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Work of Art: Regen Projects New L.A. Gallery

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by JESSICA KERWIN JENKINS



Regen Projects

Photo: Christopher Norman, Courtesy of Regen Projects, Los Angeles



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Shaun Caley Regen

Photo: Catherine Opie, Courtesy Regen Projects



Who else but **Shaun Caley Regen** could single-handedly shift the epicenter of L.A.'s art world? Her new museum-like gallery, designed by architect **Michael Maltzan**, opens on Saturday on the rougher side of Hollywood, definitely tugging everything Eastward. But then, she's been changing the landscape of the city's art scene since launching Regen Projects with her late husband, **Stuart Regen**. "Having seen Regen Projects emerge in the '80s at the forefront of a new generation of galleries in L.A.,"

says LACMA director **Michael Govan**, “it’s impressive to see Shaun raising the bar again for the city.”

Regen’s influence also extends far beyond city lines. “We think about what is interesting to see here, and how what’s happening internationally relates to what’s happening in L.A.,” says Regen, whose stable of artists includes remarkable local talent—**Catherine Opie** to **Raymond Pettibon** to **Liz Larner**—but also big-name international artists such as **Anish Kapoor** and **Wolfgang Tillmans**.

At its start 23 years ago, the gallery was run by Shaun and Stuart, son of prominent New York art dealer Barbara Gladstone, who died in 1998 at just 39 years old, succumbing to non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. They mounted a series of cutting-edge exhibitions, giving **Matthew Barney** his first show in 1991 in their homey West Hollywood space. “She not only provided local artists with a nationally reputable space, but also exposed them to international artists who they may not have seen otherwise,” says **Ann Philbin**, director of L.A.’s Hammer Museum.

For all the gallery’s growing stature, Regen believes, in some ways nothing’s changed. “We’ve had our struggles and our successes, but I think it’s essentially the same as when we began,” she says. “I wish Stuart were here to see it. I think he’d be amazed.”

Many of Regen’s artists, like **Lawrence Weiner**, have been with the gallery for decades, while those of a younger generation, including **Walead Beshty** and **Elliott Hundley**, are never the ten-minutes-of-fame types, but promise something more enduring. (The inaugural exhibition will showcase work from all the gallery’s artists.) And yet, as the Museum of Contemporary Art director **Jeffrey Deitch** points out, Regen isn’t afraid of taking a commercial risk. “A number of galleries in Los Angeles are businesses,” he says. “Shaun’s is a traditional gallery in that it’s about building and articulating a vision.”

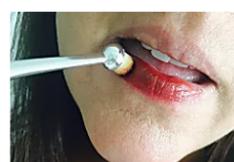
Along the way, Regen has built a reputation as a fierce protector of her artists, as quality art collector **Beth Swofford**, an agent at CAA, appreciates. “She fights for them and thinks they’re the best in the world,” says Swofford. “I admire and relate to that feeling of really fighting for an artist.” It’s the part of the job Regen likes best. “There’s the satisfaction in seeing a show like **Glenn Ligon**’s at the Whitney, which was so beautiful and so well-deserved,” she says. “Those are the moments you live for.”

When Regen dreams of expanding elsewhere, it isn’t a gallery in New York that she envisions, but maybe, one day, a space in Paris or Mexico City. For now, however, as workmen haul planters past, creating the rooftop sculpture garden, she is simply basking in the moment, soaking it all in. “With the artists and museums and all that’s happening here, I don’t have a second-city chip on my shoulder,” says Regen. “L.A. is always changing, getting better, getting pushed further, and I think it was probably that way before any of us got here.”



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