

Miller, Leigh Anne, "California Dreams for Soho," *Art in America*, March 7, 2011



California Dreams for Soho

by Leigh Ann Miller
03/07/11

How long do you think it takes to put together an exhibition with some 50 artists who work in all mediums and live 3,000 miles from where the show will be? Ideally more than the six months months-from conception to opening date—that the three organizers of "Greater L.A." had to throw together their ambitious survey of art currently being made in Los Angeles.

As is often the case, the idea came to the three New York friends—Benjamin Godsill (assistant curator at the New Museum), Eleanor Cayre (collector) and Joel Mesler (dealer)—spontaneously, and late at night. The next morning, they still thought they could pull it off, so they quickly pooled their art-world connections and expertise. "Immediately, we started hustling, and the list [of artists] is still growing," Godsill said. The three recently spent a whirlwind two days in L.A. visiting 21 studios, and, two and a half months before opening day, the roster is nearly complete.

Cayre secured the space, a 14,000-square-foot, second-floor loft on Broadway just south of Broome Street, thanks to "people I know in real estate." Her "family leverage and wiles," in Godsill's words, didn't hurt. "It's my romantic idea of what SoHo was like—

before I got here," he continued.

The space is still empty, but Cayre, who was meeting with contractors after a Friday morning press breakfast, plans to build temporary walls and add interior rooms in which to show video work.

Many of the artists had yet to see the space, and weren't sure what they'd be installing, or when. Edgar Arceneaux, an L.A. native who has shown internationally, seemed unfazed by the ad-hoc nature of the enterprise. "I can make a whole show in two months," he said. Arceneaux and Dennis Hollingsworth, a painter, both hope that "Greater L.A." will have more aspects than an ordinary group show. Arceneaux plans programming conversations between participating artists to be streamed online, and Hollingsworth likewise hopes that the show will spawn a "sustained conversation that is missing from the art world," perhaps in the form of more permanent DVDs or books.

At the Friday breakfast, participating artists Mindy Shapero and Andrea Longacre-White caught up near a table piled with pastries, fruit and mini sandwiches, while trying to distract Shapero's adorable baby with bites of croissant. Mesler (who used to have a gallery in L.A.) approached Longacre-White only a few weeks ago. She was waiting to see the space later that day before deciding what kind of project she'd contribute to the show. Neither Longacre-White nor Shapero seemed bothered by being grouped under the vague umbrella of artists who happen to live and work in Los Angeles. "Because you don't see people walking around, except at openings, you have to try harder to create a community," Shapero offered in the way of explaining the show's urgency.

Added Longacre-White: "There's an openness. The weight of art history doesn't bear down on you as much."