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Fiona Connor at Château Shatto

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Text by Alec Recinos

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Fiona Connor, *Continuous Sidewalk* (installation view) (2021–23). 621 Ruberta Avenue #3, Glendale, California, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto, Los Angeles.

Nobody walks in Los Angeles. That's how it often seems, at least, in a city designed around cars. Pedestrians are neglected in favor of ever-expanding highways, treated as an afterthought at best, a blur glanced out the window, barely seen and quickly forgotten. Fiona Connor's current exhibition at Château Shatto, however, brings walking to the forefront through its focus on an unlikely source material: the sidewalks of Downtown L.A.

Located off-site in the artist's soon-to-be-vacated studio, the show consists of only one artwork, the titular *Continuous Sidewalk* (2021–23), which covers the entire floor of the space with a patchwork of recreated segments of sidewalk originally encountered in the Civic Center. Each individual piece of curb has been carefully put into place so as to maintain the orientation of its real-life counterpart, forming a strange, noncontiguous walkway. The surface is far from pristine: The ground is uneven, with some parts crudely mended, scratched, and even painted over. There is an overwhelming amount of detail, ranging from the Twombly-esque scribbles scrawled over a patch of black asphalt in a corner beneath the slop sink, to the neat rows of laid red bricks that peek out from beneath a section of cracked and crumbling concrete.

Due to its immediacy and realism, it can be difficult to remember that *Continuous Sidewalk* is actually fabricated, a site-specific sculpture made to fit the dimensions of Connor's studio. The fact that it registers as the real thing is a testament to Connor's exacting practice, which often involves remaking ordinary objects, like the doorways of shuttered clubs and community bulletin boards—objects whose forms shift and gain meaning through use. In *Continuous Sidewalk*, the wear and tear of daily life is etched in the details of the piece. Every section of this sidewalk was once immaculate, and consequently, interchangeable and generic. Each became specific, and thus significant, only over time, as they were used, repaired, and neglected, leaving their surfaces scarred with spray paint, tarnished manholes, gum, and fissures.

These elements appear in Connor's sculpture, but they index a very different production process: They were purposefully made in the same studio in which they are now displayed, instead of accumulated over time in the city. The resulting encounter with these simulacral walkways induces an uncanny tension between the labor of the artist and the unseen, anonymous acts

that created each of the sidewalk's particular cracks and scratches. In the moments when *Continuous Sidewalk* disguises itself as artwork, to be experienced as the thing it imitates, it provides a glimpse into the quotidian moments that make up Los Angeles and the daily lives of its people. But when the focus returns to the realm of art, the physical mirroring of the outside world only highlights what is necessarily missing from these near-perfect indices: the actual history and actions that gave the sidewalks their form. The friction between the work of the artist and that of the city's walkers forecloses resolution into an easy message to open and sustain an examination of L.A.'s pedestrians. There might be no clear path provided in *Continuous Sidewalk*, but there's a solid ground on which to start.

Fiona Connor: Continuous Sidewalk runs from August 18–September 23, 2023 at Château Shatto (off-site at 621 Ruberta Ave, #3 Glendale, CA 91201).



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Alec Recinos is a writer and researcher based in California and New York. His work focuses on the political and performative nature of aesthetics.

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