

New Art Venue in L.A. (and it's not the airport)

The Culver City neighborhood of Los Angeles, which is quickly becoming a destination for commercial galleries, will soon be home to a new nonprofit contemporary art space as well. On Jan. 27, LAXART opens its doors at 2640 South La Cienega in a white-cube building renovated by architect Peter Zellner. Dubbed L-A-X (short for L.A. exhibitions), it will feature a 900-square-foot exhibition area accompanied by a 400-square-foot project room.

Founded by Lauri Firstenberg, a former curator at Artists Space in New York (and Zellner's spouse), the nonprofit seeks to be a center for both emerging and established artists, as well as a forum for dialogue on interdisciplinary approaches to contemporary art, architecture and design. Firstenberg serves as the organization's director and curator. Before founding LAX, she guest-curated exhibitions at another L.A. nonprofit, the MAK Center for Art and Architecture, which features architecture-related exhibitions.

There are only a few other nonprofit art spaces in L.A., most notably LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), a 27-year-old organization on Hollywood Boulevard devoted to innovative art, and REDCAT, CalArts' new performance and media-arts venue in downtown Los Angeles (in the Walt Disney Concert Hall). But there are none in Culver City, which is home to such commercial spaces as Blum and Poe, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, Sixspace and MC (the joint venture of Michelle Maccarone, owner of New York's Maccarone,

Inc., and Christian Haye, who founded The Project). LAX will share its building with the district's newest commercial addition, Walter Maciel Gallery, opening in January, but the two entities will have separate entrances.

LAX's advisory board includes a range of respected figures, including video artist Isaac Julien, multidisciplinary artist Sam Durant, curator and critic Okwui Enwezor, and Thelma Golden, director of the Studio Museum in Harlem. The organization is funded by donations from founding members who are "not interested in governing but wanted to contribute," says Firstenberg. The operating budget is \$150,000 for the first year, and will increase to \$300,000 for the second. The inaugural show features new paintings and a video project by L.A.-based Daniel Martinez [through March 2006]. Other exhibitions scheduled for 2006 include work by the Mexican collective Torolab and a public-art project by Los Angeles artist Ruben Ochoa. —*Reena Jana*