

Boucher, Brian. "5 Artists to Watch from the Hammer Museum's 'Made in L.A. 2025' Biennial," Artnet News, October 7, 2025.



Carl Cheng
Erosion Series 2, 1975
Compacted sediment, cardboard, wooden box
6 x 13 x 11 in
15.24 x 33.02 x 27.94 cm
One of five surviving works

One of the most closely watched shows in Los Angeles, the "Made in L.A." biennial at UCLA's Hammer Museum showcases work "not only made in the city but also grounded in its complex and unfolding terrain." This time around, it's overseen by independent curator Essence Harden and Hammer senior curator Paulina Pobocha, who declined to give the show a title, not wishing to hem in what they referred to in the exhibition catalogue, the city's "cacophonous disorder."

The exhibition features 28 artists, including familiar figures like Carl Cheng and Amanda Ross-Ho, as well as relative newcomers like Widline Cadet and Freddy Villalobos. The works presented in this year's biennial include film, painting, theater, choreography, photography, sculpture, sound, and video.

The show was inaugurated in 2012, when the city was still on the rise; Hauser and Wirth didn't open its outpost there until 2016, and the debut Frieze Los Angeles was not until 2019. Artnet's critics have often given the show a thumbs-up, like Catherine Wagley writing on the 2018 edition; she saw in the show "a marked tone shift away from the kind of insider-baseball pretensions that can often characterize ambitious group exhibitions like this, toward a social awareness that's more deeply felt."

As art historian Kate Nesin writes of Carl Cheng in the show's catalogue, "across six decades the artist's work has insisted... on a meaningfully nondogmatic set of forms and practices: kits, devices, prototypes; kinetic, often interactive public projects; testing, tinkering, waiting, responding, changing."

The 82-year-old Cheng is the subject of a retrospective, "Nature Never Loses," traveling throughout the U.S. and Europe through 2027. Reviewing the show for Art in America, Louis Bury wrote, "His irresistible artworks, which teeter between utility and whimsy, model how our species' efforts to shape the world to our purposes always contain the seeds of their own undoing."

Cheng's works appear in the collections of the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation in Los Angeles; the M.H. De Young Memorial Art Museum in San Francisco; and the Migros Museum of Contemporary art in Zurich. He's also included in "Sixties Surreal," at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art.

"Made in L.A. 2025" is at the Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, October 9, 2025–March 1, 2026.