulations.

BY ISAI ROCHA

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a set of motions aimed at strengthening gun regulations.

The four motions were authored by Board Chair Janice Hahn, Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, and Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath, with the board calling them a direct response to the Lunar New Year mass shooting in Monterey Park.

“We know that blame for the gun violence epidemic lies with the failure of congressional leaders to pass even the most basic federal gun laws,” Hahn said. “Because they have not acted — we have found actions we can take at the county level to protect lives.”

The final gun-related motion, authored by Hahn and labeled as item 56-A, seeks to support California Senate Bill 2 and Senate Bill 241, which would add requirements to concealed carry weapon laws, as well as require federally licensed firearm dealers to pass an annual training program in conjunction with the Department of Justice.

LAUSD WORKERS AUTHORIZE A STRIKE, ASK FOR HIGHER WAGES

Workers for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) voted to autho-
During the last nine months, the district has not cooperated with the LAUSD employees, consisting of bus drivers, custodial staff, teacher aides, cafeteria workers, and after-school workers.

The union representatives have stated that the workers seek not only higher wages outside of normal school hours, but also increased staffing to address dire staffing shortages in our schools. "Our 85 members on our bargaining team have met for the last nine months... and basically, the district has not listened," Arlene Inouye, UTLA Bargaining Co-Chair said. "They’ve not listened to parents, community and students, as we’ve presented and shared issues and given proposals to address the critical issues facing our schools."

While not addressing the bargaining directly, on Feb. 10, in the midst of the SEIU Local 99’s last day to vote on a strike, LAUSD Superintendent Alberto Carvalho tweeted that there has been "misinformation" going around about the district. "If you are a teacher, a leader, a parent, a student, a believer, I say thank you," Carvalho posted to Twitter. "I find myself reading a great deal of organized misinformation about what we think or do as a school system. Most of it is predictable if one simply looks back and reads past headlines."

After the strike voting period ended, without specifically calling out the unions, Carvalho tweeted about a "circus" that is being done for "nothing more than an applause, a coin, and a promise of a next show."

Despite the lack of a specific target in the tweet, the unions saw it as a shot against them and their bargaining demands.

A date for the workers’ strike has not yet been set, but an SEIU Local 99 meeting is scheduled for Feb. 15, where they will discuss the next steps in the strike process.

UNEXPLAINED BOOMS BAFFLE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY RESIDENTS

A series of loud, explosive-like booms shook through multiple cities in the San Gabriel Valley on Feb. 6, leaving residents wanting answers.

The consecutive booming sounds were heard from the city of Alhambra all the way down to Pomona, nearly 20 miles away, at approximately 10:25 p.m.

Residents of those areas took to Twitter and community apps such as the Neighborhood app, asking if others heard the thunderous blasts.

"It sounded up by the mountains," one member of the neighborhood app replied, referring to the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains.

After the booming sounds concluded, a white cloud that looked like a condensation trail was seen in the direction of the foothills, with a trailing tail that appeared to be going westward.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department told L.A. Weekly that it had not received any calls for explosions in the area. Similarly, the San Gabriel Fire Department did not receive calls for possible explosions, adding that the local cities had not scheduled any community events since its weekend Lunar New Year festival in Alhambra, which did not feature fireworks or pyrotechnics.

Similar booming sounds were heard by residents on Wednesday, Feb. 1 at approximately 11:30 p.m., also followed by flashing lights in the sky.

"Something fishy is going on in Baldwin Park," Twitter user @geoscored said on Jan. 7, with multiple Baldwin Park residents feeling the home-rumbling sounds. "A couple days ago 2 explosions and tonight another 3 explosions."

The Los Angeles County Fire Department was not able to identify the cause of the bursts and lights remain unknown. L.A. Weekly’s attempts to reach L.A. County Supervisor Hilda Solis, who represents the district affected, have gone unanswered.
streaming services, cable TV and Prime time television are fighting for your viewership now more than ever. Our UNBINGED column is here to help you weed through it all, with reviews of the latest shows that highlight what we love, what we hate and what we love to hate-watch, too.

As a new year of entertainment gets underway, TV once again is looking back. Re-vamps, rehashes, and remakes are nothing new, of course. When done right, they’re an easy win for networks, streaming services and the audience. But if done wrong, they become the ire of audiences, unaware of the salacious humor its forebear did so well. Fans of the original will want to tune in to see what happened to old friends, and the answer is simple: they grew up. By the way, so did we—don’t be surprised to find yourself relating a bit too much to ol’ Red’s point of view about the kids these days.

The Return of Velma, Willow and Hanging Out in the Basement

BY ERIN MAXWELL

Scooby-Doo gang, only this time sans the talking Great Dane, the Mystery Machine, or anything remotely charming, interesting or humorous about it. In the ’70s cartoon’s place, we are left with a mean-spirited, deplorable attempt to modernize a beloved property for an adult audience that fails on every level.

There are porn parodies featuring the Scooby Gang that are funnier than Velma. There are inadvertent cellphone videos inside of purses and pockets that are funnier than Velma. There are traffic accident videos that are funnier than Velma. Yes, the only thing actually comical about Velma is that someone thought it would be enjoyed by others.

When a serial killer runs amok thru Crystal Cove High School, Velma (voiced by exec producer Mindy Kaling) must prove her innocence against incompetent cops, accusations by former bestie Daphne (Constance Wu) and Daph’s boytoy, high-brow snob Fred (Glenn Howerton). Unlike early remakes of Scooby-Doo, which kept the crux of the characters intact, Velma completely eradicates everything familiar and endeavors about the Scooby Gang. Brilliant Velma is now an oversexed basket case, Daphne is a drug-dealing mean girl, Fred is a teenage manbaby, and Norville (the “new and improved” Shaggy) borders on incel mentality.

Velma begs the question: Who is this for? The answer is no one. This is for no one. It isn’t for Scooby-Doo fans (who wants to see their Saturday morning superheroes broken down into lecherous aholes)? It’s not foranimation fans, as the style is a lazy man’s version of the classic cartoons that once flopped Nickelodeon and Disney Channel in the early aughts. If the gratuitous sex jokes (involving minors, no less) and violence don’t keep the kids away, the atrocious writing will definitely keep grown-ups at a distance.

THE RETRO SHOW

Velma (HBO Max)

Velma is yet another update to the Scooby-Doo gang, only this time sans the talking Great Dane, the Mystery Machine, or anything remotely charming, interesting or humorous about it. In the ’70s cartoon’s place, we are left with a mean-spirited, deplorable attempt to modernize a beloved property for an adult audience that fails on every level.

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Fran Lebowitz is one of American culture's true humorist geniuses. Her dry wit and sage perspective on life, politics, people and really, everything, has made her a living legend, especially to older audiences who've read her essays or seen her appearances on late night TV over the decades. With the success of the Netflix series Pretend It's a City —directed and co-starring by her longtime comrade Martin Scorsese— during the height of the pandemic, a whole new generation has discovered her brand of satiric social commentary and more so, her inimitable spirit. Sharing her fierce point of view and laugh out loud funny takes on the world, both random and significant, Lebowitz's speaking engagements are can't miss events and the closest thing to actually getting the privilege of a one-on-one conversation. We still can't believe we actually got to have one, but we did.

**FRAN LEBOWITZ:** You know, I've always done this. I've done this since 1978. I've always done these kinds of speaking dates. Since the Netflix series, I do them more often. I used to do like, maybe 15, now I'm doing like 100 million a year. That has everything to do with the Netflix show. That show was so good. I assume the interest level for you has just exploded since it aired.

There's no comparison. I mean, I personally do not have a cell phone. Right now, I'm speaking on someone else's phone. I don't have a computer. I've never seen Netflix so I never saw it. Netflix kept postponing it and so, because it was postponed so many times, it ended up coming out during the height of a lockdown.Apparently everyone in the entire world except me was watching Netflix. So, you know, I mean, I'm not saying COVID was a good thing. It was a horrible, tragic thing. It still is. But it was very helpful to my series.

Yeah, absolutely. So are you saying that you never actually saw the show?

I saw in Marty's screening room. I saw it many times. But I never saw it on Netflix the way most people watched it.

And you're still not a Netflix subscriber even now?

No, I've never been because you need a WiFi connection.

You don't have WiFi?

No.

That's so interesting. Is there a reason that you don't want that technology even to this day, or even since the special?

You know, the initial reason is, I don't know how to type. And so when they first invented this stuff, even now you're typing all the time, or texting, whatever. I have a tremendous antipathy to machines, not just modern technology. I never had a typewriter. I'm the sort of person if a machine breaks, I hit it, and then I beg not to break. So I didn't want all these machines in my life. I'm just not interested in this. I don't hate it. I don't think it's terrible. People seem to think I'm not aware of it. I think I'm as aware of it as you could possibly be. Because people talk about it all the time. You know, people say to me, 'Twitter- do you know what that is?' Yes. I do. Also, people are constantly showing you their phones. Even people you don't know on the street. I feel that I have enough of this in my life.

I hear that. There's definitely positives and negatives, too. As a journalist it's a necessary evil on some level. As a speaker I guess not as much. For these engagements, what is the structure? At the Ace Hotel in L.A., you'll have a moderator, but will it be as conversational as the Scorsese show? Will audience participation be an element?

Yes, it's always the same no matter where I am in the world. The difference is the person who interviews me. So in L.A., it's John Brion, who you surely know is a fantastic musician. Also a friend of mine. They interview me on the stage for 30 minutes, then they leave the stage. Then I go to a lectern and I answer questions from the audience for an hour. The audience questions to me are the most fun. I love doing this and I do it all over the world. It is actually something that I would consider to be a recreational activity for me.

Do you ever get nervous or feel pressure to be funny or profound?

Never ever. I actually just enjoy it. I have never felt nervous. Once 100 years ago, I fell asleep in the Letterman green room. I don't feel nervous in any public appearance. I just don't. It's a lucky thing. It always surprises me that actors, a lot of actors have horrible stage fright. I always think like, why are you an actor if you're terrified of it. But to me, it's just enjoyable.

Well, I'm sure it's going to be really enjoyable for your fans. Advancing the L.A. show, I'm wondering about your thoughts and perspective on Los Angeles. Obviously, you're known for being New York royalty. But in terms of L.A., and your take on it, what can you share?

You know, the thing I don't hate L.A., I just prefer New York, because I prefer cities and L.A., I know, it's a city in some official way. But most people live in houses and drive in a cars. To me that's not a city. There's many very good things about L.A., I'm not saying there aren't. I'm simply saying, I choose to live in New York. It used to be truly just the movie business and the television business. And it seems more varied. So it is more interesting to me.

When's the last time you came here for a visit?

Well, I don't visit, I work. For my vacations, I stay in my apartment. I was in L.A. -I don't remember- less than one year ago. I did these speaking engagements, seven at a small theater in Santa Monica.

Well I'm sure when you come back, one thing you'll notice is that the homeless problem has worsened.

That's everywhere, by the way. That's everywhere. In the United States. It is worse in some places than others. No question. It's really bad in L.A. It's horrible in San Francisco.

What about New York? What's it like there?

It's not delightful here. There's tons of homeless people everywhere. But you don't see it very much in Europe, I can tell you that. And you don't see it very much in Scandinavia. It's not bad certainly in socialist countries. They provide for people. This country, you are on your own.

The weather here is obviously nice so it just facilitates more people being unhoused, whereas in New York, I can't imagine being outside in the winter.

There's actually a law here. I don't see it being enforced too much. There's some kind of law here when the temperature goes below a certain number, they go around forcing people to go into shelters. The homeless shelters must be so horrible that people prefer to freeze outside. In Berkeley where I was for a week, half the town is in tents.

It's a real problem everywhere, especially in Downtown L.A. Speaking of cities and the challenges of living in them, the thrust of Pretend it's a City was really diving into the nuances of urban life. When people think of New York, they think of
“PEOPLE ARE MEAN IN LIFE. A HUMAN BEING IS PART OF A HORRIBLE SPECIES. SO PEOPLE ARE MEAN. AND THE THING THAT STRIKES ME ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA IS IT CAUSES EVERYONE TO SPEND THE REST OF THEIR LIVES LIKE THEY’RE IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL. YOU DON’T HAVE TO PARTICIPATE. YOU KNOW, PEOPLE ASK ME, ‘ARE YOU AFRAID OF BEING CANCELED?’ AND I WAS THINKING, I COULD BE CANCELED AND I WOULDN’T EVEN KNOW IT. IF I’M CANCELED, DON’T TELL ME.”

pieces, which of course is not what you do. But it turned out that he knew how to do it very well.

So you were happy with how each episode was edited? Was there anything that you two disagreed on? Like, ‘Oh, I really don’t want that in or I do want that in?’

He actually had already made a movie about me for HBO about 10 or 12 years ago, called Public Speaking and I didn’t have any control over. This did. And you know the truth is, I asked him to take something out, he did, I don’t remember what it was. Editing for Marty is an endless thing. I mean, I truly believe if they had not taken say, Mean Streets, away from him, he’s still doing editing it. I saw it if I don’t know how many times, but every time I saw it, it was different. Every episode was different. Finally, when he said, it’s all done, all seven episodes, I saw them all at once so I could get more of a sense of it. Then they were going to show it to me with the color correction and I said, ‘No, You’re not’, because I really don’t like to watch myself at all. I said they could tell me what the color was and I was going to imagine it.

I wanted to know about your thoughts on COVID. What have we learned since going through it? Did you ever get it?

You know, I actually thought I hadn’t had COVID. But I was in the UK last year for like nine days. I was supposed to have eye surgery, not cosmetic surgery! And I had to get a COVID test at the hospital. And I was positive and they postponed my surgery. So I must have had COVID when I was in London without realizing it.

I think what we could have learned was that it could be over. What we did learn was that something like 50% of the population of the United States are morons. The idea that someone says here’s a vaccine and you say anything, but thank you, is psychotic to me. If everyone had taken the vaccine, then ther’d be no COVID. But now, this will never end. That is very clear to me and to anyone else, it’s totally clear that it will never end. It keeps changing and it’s just never gonna end now. There was a real chance at ending it. If 100% of the population or the vast majority of the population had gotten the vaccine, it would have ended, but now, it never will.

That brings me to my next question. Disinformation. The internet is filled with it. You don’t do social media with it. Everyone has a Twitter but you seem very aware of what it’s all about. Specifically Twitter is very much known for this. As someone respected for your opinions, your wise opinions, what do you think about people sharing there’s online? Everyone has an opinion but they only share “facts” that support their point of view. Do you think that it’s a good thing that there’s a forum for everyone to share opinions? Or not?

I think that if people say ‘this is my opinion,’ then who cares? Fine. But that’s not what they say. They say things, and give information that is lying. It is lying to say that these vaccines, for instance are anything but incredibly beneficial. They are not dangerous. They are not some sort of democratic plot. They are incredibly beneficial and we should thank these brilliant scientists who invented them. It is a lie to say that Donald Trump won the last election. That’s not an opinion, that’s a lie. In your own life, if you know someone who lies, you just don’t talk to them anymore. I hate lying. It’s the thing that I actually hate the most. And political lying is incredibly dangerous. We live in a world where no evidence is evidence. Everyone in the country saw what happened at the Capitol. Everyone saw it. Many who saw it said, ‘this is just political discourse.’ No, this is violence. But it is absolutely true that the internet allows these things to be incredibly contagious, because nothing spreads faster than a bad idea, and that has always been true.

Disinformation is out of control, but what I hate just as much is just how mean people are on the internet.

People are mean in life. A human being is part of a horrible species. So people are mean. And the thing that strikes me about social media is it causes everyone to spend the rest of their lives like they’re in junior high school. You don’t have to participate. You know, people ask me, ‘Are you afraid of being canceled?’ And I was thinking, I could be canceled and I wouldn’t even know it. If I’m canceled, don’t tell me.

[Laughs] I love that. I know you don’t have Wi Fi so you’re not watching a lot of TV but do you still read newspapers? Weeklies, dailies, magazines? Where do you get the bulk of your news?

I get the Sunday New York Times. It takes me the whole weekend to read. I do not know how people read newspapers every day. Newspapers are the thing that’s disappeared the most as far as I can see. It used to be, you know, the city used to be knee deep in newsprint, covered, and every subway had them. If you sat down in the subway, you got to pick up the newspaper first. The trash cans were full of newspapers. It was just a sea of newsprint. It’s very rare to see someone reading a newspaper now. Most people read the Times online. They don’t read a paper-p paper. I don’t think it makes a big difference except that, obviously, what’s online changes all the time. It keep them more up to date.

I also listen to the radio. Whenever I say this on a speaking date, and I look at the kids in the audience; I always like say, ‘I listen to the radio. Look it up.’ New York has all an news station. I turn it on and off a 1000 times a day when I’m doing chores. I’m very up to date on local crime. I feel that I am as informed of the news as anyone who has all the modern devices.

Do you keep abreast of pop culture and who is the hot famous person of the moment? Do you know about the Kardashians and Elon Musk or any hot topic water cooler gossip at any given time?

Don’t keep track of it or follow it. But I feel like it follows me, because people talk about it all the time. I was once in a restaurant in New York a couple years ago and I was sitting at a table with several people and someone at the table, who I have to say is from L.A., recognized one of the Kardashians coming into the restaurant. ‘I don’t remember which one,’ she said. And then she’s like, ‘where’s the other one?’ ‘Where’s her boyfriend?’ I’m like how do you know that? How do you know which is her boyfriend? And then another Kardashian came in and that’s her boyfriend. ‘No, no, no, that’s the other one.’ I said if you know this stuff, you should keep it yourself.

So, I know there are Kardashians. I don’t really remember how many Kardashians there are. But truthfully, I know people who not only know which Kardashian is which, but know the names of their many children. There’s nothing immoral about this. But frankly, it just seems kind of dopey to me. I don’t care. I don’t think the Kardashians are a danger to the United States. Kevin McCarthy is a much greater danger than the Kardashians.

Fran Lebowitz is touring across the United State. See her engagement sched- ule here.
The journey from Nigeria to Los Angeles via New York is a long one, but for singer and songwriter Yinka, the whole adventure has proven to be fuel for her music. The blend of culture, the multitude of experiences, it’s all part of her evolution as a person and as an artist.

Yinka started singing when she was in school in Nigeria. A school talent show provided the spark, as well as a heads-up to the adults around her.

“I decided to go ahead and give it a shot, and sing in the talent show,” Yinka says. “I did it, and everyone was like, ‘Wow, I can’t believe you did that.’ I didn’t know it was serious until my principal came to my house and was telling my parents, ‘Did you guys know that she could do this?’ My parents were just like, what? I knew I wanted to sing, but I would do it in my own little world. I was trying to teach myself certain things and I would mimic certain things. That was the first moment of, I want to do this and I can do this. I’ve been singing ever since.”

She’s been writing her own songs since she was about seven, and it was when she dropped her own original song onto the major online platforms a couple of years ago that she realized, ‘Ok, I’m an artist now.’ She’s not looked back since.

Yinka arrived in the States at the age of 10, with her parents. At the time, her only exposure to U.S. culture had been Barney.

“I would only watch it for the music, so I was like ‘oh, maybe they do a lot of crazy things,’” she says. “When I got here, it’s a real place where people do real life stuff. But it was very interesting. When I started school, I didn’t really do much but creative things. I joined every art thing, every after-school program I could, because that was the only thing that made me feel sane. Coming from another country, everything feels overwhelming. But I think music and art was the calm to the madness.”

Her move from NYC to L.A. four years ago was music-driven, and she feels like it’s one of the best decisions she ever made. What was originally intended to be temporary had turned into something more permanent, and she feels at home in the City of Angels now.

“I love it because I’ve experienced so many different phases of my life,” she says. “It affects my music, how I view things and how I create. I have the New York in me. A New York love story is different to an L.A. love story, and they’re definitely different from a Nigerian love story. When I think about that, it all inspires my experience and how I was to portray and share my love stories to people. So I definitely think it’s made an impact on my music.”

Yinka describes her sound as multi-di-
imensional, and says that she doesn’t feel a need to box herself in. Sure, there are elements of R&B, pop, and contemporary soul in there. But she’s no cookie-cutter artist.

“I think my music is something that is unexpected, it’s new, it’s interesting to the ear, and it’s exciting,” she says. “It’s more like an experience rather than just a sound.”

Her latest release is her debut EP, Let’s Get Romantic. The record is an attempt by Yinka to start a movement loving love, rather than abandoning the concept in a wave of cynicism and bad experiences.

“It started as an internal movement,” Yinka says. “Dating has been a bit crazy, everyone is saying ‘fuck love.’ You know what? I don’t think we hate love, I just think we’ve had bad experiences. Instead of seeing it as ‘fuck everyone,’ there’s more ways to express love. I started talking about what I wanted in a partner, what I wanted my romantic journey to be, and I think it just blew up into the whole EP where I tell different stories about love and real experiences, how it can be a short amount of time, but feel like forever and be a great experience. That’s what inspired the EP. Let’s get romantic again, let’s love love again. Even though we’ve had some challenges, let’s do it as a movement and do it together. Build from there.”

The artist says that the EP is definitely representative of her journey, her career, so far. The evolution is evident as she explores different directions, subtle ideas, on the actual EP.

“I write differently and I tell stories differently, so I think it’s a representation of my evolution as an artist, and also the stories I’m telling,” she says. “It tells stories as I evolved as a person. From, ‘I don’t know about romance,’ to ‘let’s get romantic.’”

It’s fitting that an EP called Let’s Get Romantic is dropping around Valentine’s Day. While currently single, Yinka has big plans for a holiday that she loves.

“I’m actually excited for Valentine’s Day, because I feel like I want to be everyone’s valentine,” she says. “I want to send my friends flowers, go out and celebrate it. I feel like we always get stuck on, ‘I’m single so I can’t celebrate Valentine’s Day.’ It’s not specific that you have to be with an intimate partner, a boyfriend or girlfriend. It’s a day for love, so do whatever you want to do, whether you want to celebrate your dog or friends. So I have plans like that with my friends. Send them flowers and their favorite books, and I’m really excited for that. Also the EP. This is an exciting Valentine’s Day for me, so I plan to go all out.”

Her favorite slow jam, she tells us, is Rosalia’s “HENTAI,” which is a great one, though her own new EP is equally beautiful and expressive. As for the rest of 2023, Yinka plans to release more music, some visuals, and to tour in the summertime.

You’ll be seeing plenty of her.

Yinka’s Let’s Get Romantic EP is out now.
OPEN FEB 16
W ith the armada of art fairs in full citywide stationing this week, expect a tidal wave of big ticket intentionally timed local gallery openings, as well as a host of satellite projects, book releases, studio parties, design events, branded cocktail hours, and all the buzz—with the theater, performance art, musical, cinematic, technological, and modern dance worlds offering compelling alternatives to the white box blizzard in case you need that. We’ve rounded up a quick guide to the five fairs at the heart of Art Week LA—LA Art Week? Frieze Week? Art Fair Week?—highlighting some of the most intriguing coinciding projects. Fair thee well, art lovers!

**THE ART FAIRS**

**FELIX ART FAIR, HOLLYWOOD ROOSEVELT HOTEL.**

An extremely Los Angeles, old-school classic style hotel fair, with a range of gallery exhibitors set up in the poolside cabanas and upper floor suites (the room loos make great project spaces). A savvy mix of contemporary galleries with a penchant for the on-trend and urbane; plus festive poolside hangs with possible day-drinking. **Thursday-Sunday, February 16-19; $90-$400. felixfair.com**

**LA ART SHOW, CONVENTION CENTER DOWNTOWN.**

The city’s longest-running, most eclectic fair is back with something like 120 galleries, museums, and non-profits from around the world exhibiting painting, sculpture, works on paper, installation, photography, design, video, performance, and special programs—like the perennially acclaimed DIVERSEartLA projects bringing international issues-based institutions into the conversation. **Thursday-Sunday, February 16-19; $30-$250. laartshow.com**

**SPRING/BREAK ART SHOW, SKYLIGHT CULVER CITY.** Hyper-indie, curator-helmed, local and nationally sourced, artist-focused fair; heavy on interdisciplinary engagement and experiential booth and built-out installations, surprise discoveries, fanciful materials, and pointed social experiments. Consistently the weirdest and most extraordinarily memorable of the art fair crop. **Thursday-Sunday, February 16-19; $56-$152; and there are a good number of off-site projects, many of which are free. frieze.com.**

**FRIEZE LOS ANGELES, BARKER HANGAR SANTA MONICA.**

The fancy one that movie stars go to. The center of gravity for Art Week LA (LA Art Week?), and the manifestation of a dominant global brand unfolds at an unremarkable location which they promise to transform and activate with scores of the world’s most impressive galleries, curated rising-star perspectives, sprawling outdoor installations, and eclectic programs and performances. The (don’t call it) Frieze Week momentum also gives rise to a host of related shows, programs, and popups across the West Side and beyond. **Friday-Sunday, February 17-19; $56-$152; and there are a good number of off-site projects, many of which are free. frieze.com.**

**NOT THE ART FAIRS: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16**

**ALEX KATZ: SUNRISE AT MAK CENTER.** Acclaimed for his iconic portraits and impressionistic landscape depictions, the now 95-year-old Katz has inspired generations of painters. Fresh off his triumphant presentation at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, MAK Center fills the historic architectural landmark Schindler House with the latest iteration of artist’s ongoing series of paintings he refers to as “splits,” in which he uses a cut-up technique that blends inspiration from Manet’s pictures of women in hats in the sun, the fractured imagery from early cubism, and “the ‘cheap’ quality in Fassbinder’s Beware of a Holy Whore.” These large-scale immersive portraits of Sunrise Coigney encapsulate the fleeting nature of the gaze inside everyday life. **835 N. Kings Rd., West Hollywood; Opening reception: Wednesday, February 15, 7-9pm; On view February 16 - March 12; free; makcenter.org.**

**PAUL MCCARTHY: WS WHITE SNOW PRESENTED BY LAND, THE BOX & HAUSER & WIRTH.**

The legendary artist’s largest single work in the US, WS White Snow is an 8,800-square-foot artificial forest and a faithful replica of the artist’s family home that has stood fully installed in a warehouse in East LA for over a decade. An accompanying 7-hour four-channel video projection, edited by Damon McCarthy and taken from 350 hours of recordings from the 30 days of the original 2012-13 performance, will be projected alongside the installation. **WS White Snow is an explicit confrontation with American consumerism and grandiosity, reckoning with economic, social, and climate breakdown. This will be the first and possibly only time audiences in Los Angeles will be able to experience the piece in situ, with the future of the work uncertain. February 16-19, timed entry tickets 11am-6pm; free; location provided with rsvp; nomadicdivision.org.**

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17**

**CHARLES ARNOLDI: DEEP CUTS AT PRAZ**
Chuck Arnoldi’s long and storied career as a visual artist has led him, across the years, to an eclectic panoply of visual cues, formal experiments, mechanisms of gesture, evolutions of experience, and evidence of process. But despite an array of abstract styles from the muscular and rough-hewn to the delicate, pensive, ecstatic, puzzle-solved, color-theorized, and occasionally narrative, Arnoldi’s throughline has always been elemental. Specifically, stone, water, air, fire, and wood—especially wood. For the past several years, he’s remained captivated by the curious and intuitive strength of the epic stone walls that endure at Peru’s majestic Indigenous cultural sites, even as his immediate attention has returned to the fate of trees on fire-ravaged hills much closer to home. Along the way, a series of hefty, chunky, dimensional paintings and assertive sculptures have curiously married these forms, in chainsaw-chiseled carved compositions that reflect the operations of material, action, and color. As always with Arnoldi, ideas may float freely between mediums and idioms, and remain perennially susceptible to unexpected experiences and experiments—but the results are somehow always instantly recognizable as his. 6150 Wilshire Blvd., Miracle Mile; Opening reception: Friday, February 17, 3-6pm; On view through March 25; free; praz-delavallade.com.

FRIIDOM DUNN: BLACK HÖMER AT WACO THEATER CENTER.

Homer was a legendary Greek author said to have been “the greatest poet of all time,” but by whose standard? Dancer and movement composer Friidom Dunn presents an original work in progress exploring an alternative window on this foundational story of Western cultural identity, through his Epiic style of poetry in motion, dance, music, speech, and soulful connection. We all individually hold our own personal Odyssey within our lives on this Earth, says Dunn, and just as Ulysses sailed the seas, dove the caves, confronted the oracles, challenged his own desires, and relentlessly pursued his foretold fate, this will be a fantastical telling of Friidom’s own journey as an artist, a man, and a citizen. 5144 Lankershim Blvd.
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**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

**ART + SOUL AT BERGAMOT STATION ARTS CENTER.**

With Frieze Los Angeles installed mere steps from LA's favorite train depot turned gallery complex, it would be impossible not to throw a party. In addition to the regularly scheduled new and recently opened exhibitions at the site's more than 20 contemporary art venues, and the inaugural Photo Forward art fair, the galleries, creative businesses, Birdie's restaurant mixologists, and even a comedy club, offer specials, tours, performances, books, talks, and surprises. 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica; Saturday, February 18, 5-8pm; free; bergamotstation.com.

**“FRIEZE WEEK” AT SANTA MONICA ART MUSEUM.**

The West Side's newest public culture venue hosts a full weekend of talks, shows, panels, and programs pegged to nearby Frieze Fair. As their new exhibition Looking West unfolds a thoughtful vision of the promise and pitfalls of Westward expansions, the weekend conversations center around the increasing role of VR and related technologies in redefining the immersive museum experience, the unlikely but perfect confluence of NFT and physical artistic practices, the urgency of feminist thought and conscious community in the web3 space, and the very future of art museums themselves. Saturday night's opening reception for Looking West is followed by a nearby afterparty, and it all coincides with digital curatorial and experiential activities at the site and in the metaverse. 1219 Third Street Promenade, Santa Monica; Special events Friday-Saturday, February 17-18; Looking West opening reception: Saturday, February 18, 5-9pm; free; santamonicaartmuseum.com.

**THE LIFESPAN OF A FACT AT FOUNTAIN THEATER.**

What's more important: writing the truth, or telling a good story? Based on the eponymous nonfiction book, this highly entertaining, very funny new play follows young intern Jim Fingal, whose first assignment at an elite New York magazine is to fact check an essay written by a highly celebrated and cantankerous author. What Jim finds turns his world upside down. Thought-provoking, with zinging one-liners, The Lifespan of a Fact explodes into a hilarious slugfest between "facts," and "truth," making it hard to imagine a play ever being more timely. 5060 Fountain Ave., Hollywood; Performances February 18-April 2; $25-$45; fountain-theatre.com.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19**

**TRULÉE HALL: LADIES’ LAIR LAKE AT REDCAT.**

LAND, OUTFEST, LACMA, and Rush & Co. present the premiere screening and live performance of Ladies’ Lair Lake, reflecting Hall’s feminist-oriented and richly imaginative art practice. The mythological narrative takes place in an edenic forest setting, beside a lake inhabited by a sorority of nymphs overseen by a benevolent yet mischievous goddess. With 16 original songs, Hall immerses viewers in her mythical, choral, and playful world, narrating a creation myth that begins not with man but with woman, and explores themes of disobedience and loss of innocence; the clash between patriarchal religion and matriarchal goddess worship; the complexities and loss of autonomy that accompany motherhood; and the interplay of free will and fate, of human desire and divine intervention. 631 W. 2nd St., downtown; Sunday, February 19, Reception: 4pm, Program: 5pm; free; nomadicdivision.org.

**BENDING THE RIVER: LAUREN BON AND EMMA ROBBINS AT BOIL, TOIL & TROUBLE.**

The special traveling exhibition includes 50 contemporary artists working in a range of media, who each explore mystical, mythological, or spiritual frameworks and practices as they pertain to the history, power, and contentions around water. Artists selected have created works that deal with magic, ritual, the alchemy of water and the role of the witch and other spirit channelers and guides in contemporary art. A series of events and conversations happens through the exhibition, such as this afternoon’s presentation by Los Angeles’ favorite river-bending multidisciplinary artist Lauren Bon and Emma Robbins, a Diné artist with a passion for empowering Indigenous
women. **708 N. Manhattan Pl., Melrose Hill; Sunday, February 19, 2-4pm; Exhibition continues through February 26; free; art-incommon.art.**

**GLENN KAINO AND DAVE SITEK: HIGH SEAS AT AF PROJECTS.**

The Invisible Embrace exhibition by Glenn Kaino and David Sitek—aka the interdisciplinary art and sound crew High Seas—officially ended in January, but the artists will stage a one time performance with special guest Danielle Agami inside the installation before it's actually taken down. At the intersection of art and music, High Seas was born of a fanciful yet absolutely epic collaboration that was part of last year’s Forest for the Trees immersion, and has continued to bear creative fruit as the pair explores the magnetism of humanity’s collective compass, sailing the sea of language but trapped in the time machine of a palindrome. **7503 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Sunday, February 19, 2pm; free; instagram.com/afprojectsla.**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21**

**LUCY MCRAE AT USC ROSKI TALKS.**

Artist Lucy McRae leads a multi disciplinary, art-research studio investigating the impact future technologies have on human evolution. In parallel to her gallery and museum-focused art practice, she thrives as a director and a maker, in the writer’s room and in the lab. Boldly staring down the status quo, Lucy ponders a new story for how future technologies will fundamentally alter human intimacy, reproduction, spirituality, biology, and wellness culture—shining light on the ethical implications of genetic engineering. Her prophetic aesthetic is flung far from archetypal tropes, creating nostalgia for a future about to happen. Lucy’s work diversifies the predictive voices we traditionally call ‘science’ and ‘technology’, through designing hypothetical worlds that use speculation as a tool to provoke an exploration of ideologies and ethics about who we are, and where we are headed. **USC Harris Hall, downtown; Tuesday, February 21, 7pm; free; roski.usc.edu.**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22**

**CAMILLA TAYLOR: DRY TREE AT TRACK 16.**

Presenting a new body of work, the show includes sculptures, prints, and textiles which evoke multilayered conceptual themes stemming from one idea: a tree. Taking the concept of a tree, both “tree of life” and also the genealogical “family tree,” Taylor creates quiet, vulnerable work. A genealogical tree does not necessarily matter in everyday life, but family lineage is quietly present; this theme of a past presence is demonstrated through the materials, as nearly all of the materials for the artworks are salvaged. The past life of the materials, which existed in other places and were touched by other hands, is not apparent, yet there is a sense of haunting, or hiddenness in them. **Bendix Building, 1206 Maple, downtown; Wednesday, February 22, 7pm; Exhibition on view through February 25; free; track16.com.**
The UCLA Student Association’s newest addition of dachi products is diversifying the available snack and beverage options on campus with a variety of Asian snack selections. The dachi nook is located in Ackerman Union with offerings representative of more than five Asian nationalities.

Dachi — short for friend in Japanese — is an Asian-inspired treat and beverage company founded in 2022 by UCLA Anderson School of Management alumni Kelsey Kawana, Eric Luo and Anne Marie Bessacini.

“The heart of dachi has always been at UCLA where the company first came together,” co-founder and CEO Kawana said in a statement. “We are thrilled to be partnering with the Associated Students of UCLA for the grand opening of our very first storefront, and we are excited to make Asian snacks and beverages more accessible to UCLA’s diverse student body.”

The inspiration behind the former students’ snack and beverage nook is to broaden student exposure to other cultures and foster a sense of belonging for the Asian American Pacific Islander populations through Japanese classics of Pocky and Ito En Tea, Korean Chapagetti instant noodles, and dachi-original offerings like Tomo’s Golden Almond Cookie.

This installation is the first collaboration with dachi. The UCLA alumni founded-company installed its first offering on the UCLA campus near the Anderson School of Management in 2022 as a part of the Venture Accelerator at UCLA Anderson — a six-month program that utilizes UCLA resources to help startup founders launch their businesses.”

The spirit of the dachi brand is represented by its round mascot, a Japanese red raccoon named Tomo, who, according to the dachi website, “adores the simple pleasures of life: eating, napping and being with friends.” To date, dachi has served over 4,500 customers and offered over 60 unique Asian snacks and beverages.

The dachi nook is open in Ackerman Union between 8 a.m. – 11 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.- 9 p.m. on Saturday; and 8 a.m.-8 p.m. on Sunday.
California’s Most Famous Medical Cannabis Prisoner Returns Home

Luke Scarmazzo’s release marks the start of the closing chapter in the federal war against medical cannabis

By Jimi Devine

Luke Scarmazzo was California’s most prominent medical cannabis operator serving federal time for nearly 15 years until his release on Feb. 3.

For those many years, Scarmazzo served as the face of the worst case scenario for state’s medical cannabis operators. He was walking proof that even if you were operating in full compliance with state law, the feds could come rip you away from your family at any moment.

There is a fair argument to be made that of the cannabis offenders released in recent years to much deserved excitement, Scarmazzo was the most connected to the industry. Modesto, the home of California Healthcare Collective (CHC) for its year in operation, is now riding its own cannabis wave that hit the shore a bit later than coastal California. We even covered cannabis sales at the Modesto Reservoir during Dirtybird Campout.

After giving him some room to catch up with family and friends, we caught up with Scarmazzo last weekend.

The conversation would start with the fact he’d been the main face of California medical cannabis prisoners since the release of Eddy Lepp in 2016. But the two were on very different boats. Scarmazzo operated a nonprofit collective while Eddy grew some legendary massive for the time “smell it from the highway crops.” Eddy pushed the limits and many of his peers up north weren’t as surprised. Scarmazzo on the other hand represented a lot more people doing exactly what he was doing that didn’t want to end up in similar circumstances. As such, he’s had a lot of different people and organizations advocating for his release through his whole incarceration.

So with all that, when did Scarmazzo
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When he logged in there were significantly more emails in there than usual.

"So I knew something was up," Scarmazzo said. "So I was like, OK, so I open it up. And the first email I see is from my attorney, and the subject line says, ‘you’re a free man.’ So I just stared at the computer for a few minutes."

Things got a bit more obvious in 2017 that Scarmazzo was getting targeted for more time over his music career. In January of that year, Scarmazzo’s co-defendant, Ricardo Montes, had his sentence commuted by President Obama on his way out the door. Scarmazzo, who also applied, wasn’t as lucky. And given the nature of how clemency works he never found out why, but to onlookers it seemed pretty obvious.

The pair had worked on their clemency petitions in an informal clemency clinic in the prison library where Scarmazzo and Mission Green founder Weldon Angelos would help guys file their petitions and stuff like that for free. Scarmazzo had wrapped his head around legal forms and paperwork over the first five years of his sentence on the hunt to find a way out. He was essentially offering up the skill set he’d built in that time to other prisoners free of charge.

"So we did this kind of clemency clinic, and then we, when it came to our turn to file, Weldon and I worked on both mine and Ricardo’s clemency petition," Scarmazzo said. “They're basically identical peti-

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