Art   Reviews

Does Nobody Walk in LA?

Fiona Connor's "Continuous Sidewalk" tells the story of a city where many people walk every day as part of their lives, livelihoods, and just for a casual stroll.

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Installation view of *Fiona Connor: Continuous Sidewalk*, Glendale, California (all photos AX Mina/Hyperallergic)

GLENDALE — The idea that no one walks in LA, **popularized by the 1980s band Missing Persons**, feels true until it doesn't. There are many places where people of all social classes do a significant amount of walking, and in almost every neighborhood, working class and unhoused folks walk a lot. To walk in Los Angeles is to experience the city where it receives the least investment.

Walking up to **Fiona Connor's "Continuous Sidewalk,"** an ambitious installation in Glendale, a municipality in Los Angeles County, requires using the sidewalk. The show is technically presented by Chateau Shatto Gallery in LA's Fashion District, but because of the nature of the work — fully recreated sidewalks — it is hosted in the artist's studio.

According to a **recent editorial by the _Los Angeles Times_**, "LA has been hit with more than 1,700 claims and 1,020 lawsuits for sidewalk injuries over the last five years, and paid out more than $35 million in settlements." That same article pointed to a recent city audit that noted that centuries might be required for safe, smooth sidewalks based on the pace of repair.

If the city's sidewalks leave a lot to be desired, they have always been a playground for artists. Neighborhoods with high concentrations of artists, like the Arts District or Silverlake, **contain a high density of stencils spray painted on the sidewalks**. Connor has taken it one step further — she's turned the sidewalks themselves into works of art.
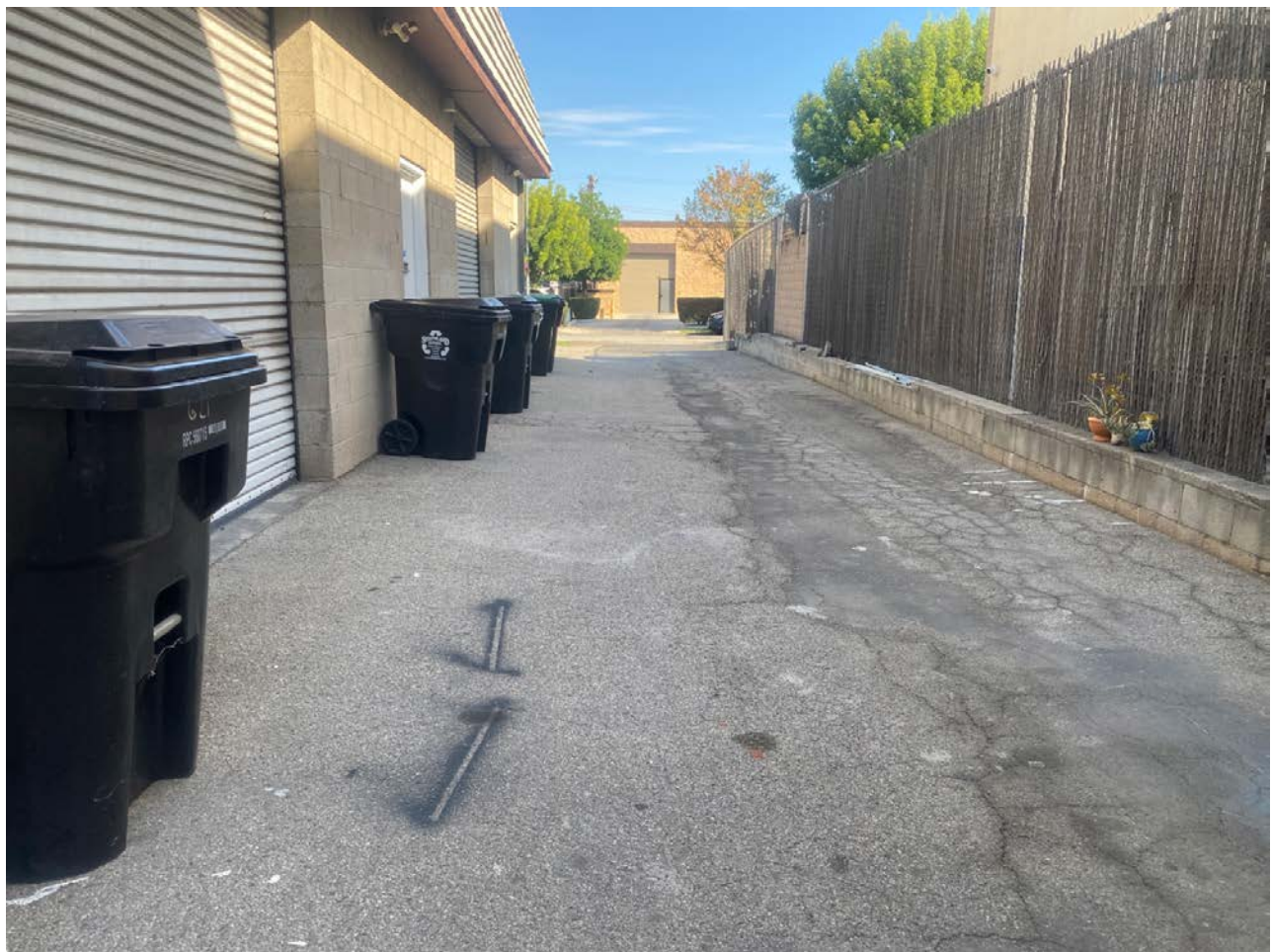
Installation view of _Fiona Connor: Continuous Sidewalk_, Glendale, California

Hailing from New Zealand and living in the city for the past 15 years, Connor has spent time indexing and reproducing segments of sidewalk around Los Angeles's downtown Civic Center neighborhood, a complex

of government offices. Little details, like bumps and cracks, are oriented to the cardinal directions of the original site.

The symbolism here is significant — in addition to reports of sidewalk neglect from city officials, the area around Civic Center is often the best evidence that Los Angeles **was originally designed to be walkable** before the advent of car culture.

But beyond the symbolism there is the craft. Some of the work is made of actual concrete and asphalt, some of resin and wax. Everything from cracks to fissures to little pieces of candy wrapper appear on the floor. A manhole cover feels like it could open up into an underground world, and all the scratches and etchings of well-worn civic infrastructure tell the story of a city where, in fact, many people walk every day as part of their lives, livelihoods, and just for a casual stroll.

The name of the installation — "Continuous Sidewalk" — highlights that it is continuous with the sidewalk just outside, which makes the work partially a readymade, partially an act of artistic documentation, and partially just an actual, functioning sidewalk. As I walked out, I started paying extra attention to the real physical ground beneath me for the rest of the day, noticing its bumps and curves and little fragments and pieces.

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Continuous Sidewalk *is presented by Chateau Shatto and continues at 621 Ruberta Ave, #3, Glendale, California through September 23. The exhibition was organized by the gallery.*