

GENE'S

Grand Buffet

By Joshua Abelow, Jesse Benson, Bjorn Copeland, Michael Kennedy Costa, Juliana Halpert, Merideth Hillbrand, Sophia Le Fraga, David Muenzer, and LeRoy Stevens

From October 11th to November 15th, 2025

After having my gallery located on the edge of MacArthur Park — perhaps the most disregarded area in all of Los Angeles — for about a year and a half, I came to understand the depth and the breadth of the unrequited love that many Angelenos have with this city. I then came to realize that this is somewhat emblematic of the unrequited love that many Americans have with this country as a whole. What is happening within Los Angeles County is not the same as the nationalism or patriotism exhibited in other parts of the United States, of course, as the people I have been interacting with or walking past were not aggressive or exclusionary or xenophobic; nor are most of the people I interact with or walk past elsewhere. Most people I engage with simply want to know that they and the rest of us from West Covina to West Hollywood will be taken care of in the most basic of ways — housing, healthcare, food, etc. Why are city officials more focused on preparing for the Olympics and building new shopping centers than figuring out new solutions for traffic patterns and providing more widespread and better promoted harm reduction services?

That was both a snarky rhetorical question and a legitimately sincere question. I know why the local government does what it does — it is greedy and corrupt, like all forms of government. But also, why does it have to be that way? Why can't people ever choose love and empathy over money and more money?

Community has always and always will be such a major focal point of Gene's Dispensary and its expansive and varied programming. From day one, I have involved people and practices I have cared deeply about for many years. From day one, I have organized exhibitions and events elsewhere with people I greatly admire at places I greatly admire. From day one, I have been determined to stay rooted in my community, while also growing my community.

This exhibition is the first exhibition at the new Gene's location in Chinatown: 422 Ord Street, 2B, Los Angeles, CA 90012. It's above Leroy's and next to The Fulcrum. These two spaces are operated by two of my best friends and favorite people, Ian James and Josh Schaedel. I am further integrating myself and my gallery into my community (like, I mean, officially).

This exhibition also includes nine of my favorite artists and people: Joshua Abelow, Jesse Benson, Bjorn Copeland, Michael Kennedy Costa, Juliana Halpert, Merideth Hillbrand, Sophia Le Fraga, David Muenzer, and LeRoy Stevens. I have previously worked with each of these artists in some capacity, some more extensively and/or intensely than others, but they are all now officially a part of the Gene's extended family.

Take a look around. Have a little bit of this, have a little bit of that. Chin-chin!!

- Keith J. Varadi, October 2025

422 Ord Street, 2B
Los Angeles, CA 90012

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Clockwise from Door:

Joshua Abelow, *H-Man*, Oil on linen, 24 x 12 inches, 2024

Sophia Le Fraga, *Put a Finger Down: Things Edition*, Oil pastel, wax crayon, vinyl, Ess-a-Bagel wrapper on found library card, 3 x 5 inches, 10.75 x 12.75 inches (framed), 2024

Michael Kennedy Costa, *Mouth*, Flashe and colored pencil on linen, 14 x 11 inches, 2025

Sophia Le Fraga, *Final Days (Remember This)*, Ink on found library card, 3 x 5 inches, 10.75 x 12.75 inches (framed), 2024

Joshua Abelow, *Untitled*, Oil on linen, 16 x 20 inches, 2024

Bjorn Copeland, *Phantom Buffet*, Electric skillet, telephone, latex paint, foil tape, 15.5 x 14 x 6 inches, 2025

David Muenzer, *Scalar-Daemon (1134%, X-axis, or: in its own hold)*, UV-cured print on Plexiglas 24 x 48 inches, Edition 1 of 2 + AP, 2016/2025

LeRoy Stevens, *Psycho Geography*, Found architectural model, paper, photographs, latex masks, Plexiglas, MDF, and acrylic, 33 x 18 x 35.5 inches

Jesse Benson, *Compartmentalization Painting 11 (Irvine)*, Oil and gesso on panel in aluminum frame, 8.5 x 11 inches, 2023

Merideth Hillbrand, *Means and Discriminatory Powers (#2)*, Inkjet prints, custom frame, 19.25 x 13.25 x 19.25 inches, 2025

Jesse Benson, *Compartmentalization Painting 2 (Pavilion)*, Oil and gesso on panel in aluminum frame, 8.5 x 11 inches, 2023

Michael Kennedy Costa, *Other Life*, Flashe and colored pencil on linen, 14 x 11 inches, 2025

Juliana Halpert, #7 (*Devil*), from the series "Wake up sleepers!", Archival inkjet print, artist frame, 28 x 22.5 inches, 2021

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