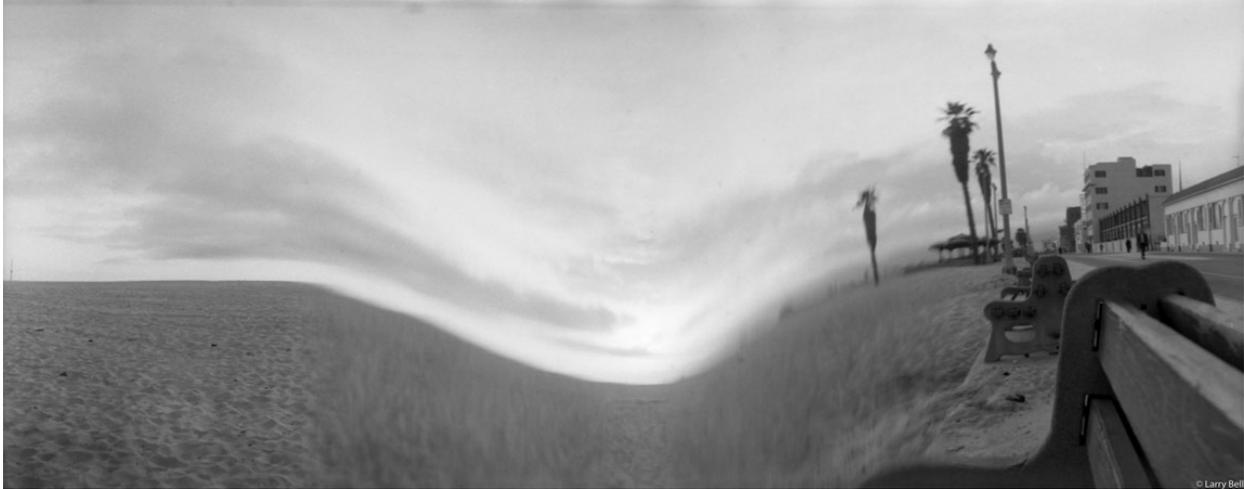


DESERT CENTER | LOS ANGELES  
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Suite 207  
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© Larry Bell  
Larry Bell

*Alpha Wave 25A, 1968*

## DESERT CENTER | LOS ANGELES OPENS JUNE 21 (6-9PM) WITH “GREATER THAN LA”

**June 12, 2018** — What is Greater Los Angeles? Is it simply, as Wikipedia would lead us to believe, "the more-or-less continuously urbanized area stretching from Ventura County to the southern border of Orange County and from the Pacific Ocean to the Coachella Valley in the Inland Empire"? An amorphous agglomeration of density and desert? A megacity of 20 million speaking 224 languages across beach towns and heat islands, lush canyons and dusty valleys? Are the parts bigger than the whole? How do Angelenos—or Arizonans, or Marylanders, or New Yorkers—make sense of it all: from an aerial view, beach towel perch, a simply sidewalk glance along one of the many boulevards of sin? What if we only saw it through art? What stories would we hear? What truths—or lies—would we discover?

The reality is that there is no complete picture, and perhaps no incomplete picture. Greater LA is a collage, a pastiche, graffiti written over billboards tagged over graffiti. It's a feeling captured in a shattered glass painting by Zane Lewis, one that captures the radiance of the Pacific Ocean meeting the salt air. And it's a wall of hand-carved tiles by Lauren Halsey that invoke Egyptian pyramids as much as they evoke the quotidian struggle of black lives in South Central. It's a surrealist 1968 photograph of Venice Beach, shot with a panning widelux camera, which Larry Bell wired to a helmet that triggered a snapshot every time he emitted alpha waves. And it's a triangular double-beveled, prismatic mirror that Kelly Lamb made after hearing about a friend who meditated into a similarly-shaped reflector every morning he lived in the Source Family house. It's a grainy video of Rachel Mason free climbing the old Dickson Art Center at UCLA (when she was still a student, not a teacher there). And it's a Super 8 film by Alex Becerra capturing the iconic buildings of Inglewood that will soon face extinction in the face of "progress" (i.e. gentrification). These works, and many others in this debut exhibition at Desert Center | Los Angeles, a new project space from Michael Slenske,

remind us what it means to be alive in Greater Los Angeles over the past half century. They do not offer a complete picture, but a snapshot, a rorschach of identity—artistic, geographic, ethnic, romantic, tragic, and platonic—and by gathering enough snapshots perhaps we can start to form an album that hopefully helps us answer these questions: What is Greater LA? What is Greater Than LA? And are they both—the parts and the whole—one and the same?

## **ARTISTS**

Natalie Arnoldi, Alex Becerra, Larry Bell, Awol Erizku, Gajin Fujita, Genevieve Gaignard, Lauren Halsey, Seffa Klein, John Knuth, Kelly Lamb, Jake Longstreth, Rachel Mason, Ben Wolf Noam, Steven Perilloux, David Quadri, Jennifer Rochlin, Ry Rocklen, Matthew Rolston, Grant Shumate, Henry Vincent, Han Weigand, Andy Woll, Robert Yarber, and some other surprises...

## **DESERT CENTER | LOS ANGELES**

Desert Center | Los Angeles (@desertcenterlosangeles) is a new project space from Michael Slenske. Its name is derived from the California desert city that serves as a midway point between Phoenix, Arizona (Slenske's hometown) and Los Angeles (his home). Like the Desert Center municipality, a southwestern roadside attraction in bad decline that was once a training ground for General Patton's army and the birthplace of the world's largest managed health care system, Desert Center | Los Angeles is a metaphor for something, for someone, between two worlds. It's a small place for big ideas, ones that hopefully don't end in ruin.

As Seffa Klein, an artist who has also co-existed between Arizona and California and is installing a utopian architecture for the debut exhibition, explains, "It's a liminal space between cultural centers. The center of nowhere. And the desert is such an abstract landscape, it seems like its center is always wherever you stand. As is art, always activated by the viewer, so then the name calls attention to the center of so many things."

## **MICHAEL SLENKE**

Michael Slenske is a Phoenix-born, Los Angeles-based writer and editor who covers art and culture. He has served as the editor-at-large of *CULTURED* and *LALA* and as a contributing editor at *Modern Painters* and *Art + Auction*. His work has been anthologized, included in numerous artist monographs (including those for Abraham Cruzvillegas, Enrique Martínez Celaya, Jose Dávila and Bari Ziperstein), and appeared in: *Design LA* (The Los Angeles Times), *New York, W*, *Architectural Digest*, *WSJ.*, *Galerie*, and *Wallpaper\**.