

CALENDAR

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ART REVIEW



CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT Los Angeles Times

Cheech show packs Flamin' Hot punch

Cheetos, soda cans and more appear in exhibit casting a skeptical eye on the state's agriculture.

CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT
ART CRITIC

RIVERSIDE — Gerald Clarke's sculpture "Continuum Basket" lines up 668 crushed beer and soda cans in a spiral pattern, affixed to the shallow bowl of a TV satellite dish hanging at eye level on a wall. The low spiral creates a traditional Indigenous basketry form — Clarke, born in Hemet, is an enrolled member of the Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians — embedded into a high-tech parabolic antenna designed to transmit or receive information between near and far.

Like Marcel Duchamp's "Rotorelief" sculptures that turn a spiraling graphic into a slyly hypnotic image to enthrall a mesmerized viewer, "Continuum Basket" is built from a device that streams spellbinding corporate television and internet into personal space. The crushed cans are product rubbish, evoking an injurious intake of virtually addictive quantities of alcohol and sugar. The subsistence labor of impoverished scavenging for littered aluminum cans collides with the number "668," pointedly cited in the



The Cheech Marin Center

sculpture's label. The figure conjures the IRS form number for a legal government seizure of property.

Clarke's sculpture materially connects past and present. Disparate cultures link, cementing the bond through a mix of wit, worry and skepticism.

"Continuum Basket" holds a lot. It's a virtual cornucopia within "Land of Milk and Honey," a lively, engaging and sometimes sobering group exhibition at the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art and Culture of the Riverside Art Museum, through May 28.

[See Cheetos, E3]

JAZMÍN URREA collected material for "Pasarela de Chucheria," top, in food deserts; Luis G. Hernández's "Untitled #36" uses same-color paints from both sides of the Mexico-California border.

CEO leaves L.A. Phil

Chad Smith makes surprise move to be president of Boston Symphony Orchestra.

MARK SWED
MUSIC CRITIC

The Boston Symphony made the surprise announcement Monday that this fall its next president and chief executive will be current Los Angeles Philharmonic CEO Chad Smith.

In his two decades at the L.A. Phil, of which he became CEO in October 2019, Smith has played an outside role in the progressive ambition of the orchestra, which now has the largest budget, the broadest range of musical and educational activities and the most extensive community engagement of any orchestra in the world.

"He opened my eyes to new music," Gustavo Dudamel said in a phone call from Berlin, as he was about to go onstage to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic in "Téenek — Inventiones de Territorio," a work by Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz that was commissioned by the L.A. Phil and premiered by Dudamel in 2017.

"I was not a teenager when I began at the L.A. Phil," Dudamel said of becoming the orchestra's music director in 2009 at age 27, "but musically I was a teenager, very young. Chad gave me the possibility to grow up inventively."

Smith leaves at the height of his career and when the L.A. Phil is in the best shape of its 104-year history. While many other American orchestras are [See Smith, E6]

First lady of L.A. rock radio

Mary Turner, a DJ for KMET in the 1970s and '80s who was also heard by millions elsewhere, has died. **E2**

Fearsome look at mental health

Bethanne Patrick gets real about "Double Depression" and the pressures on women in her memoir. **E2**

Scribes protest TV showcases

Writers picket outside New York City venues hosting previews of upcoming series for ad buyers. **E2**

Comics **E4-5**
Puzzles **E4**

A disgraced Hillsong pastor revisits scandal

Carl Lentz speaks in a docuseries that makes case he's a scapegoat for the church's issues.

By MEREDITH BLAKE

Just a few years ago, Carl Lentz was on top of the world.

The pastor had founded the New York City outpost of Hillsong, a Pentecostal megachurch with roots in Australia, in 2010. Over the following decade, it became a sensation, drawing thousands of diverse, young congregants every Sunday to services in Manhattan.

Known for his designer skinny jeans, plunging V-neck shirts and wildly charismatic sermons, Lentz attracted celebrities to his

flock and in 2014 famously baptized Justin Bieber in a bathtub belonging to NBA player Tyson Chandler. In the process, Lentz turned into a star himself, a "hype-priest" to the rich and famous who was interviewed by Oprah Winfrey and profiled in major magazines.

As a white Evangelical who lived in the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn and wasn't afraid to say Black lives matter — even on "The 700 Club" — he seemed to represent a new, more progressive strain of Christianity, even as he dodged questions about the church's stance on LGBTQ+ issues and did little to increase diversity in its leadership.

Then, in late 2020, he was fired from Hillsong for "moral failures." On Instagram, Lentz apologized for cheating. [See Hillsong, E6]



CORY WEAVER L.A. Opera

RUSSELL THOMAS has the title role in L.A. Opera's season-closing presentation of Verdi's "Otello." The opera figures prominently in the group's history.

OPERA REVIEW

L.A. Opera calls on a hero once again

Russell Thomas plumbs Otello's torment as history is revisited — and made.

MARK SWED
MUSIC CRITIC

Los Angeles Opera began last week with the Pulitzer Prize announcement that "Omar," the acclaimed new opera by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels, was being honored as the year's best musical composition. A co-commissioner of "Omar," L.A. Opera gave the West Coast premiere in October. This is already the third premiere by America's youngest major opera company to be

honored by the Pulitzers: Ellen Reid's "prism" won in 2019 and Elliot Goldenthal's "Grendel" was a finalist in 2007.

Angelinos woke up on Saturday to the New York Times featuring L.A. Opera as a happening operation, a company rife with innovation. It lived up to the reputation well last month when it presented a troubling, timely pair of experimental operas, Emma O'Halloran's "Trade/Mary Motorhead," in the black-box REDCAT.

Another of L.A. Opera's accomplishments has been to make going to the opera a trendy occasion. Its audience loves to dress with Hollywood flair and pose for selfies. All of that adds — you [See 'Otello,' E6]

Art that holds California's glory and its ugliness

[Cheetos, from E1]

Sculptures, installations and other works by more than 40 mostly American and Mexican artists are included. In Exodus, God led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to a land of milk and honey. The show's theme is California agriculture, its biblical title framing the Golden State as part fertile and utopian paradise, part huckster marketing dystopia. Sometimes the milk is sweet, sometimes curdled; the honey fragrant or rancid.

Jazmín Urrea's crispy, dark red "Pasarela de Chucherías" — a slang name that loosely translates as "a junk-food path" — is composed of a thick circle of Flamin' Hot Cheetos laid out flat on the floor. Your encounter with this blazing sculptural form could be the exhibition's equivalent of Moses coming across the miraculous burning bush. The crimson circle looks like an open wound or crusted scab, a sore blemish in the typically pristine space of an art museum gallery.

"Pasarela de Chucherías," made of a hugely popular snack loaded with artificial colors and unpronounceable flavor enhancers (disodium guanylate, anyone?), makes a wicked nod in the direction of pristine Minimal and Conceptual sculptures like British artist Richard Long's circles of stones gathered on hikes through the natural landscape, or German artist Wolfgang Laib's gatherings of generative staples like flower pollen and rice. Urrea's collecting excursions take place in neighborhoods like South L.A., where she lives and works, in "food deserts" marked by convenience stores rather than groceries or farmers markets.

The exhibition is divided into three loosely themed sections. At the center is "Food," where Clarke, Urrea and other artists' edibly defined paintings and sculptures are found.

Sustenance is flanked on one side by "Histories," which tells personal narra-

'Land of Milk and Honey'

Where: The Cheech Marin Center at the Riverside Art Museum, 3581 Mission Inn Ave., Riverside

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. Closed Mondays. Through May 28.

Info: (951) 684-7111, riversideartmuseum.org

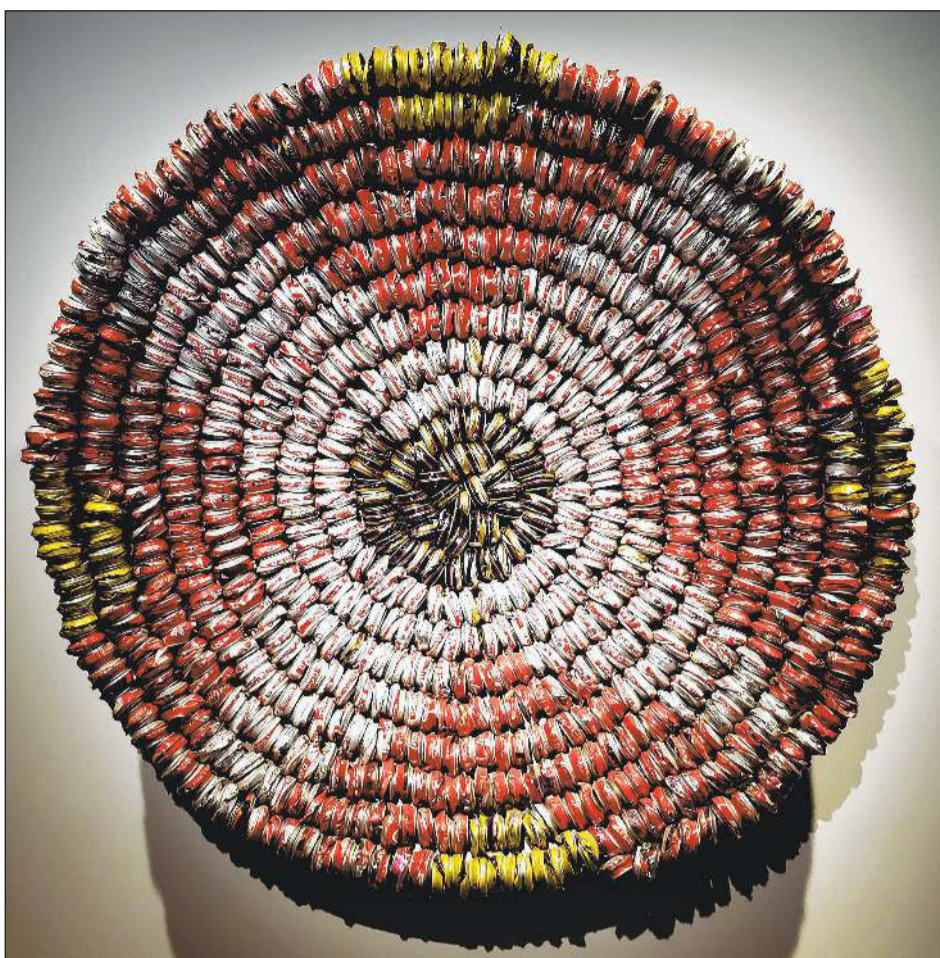
tives of California. They include stories both heavenly and hellish — and sometimes in between, as in Xavier Cázarez Cortéz's shelving loaded with collectibles, the structure crushing a red MAGA hat wedged underneath, like Dorothy's house fallen on the Wicked Witch of the East.

On the other side is "Labor." It glances off the cultivation and distribution of bounty, whether by Japanese, Filipino or Latin American immigrants who tilled the land, or in modernist architecture, like the Albert Lopez Jr. sculpture of a suspended enclosure based on Mondrian's paintings, pierced with a grid-pattern of windows whose design replicates those in an Orange County jail.

Two other very different works, which nonetheless speak to one another across time and space, help frame the theme.

One, in "Histories," is a group of 11 simple works on paper made in the 1950s and after in a Social Realist style. The muscular charcoal drawings and darkly inked linocuts by Domingo Ulloa (1919-1997), who is sometimes called the father of Chicano art, record genre scenes of post-World War II braceros, Mexican guest workers toiling on West Coast farms. Ulloa, born in Pomona and trained in Mexico City, took the socially oriented printmaking of the revolutionary Taller de Gráfica Popular to heart.

For good and for ill, those milk and honey farms would barely exist without the wa-



Photographs by CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT Los Angeles Times
GERALD CLARKE'S "Continuum Basket" is in "Land of Milk and Honey." The sculpture is composed of 668 crushed beer and soda cans on a TV satellite dish.



CAMILO ONTIVEROS and Javier Tapia's film installation "Liquid Light (detail)" focuses on water.

ter being channeled in through herculean industrial effort from natural sources like the Colorado River. At the other end of the show, in the section devoted to "Labor," a gorgeous, nearly half-hour recent film projection by Camilo Ontiveros and Javier Tapia, produced with the aid of

high-tech drones, follows the glistening water and its impact from high in the cloud-swept Rocky Mountains to the desiccated edge of Arizona's Sonoran Desert and Mexico's Sea of Cortez.

The film is a collaboration with director Nicolás García, photographer Ruben Diaz, musician Steve

Rioux and the two artists. Shown in a darkened, low-ceilinged room, the floor strewn with a layer of salt and sand that crunches loudly underfoot, the ethereally beautiful, even fragile poetic imagery in "Liquid Light" flows between luminous aerial panoramas and close-up details as intimate as tiny dead bugs scattered on parched earth.

There's much more. The exhibition is the fifth installment of the MexiCali Biennial, a series of art projects related to the two historic Californias — *Alta y Baja* — and conceived by artists Ed Gomez and Luis G. Hernández. (Gomez is co-curator of "Land of Milk and Honey" with April Lillard-Gomez and Pomona College art historian Rosalía Romero.) A kind of "anti-biennial," it was born in the shadow of the commercially oriented glob-

al proliferation of biennial exhibitions early in the 21st century.

To understand its smartly renegade spirit, which is charted here in a number of documentary displays in a side gallery, all you need to know is that the first biennial was held in 2006 and the second in 2009 — three years later, not two. The global financial crisis of the prior year may have been a factor, but the show has also been mounted in the off years of 2013 and 2018. Tossing the demands of a biennial calendar just might be a wry nod to the playful, self-deprecating joke about being "on Mexican time."

In addition to the documents, a wonderful 2006 Hernández mural, re-installed here, articulates the series' founding temperament. Two sets of five wide, flat, unmodulated stripes of different colors — orange, cream, blue, yellow and red — are repeated on the wall, with a white space separating them. To make the mural, Hernández went to each side of the Mexico-California border and bought five cans of paint in identical hues from two Home Depot stores — a well-known location for hiring available day-laborers. Then he went to work himself, painting the museum wall.

A viewer goes back and forth in front of the mural, checking out one "skin" of colors against the other, searching out similarities and differences between them. Now you see them, now you don't.

The famous Mexican and Chicano mural traditions, from Diego Rivera on, are almost exclusively figurative, given their educational goal as community platforms recording cultural history and advocating for social progress. But this one is a purely geometric abstraction, complete with Minimal and Conceptual art underpinnings. The social dynamics of mural traditions well up in a wholly contemporary way, their profound legacy given a thrilling spin.

The tables get turned. Who could ask for more?

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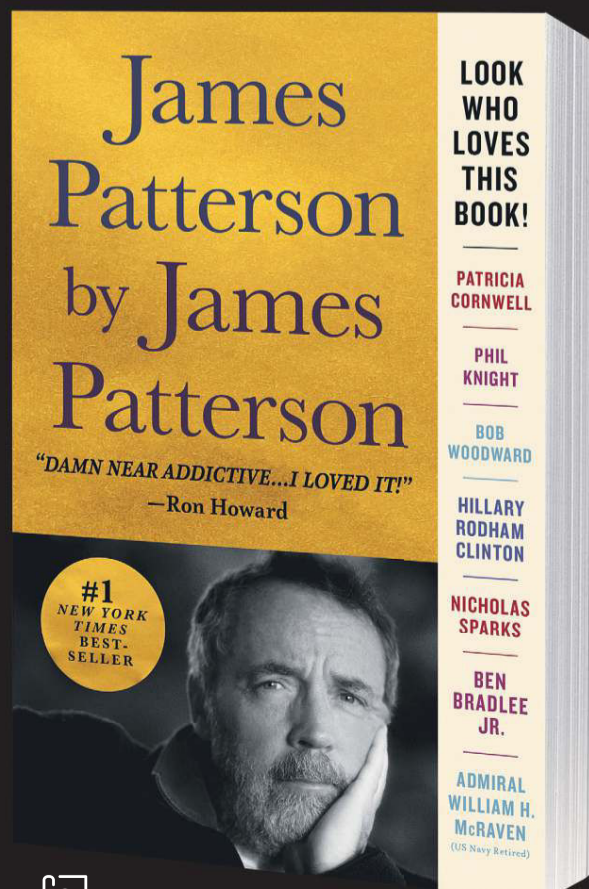
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