

5 Free Art Shows to See in L.A. This Week

By [Catherine Wagley](#)



Still from Harry Dodge's *Mysterious Fires* (2016)

Courtesy of the artist and the Armory Center for the Arts

This week, an intellectual in a rubber mask wonders about human extinction and a Mid-City show pays tribute to a renegade group called Rat Bastards.

Order pizza before the world ends

In Harry Dodge's new video, *Mysterious Fires*, actors fight off laughing fits while discussing human extinction and a crew member suddenly tells people to "check out my work." The casual atmosphere contrasts a heavy plot. Artist Cay Castagnetto, in a wrinkled rubber mask and a lab coat, plays an odd intellectual with a hard-to-place accent. She is interrogating a half-machine, half-human named after Dolly the cloned sheep. "We humans are like small children playing with a bomb," says the intellectual, "and we have very little idea when the detonation will occur." Dodge stops her, recommending she say her lines again, with intensified inflection. Soon after, he interrupts talk about existential disaster and imminent machine takeover to ask a crew member to order pizza. The film is the centerpiece of Dodge's show at the Armory, "The Inner Reality of Ultra-Intelligent Life." 145 N. Raymond Ave., Pasadena; through Jan. 8. (626) 792-5101, armoryarts.org.

Breaking school rules

"[I]n art school, you're told, well, don't put anything in the middle," said painter Deborah Remington in a 1973 interview. "I put everything I wanted smack in the middle." Then, she added, she would "attempt to make it look like it wasn't in the middle." Many of the paintings in her show at Parrasch Heijnen have objects in the center: the glowing, floating grate in *Soot Series 2* or the explosive red and purple clouds in *Kennett I*. This approach reads as brazen, and the work has an infectious confidence and a sci-fi sensibility, like it's depicting catastrophes or equipment from a machine-made future. But none of the work is perfectly symmetrical. Remington, who spent much of her career in San Francisco and died in 2010, always found a way to throw things off-kilter. For instance, a crystal shape juts out like a rocket from the right-hand corner of certain of her "Adelphi" drawings. 1326 S. Boyle Ave., Boyle Heights; through Nov. 26. (323) 943-9373, parrasch-heijnen.com.

Unfair

Walking through artist-activist Fred Lonidier's "N.A.F.T.A. (Not a Fair Trade for All)" at Michael Benevento is like exploring a well-illustrated, 3-D manifestation of a research paper years in the writing. It's wordy and dry, but it's also compelling in the way a crash course on something you're desperate to understand can be. The subject here: labor violations and trade law. In the late 1980s Lonidier created *Labor Link TV*, a public-access show about union activities, and footage from the show plays in the gallery. Footage from 1997 shows a protest outside a Hyundai plant in San Diego and features an interview with a verbose, eager organizer, who keeps referring to the sixth floor of the corporate building, wanting the big shots up there to know he's not going away. *3712 Beverly Blvd., Koreatown; through Dec. 3. (323) 874-6400, beneventolosangeles.com.*

Laughing rats

In 1957, within months of moving from L.A. to San Francisco, artist Bruce Conner formed a collective. He called it the Rat Bastard Protective Association, taking inspiration from an organization of local trash collectors called the Scavengers' Protective Association. He sent out invitations to some of the city's most exciting, and devotedly experimental, young artists: Jay DeFeo, Wally Hedrick, Joan Brown, Fred Martin. The work of the Rat Bastard artists features in the Landing's current exhibition, curated by scholar Anastasia Aukeman with the help of gallery director Sam Parker, who was interested in the Bastards even before he met Aukeman. It's an appropriately expressive and gritty treasure trove, held together by mutual admiration. A loose drawing by Brown called *Rat Laughing at Manuel's Sculpture* shows a nimble rat doubled over in front of a sculpture, presumably made by Manuel Neri, another of the Bastards. *5118 W. Jefferson Blvd., West Adams; through Jan. 7. (323) 272-3194, thelandinggalleries.com.*

Dance before casting votes

The night before the presidential election, a group of mothers-to-be will

debut new performances at alt space Pieter in Lincoln Heights. Performer-choreographer Sarah Leddy, who operatically parodied fame obsessions in her recent piece *Grand Best American*, organized the event and calls it "Letters to the Future." The evening includes new work by artists Rebecca Hernandez, whose performance *Displace* featured female dancers in plaid and denim and a digital projection of a two-story home, and Andrea Gise, whose CalArts thesis show involved glitching images and an army of uniformed women who confront their digital doppelgangers. How else should one spend election eve? *420 W. Avenue 33. Unit 10, Lincoln Heights; Mon., Nov. 7, 8:30 p.m. pieterpasd.com.*

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