

ANAT EBGI

FAD — magazine

5 L.A. Gallery Shows To Close Out This Summer

Written by: Vittoria Benzine

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Cosmo Whyte at Anat Ebgi.

Ten years ago, the girl that Brooklyn-based art writer Vittoria Benzine used to be spent all the money in her college savings account to see the guy she'd pined after throughout compulsory public education in L.A., knowing deep down he didn't want to see her. Benzine has since resolved she'll always have problems. The mark of improvement is whether those problems are getting cooler. Last year, when she got lured back to L.A. for the first time since growing up, it turned out she still had the same fetish for abandonment, now just with a cooler shape. Art writers are also writers, artists, with practices informed by personal experience. Styles of living are like handwriting.

To break the fourth wall, though — having a hard-won, independent, adult relationship with L.A. after five weeks unwittingly alone here feels like an analogous personal victory to this writing career itself. Southern California commands a glamorous if harrowing human culture, but its rocky, sandy landscape also has agency and attitude.

6150 Wilshire Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90048
+1 (323) 272 3418

anatebgi.com

4859 Fountain Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90029
+1 (323) 407 6806

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Its azure beauty can be oppressive — I find it impossible to work here. But even without a car last summer, I still saw galleries en masse by Ubering to neighborhoods and covering them on foot. I saw all of Downtown L.A. like that with a musician I met in the jam aisle at Erewhon. Skinny strumming arm draped around me, sweating, he laughed, “You live like this?” “Yes,” I said, “in New York, I walk miles every single day.” Both cities have their own powers. Here alone, though, has Sprüth Magers crowned by palm trees.

When I left the Hills of L.A. at the end of last summer I figured it’d take a long time to ever return. Now I know how magic works, so I should’ve known better. It’s been a blessing to be back exploring art in L.A. — this time with a Maserati and a co-pilot. Every time I return it seems more’s happening, and I gain a richer idea of why. Numerous gorgeous shows by Suchitra Mattai, Hank Willis Thomas and more closed last week. We still have neighborhoods to see. Still, these beauties remain on view.

“Hush Now, Don’t Explain” by Cosmo Whyte @ Anat Ebgi

People think the human species ascending means spaceships, but that’s just a bandaid. To me, it means doing the work at home. I’ve read that some people think every time an individual betters themselves inside, it elevates the collective vibration. We as a human people have a lot going on right now, including learning that today’s atmosphere (literal and not) is the legacy of a long, often painful past that needs unwinding, coaxing. L.A.-based Cosmo Whyte does his artist’s duty by translating that process across disparate physical mediums from charcoal to beaded curtains so heavy they can make visitors realize the reality of what they mean — sourcing his imagery all the while from historic events and family archives alike. Neon lights repeating “don’t behave like the men who brought you here” could reasonably haunt anybody reading them. Through September 16th.