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A Mad Dash Around This Year's Felix LA Reveals Domestic Ecstasy

If the annual art fair that runs parallel to Frieze LA is to be trusted as a bellwether, interiors are trending at the 2023 edition, according to CULTURED editor-at-large Kat Herriman.

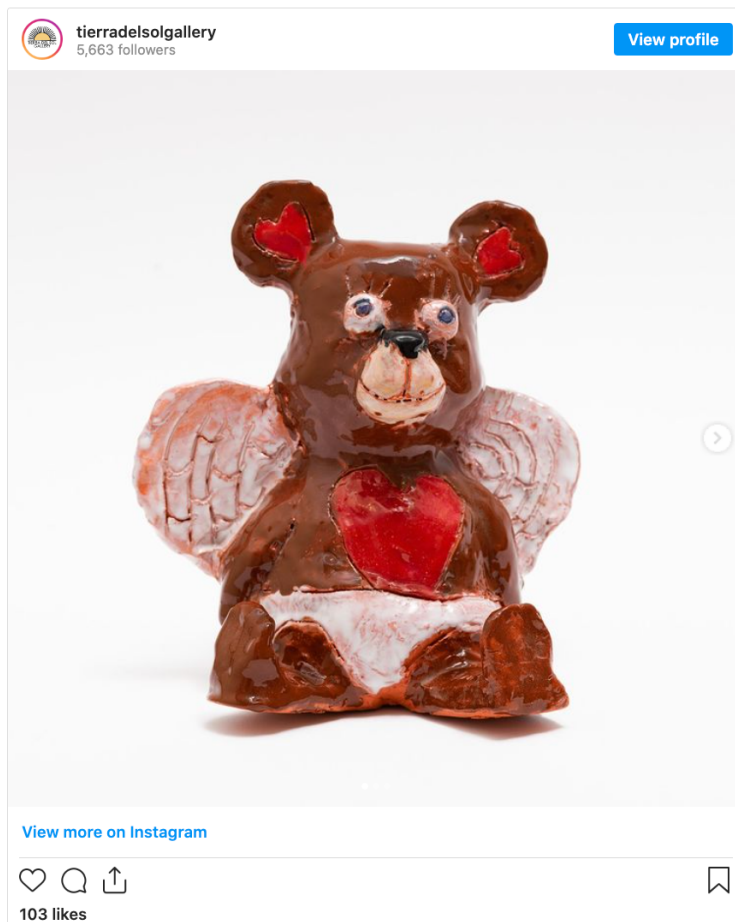
Kat Herriman, February 16, 2023 | [Link to original article.](#)



Soil Thornton, A redacted and amended view, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist and Morán Morán.

At 10:50 a.m. yesterday, the foyer of the Roosevelt Hotel is stuffed near full in anticipation of Felix's VIP opening. Like the exhibitors concealed behind its doors, attendees in queue are a *mélange* of first-timers and regulars, that latter of whom are wise enough to know to start the fair from its top floors and work their way down. It's a formula that allows me to woosh around all the various crevices of the beloved, hotel-bound fair before it becomes impossible to do so. As I make my way through the maze of halls and installations, I wonder if we were indeed moving into a more abstract era as everyone keeps promising. Are we ready to give Identity Politics Figuration a rest? And how about sculpture? Do people miss having things on their floor yet?

The answer for sculpture, as I find, is a resounding no, although there are little gems scattered throughout. Ceramics are especially prevalent in this category. My favorites are the big-eyed angels and figurines by Los Angeles-based Aura Herrera at Tierra del Sol, a non-profit and gallery. No cynicism present here, just an accomplished relationship to the way clay holds even the slightest press of a finger.

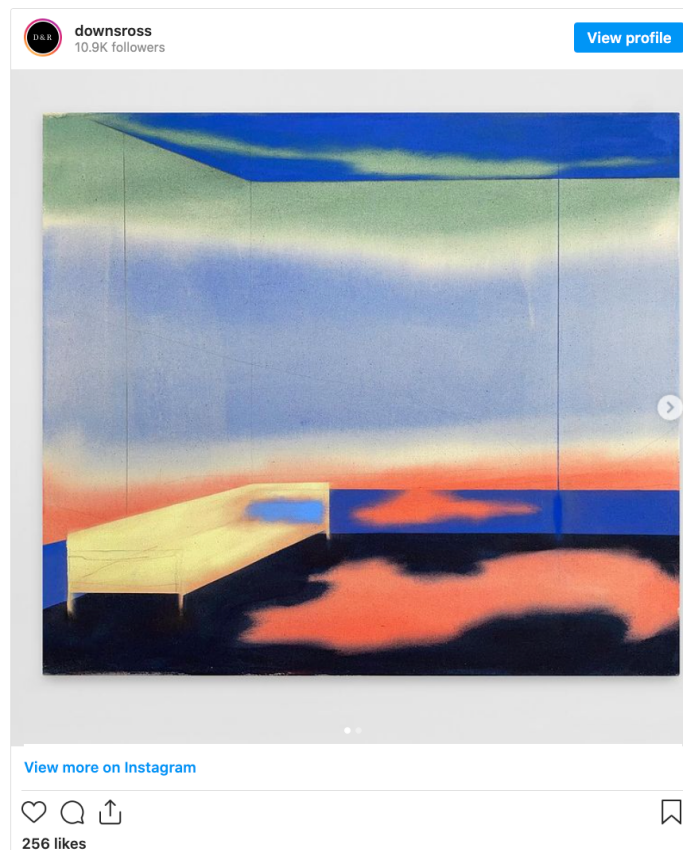


As far as trending hunting for painting and drawing, I have my work cut out for me. Felix LA is expectedly loaded with frames and stretchers that occupy every available inch in every available dimension. I was recommended by nearly everybody to check out the fair's bathrooms, but I won't tell that to you, although I do appreciate when galleries put their naughty stuff in there. So, on second thought, look in bathrooms if the rest of the booths makes you wonder. Lock yourself in with the art. Sit with it.



Left: Quentin James McCaffrey, *Mirror with Sunbeam*, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery.
Center: Liza Lacroix, *sits up in bed and opens mouth.*, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains.
Right: Nick Goss, *Golden House*, 2022. Photography by Ruben Diaz. Image courtesy the artist and Matthew Brown.

Back in the fair, it takes a while to uncover this year's overt themes, until, finally, my naivety catches up to my eye. Felix LA 2023 is the fair for the interior, not only because booths are embracing their physical truths as hotel rooms, but also because the art itself has turned inward. What I find is not quite Abstract Expression nor is it didactically clear. Instead, it floats somewhere in between with a heavy emphasis on spaces and still lifes as a genre that implies but also obscures the body.



Some of the spaces are breath stoppingly real, like the delicate and diaper detailed paintings and drawings of Quentin James McCaffrey at Nicelle Beauchene, while others like Annabelle Häfner's work at Downs and Ross are much more dream-like, retaining the legible basics: a ceiling, a wall, a bed. I bemoan the scale of Häfner; her paintings are so minimalist and paradoxically juicy like Allen Jones that I want one big enough to step inside.

Matthew Brown, who has quickly become an LA staple, reinforces my on the fly hypothesis with a large Nick Goss painting entitled Golden House, and small devotional windows by Sula Bermúdez-Silverman. More windows are to be had at 56 Henry, where a set of shades by Kevin Reinhardt do little to block out the noontime sun that shines through.

Across from the Reinhardts, a Cynthia Talmadge pointillism piece teases me. It says Remember this is Los Angeles, kid! There has been precedence mounting for this domestic shift for years, especially in a city of angels where Laura Owens's shadow runs long and Jonas Wood cut his fortune out of a kitchen sink.

Neither of those influences fed the paintings that stayed with me as I exit the fray. Rent free will stay the suite of works by Liza Lacroix for Magenta Plains. Lacroix's imposing abstractions, under the slightest suggestion, begin to morph into torrid flashes of the familiar. Living somewhere between Charline von Heyl's sallies and Cecily Brown's illegible bedrooms, Lacroix's work builds out an imaginative space large enough to get lost in.