

FRIEZE



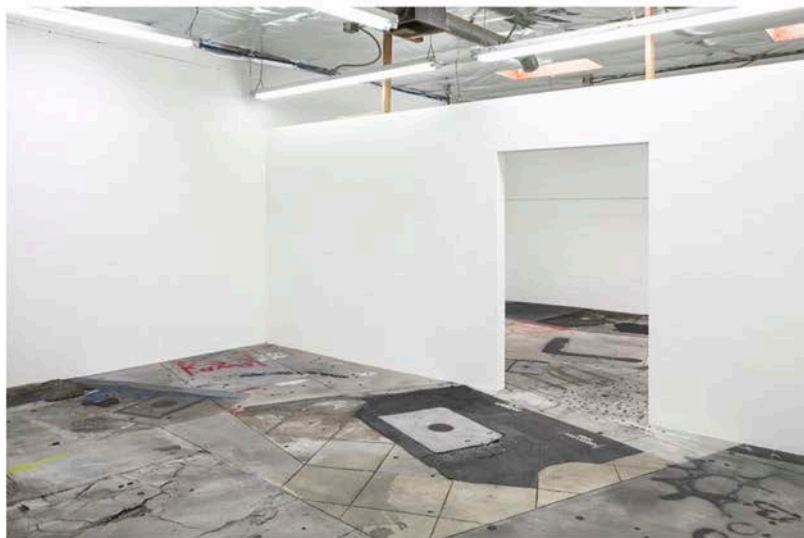
Fiona Connor Brings the Street into the Gallery

At the artist's studio via Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles, the artist's facsimiles of pavement interrogate the similarities between civic labour and artistic production

 BY CLAUDIA ROSS IN EXHIBITION REVIEWS | 13 SEP 23



This summer, I spent US\$500 fixing my ten-year-old Honda Civic's failed starter but, after seeing Fiona Connor's *Continuous Sidewalk* (2021–23) – on view via Chateau Shatto at the artist's Burbank studio – I wish I hadn't. The Los Angeles-based artist, known for her uncanny replicas of quotidian architecture, ditched her car during the pandemic – a decision that prompted a newfound interest in pavements. Not just any pavements, but LA pavements: those often-ignored elements of infrastructure in a city famous for its motorways. Connor's newest project perfectly re-creates concrete slabs hand-selected during commutes downtown; the resulting installation features 20 or so distinct fragments of pavement, their cracks, graffiti and other eccentricities forged across a single cement pour in the artist's converted warehouse space. Here, Connor's diverse technical repertoire culls artistic gestures from forms typically dismissed as banal, collapsing divisions between the gallery and the street.



Fiona Connor, 'Continuous Sidewalk', 2021-23, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and Château Shatto, Los Angeles; photography: Ed Mumford

Narratives emerge from the deceptively simple installation, chronicling the interactions between the city, its inhabitants and private owners. Spray-painted stencils reading 'JOKER' and 'SOUL ASSASSINS' emblazon one rough edge, while a half-destroyed storm drain fills another: both likely the remnants of pedestrian intervention. In another, a palimpsest reveals a lineage of previous owners (in LA, pavements are installed by adjacent property developers): broken white plaster meets a wash of dark asphalt that cedes to reveal a pocket of neat red brick. Elsewhere, rectangular black concrete displays the results of a rogue power washing, usually completed by city employees, the curlicue ornamentation of which creates a cursive that just eludes understanding. The outcome is oddly captivating: Connor's project notes the collisions of civic and governmental forces coded within our landscape.



Fiona Connor, 'Continuous Sidewalk', 2021-23, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and Château Shatto, Los Angeles; photography: Ed Mumford

The range of techniques required by such careful facsimile questions the separation between work completed for civic projects and methods employed for artistic production. A variety of approaches fills the small space: Connor took plaster casts of manhole covers and drains in the city's Fashion District, which were later painted bronze; thick, gummy dots of enamel replicate sticky circles left by old chewing gum. Other sections mix fine-art practices with those found on the road: the artist faithfully re-creates a discarded York peppermint patty wrapper by screen-printing the brand's label on flimsy, archival aluminium; in an adjacent square, a reproduced, disposable coffee cup wedges between concrete beds laid by professional contractors.



Fiona Connor, 'Continuous Sidewalk', 2021-23, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and Château Shatto, Los Angeles; photography: Ed Mumford

These unique facets recall ubiquitous urban sights and an array of art-historical referents. The power washer's looping script conjures the image of Cy Twombly's incoherent scrawl, while the subtle curvatures of mixed concrete feel like nods to the artwork of Carl Andre, Richard Serra and even Boyle Family. In a back corner sits a large, paint-dotted sink original to the studio – an inclusion that combines the space's artistic use with the facilities necessary to its function. Connor's familiar structures interrogate the arbitrary stratification of manual labour, calling attention to the evocative materials, markings and techniques just underfoot.



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Burbank runs roughly ten degrees hotter than LA proper, and Connor's studio has no air conditioning. Absent a gallery's chill, the installation feels like an eerie continuation of the outside world, the experience of which bleeds beyond Burbank's borders. After my viewing, I found myself taking pictures of the road: 'That's a good one,' I thought, staring at a cement plank with an empty Modelo bottle resting in a crevice. My camera roll testifies to the work's success: Connor forces encounters beyond the art world's regulated echelons. And, in case you were curious, *Continuous Sidewalk* is not currently for sale. Connor and her gallery would prefer that the work be installed in public.

Fiona Connor's 'Continuous Sidewalk' is on view at 621 Ruberta Ave until 23 September

Main image: Fiona Connor, 'Continuous Sidewalk', 2021-23, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and Château Shatto, Los Angeles; photography: Ed Mumford