

The 8 Best Niche Museums And Galleries In Los Angeles

 laist.com/2017/10/26/hidden_gem_museums.php

by [Annie Lloyd](#) in [Best Of](#) on Oct 26, 2017 1:30 pm

Los Angeles has its fair share of reputable art institutions. Places like LACMA, MOCA, the Broad, and the Getty (which is co-sponsoring the [Pacific Standard Time LA/LA exhibit](#) around Southern California) represent the typical ways of seeing and consuming art. But what if that type of consumption turns stale? What if you want to see art in a different type of space? Los Angeles has far more interesting and exciting places operating under the radar of the established art gate-keepers. Here are some of our favorites.



A magician's decaying dice (Photo by [Sgerbic](#) via [Wikipedia](#))

MUSEUM OF JURASSIC TECHNOLOGY

[The Museum of Jurassic Technology](#) is one of those “unknown” museums that actually everyone knows about but continues to cite as the “unknown” museum. You can’t be niche when literally every Los Angeles tour book lists you at the top of their list. That being said, the Museum of Jurassic Technology is primo museum content, and it fully deserves a spot atop every list of museums in Los Angeles.

The place is a treasure trove of made-up artifacts and esoteric collectibles. One room is dedicated to microscopic mosaics; another is dedicated to paintings of the Soviet space dogs. It also has a rooftop dove oasis (!!) which might be one of the most idyllic spots in all Los Angeles—in it, you surround yourself with greenery and the calm coo-ing of beautiful birds.

If a museum is a place to display historically relevant artifacts of either artistic or scientific merit, the Museum of Jurassic Technology upends the genre; most of its artifacts are neither legitimately historical nor scientific, and very little of the art has aesthetic merit (those mosaics notwithstanding). It's essentially an old-school cabinet of curiosities. Most of it is made up and displayed at whim. But in this vein, does its mere existence not make it the most historic, scientific, and artistic place of all?

The Museum of Jurassic Technology is located at 9341 Venice Boulevard in Culver City. Open Thursdays from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Fridays through Sundays from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. \$8.



Installation view of Artists of Color, May 2017 - February 2018 at The Underground Museum, courtesy of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, photo by L n' S Photo Services

THE UNDERGROUND MUSEUM

[The Underground Museum](#) was established in 2012 by the late painter Noah Davis, who dreamed of bringing “museum-quality” art to Arlington Heights, a predominantly working-class neighborhood. The first exhibit was called *Imitation of Wealth*; in it, Davis re-created famous pieces of art because no museums were willing to lend their work. The exhibit asked questions of artistic hierarchy, class structures, and authenticity, and set the groundwork for a small museum that has grown into one of the most important art spaces in Los Angeles. In 2015, the Underground Museum began collaborating with MOCA, setting up an exchange where Davis would curate exhibits with works from MOCA's permanent collection. Davis primarily focused on exhibits featuring the black experience in Los Angeles and America; his brother, artist and director Khalil Joseph, installed his video piece *m.A.A.d* at the Underground Museum before it showed at MOCA under the title *Double Conscience*. Davis unfortunately passed away at the young age of 32 back in 2015, but his vision and aesthetic are being continued via the new museum director and guest curators. The Underground Museum is also a strong community player in mid-city and South Los Angeles (Black Lives Matter and other groups often use the space to organize).

The Underground Museum is located at 3508 West Washington Boulevard in Arlington Heights. Open Wednesdays through Sundays from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. Free.



The gallery space at the Vincent Price Art Museum. (Photo from the Museum via [Facebook](#))

VINCENT PRICE ART MUSEUM

Vincent Price was most known for his myriad roles in horror cinema, but his side hustle was studying art history and building a formidable art collection (he got an Art History degree from Yale before embarking on his acting career). In the 1950s, he also acquainted himself with East Los Angeles College, eventually recognizing how students of the college could benefit from more opportunities to see art on their campus. In 1957, he donated some of his and his wife's art collection to kick start the school's collection. The museum, which is [named after him](#), has since grown to include a much larger collection and regularly hosts temporary exhibits. Currently, the first comprehensive exhibit of Laura Aguilar's photography ever mounted is on display. Also, because it is attached to ELAC, it regularly showcases student work as well.

The Vincent Price Art Museum is located at 1301 Avenida Cesar Chavez in Monterey Park. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Free.



The entrance to the gallery. (Photo via the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery on [Facebook](#))

LOS ANGELES MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY

On the grounds of the Barnsdall Art Park in Los Feliz, the Hollyhock House usually gets the spotlight. It's like ok, we get it, Frank Lloyd Wright was America's pre-eminent architect, bridging life and nature, yadda yadda yadda. But the house isn't the only way to connect with art at the park. The [Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery](#) is, according to their website, the "longest running institution in Los Angeles devoted solely to exhibiting art." It focuses primarily on displaying work from Los Angeles artists. They feature prominent artists as well as fellowship recipients, underrepresented artists, and artists who submit work through an open call.

Plus, what's better than spending an afternoon looking at a great art exhibit before having a picnic on the vista of the park as the sun sets over western Los Angeles?

The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery is located at 4800 Hollywood Boulevard in Los Feliz (top of the stairs in Barnsdall Art Park). Open Thursdays through Sundays from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Free.



The CSUN galleries. (Photo via the galleries on [Facebook](#))

CSUN ART GALLERIES

Up in the Valley, Cal State-Northridge has a historic and comprehensive set of [art galleries](#). Founded in 1958, it has since showcased over 500 exhibits, featuring artists like James Roble as well as the student artists who study at the university. Right now, the gallery is presenting an exhibition of Judy Baca in conjunction with Pacific Standard Time's LA/LA exhibit. Baca's [Great Wall of Los Angeles](#) is a hugely important work of public art, and she's a CSUN alum, so it's only appropriate her work would get its retrospective on campus.

The Cal State-Northridge Art Galleries are located at 18111 Nordhoff Street in Northridge. Open Mondays through Saturdays from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., closing at 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Free.



A display case at Arcana. (Photo by Steve R. via [Yelp](#))

ARCANA: BOOKS ON THE ARTS

Ok, so this one isn't technically a museum or gallery. But the book collection at [Arcana](#) is so vast and so thorough that you're likely to see and learn about far more art than you necessarily would at LACMA. It's not a library, so if you want to take any books home you have to shell out some cold hard cash, but perusing the books while in the store is entertaining in and of itself. Photo books, artist biographies, museum exhibition catalogues, you name it—if there's an artist whose work you want to look at, it's likely Arcana has one or several books on the subject. The sheer breadth of possibilities in this store is staggering, and they regularly host book signings and discussions.

Arcana: Books on the Arts is located at 8675 Washington Boulevard in Culver City. Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.



The boutique at Junior High. (Photo by Dustin Stafford courtesy of Junior High)

JUNIOR HIGH

[Junior High](#) came to Hollywood after its successful [Kickstarter campaign](#) revealed how desperate young Angelenos were for a community space untethered to pre-existing gatekeepers. In the year and a half since its opening, the space has regularly featured gallery shows by and for young artists (in particular young and queer artists of color). It also hosts concerts, comedy shows, and yoga classes, and a small boutique of local artists' wares occupies the front of the store. DIY spaces and "community-driven" art spaces are much more common nowadays, but Junior High separates itself from the pack because of its apparent commitment to representation. Local teen artists intern at the space, and creator Faye Orlove began handing curatorial duties over to people who come from the communities the gallery aims to represent. Plus it focuses more on events/education than it does selling any sort of art.

Junior High is located at 5656 Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood. Gallery and store are open Saturdays and Sundays from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. Event listings are [here](#).



The Heritage Square Museum. (Photo by Jennifer N. via [Yelp](#))

HERITAGE SQUARE MUSEUM

If you're a regular reader of LAist, you know we love history. We love it so much we want to get married to it. Of course, ha ha, that's a joke, we know can't marry history. What we can do, though, is get married AT historically significant locations. Luckily, the Heritage Square Museum lets you do [just that](#). The [Museum](#) consists of Victorian-era buildings that were saved from demolition to provide a backdrop for educating visitors about life in the first 100 years of California statehood. The outdoor, living history museum features tours, events, and lectures, all dedicated to examining the daily life of Los Angeles as it grew from a new American city to a huge American metropolis. Unfortunately, though, the original two buildings in the collection were burned down via arson in 1969.

The Heritage Square Museum is located at 3800 Homer Street in Montecito Heights. Open Fridays through Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. \$10.