

Okay, quick, when were you first in Los Angeles?

I said quick.

For me, moi, **Pawn**, it's right now. Got here yesterday at noon PST and already feeling like it's all just so much already done.

Business, that's why. Came here for business, [Scale 10x](#). That's Southern California Linux Expo, 10<sup>th</sup> year.

Excitement incarnate, right?

Okay, it's more than that. **Pawn** loves art, LA has lots of art, and I haven't seen it all. So, called my old neighbor A from SD and asked if he'd like to join me for a little pre-conference R&R in the belly of the beast. Sure thing, says AofSD and off we go. He picks me up at the airport, and it starts.

First stop is food, [Cafe Midi](#). I awoke at 3:30 CST, arose at 5:30 after trying too hard to sleep some more, and by the time we roll up to the restaurant (148 S. La Brea) it's almost 2:00 PST. I have Dover Sole and AofSD has a breakfast burrito. I am soon to learn that this is what most Californians have for at least one meal per day; a wad of food you can hold in one hand whilst completing a phone call with the other and pretending you're carrying on a conversation with your old friend across the table. At least that's how it feels.

Don't tell me I'm petty. I'll walk out on you.

So here I am sitting in a Westin Bonventura hotel room, 23<sup>rd</sup> floor, with a view of the HOLLYWOOD sign (yes, really), watching *Californication* on in-room cable, and reflecting on two days of deep immersion. Let me tell you how it works.

Lots of art, so lots of eyeball time. LA has always harbored a real, deep, inferiority complex vis-a-vis the elite, East Coast, New York art scene. This triggered a volcanic uprising about 50 years ago, and no looking back since. Lots of money flows through the hands of the wealth centers here â€” Hollywood, Silicon Valley, Asian Trade, etc. â€” and they have made their mark. There is so much money layed down on art here it almost makes you forget that Dubai exists... but it still does.

Deep cultural diversity. New York may be the most cosmopolitan city in the US, but has nothing on LA when it comes to the actual diversity of the sitting population. In downtown LA one can walk a few blocks and cruise from one culture's deepest, darkest, most embarrassing vices and most shameful fashion crimes, and right into another's. Korea, Japan, China, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Vietnam... etc. You get the idea. There's a few square mile area in the fashion district that is like the UN of bad attire.

In NY, people want you to love them, want you to appreciate how hard they work to live, to actually live, in their city, but they don't think you're really up to the task. In LA, they just assume you appreciate it, they are so glad you do, and they will only judge you for your lack of physical discipline, diet, tanning habits... I'll take New York, if you get me.


Hank Moody is no hero, and as such is a perfect role model for a 21<sup>st</sup> century LA.

Here's what's good and bad in LA. Consider this a capsule review which I have carefully crafted to save you the trouble of traveling here yourself.


Vivian Maier at [Merry Karnowsky Gallery](#) (170 S. La Brea) is da bomb!



[Vivian Maier](#) has been a favorite of **Pawn** since John Maloof first started photo-blogging about her. I won't go into her whole story here, but enough to say that she was a French immigrant to New York, then Chicago, who took to street photography when not working her day job as a nanny. Maloof found her (mostly undeveloped) film in a storage locker liquidation sale while she was in her last year of life in a nursing home. She never showed or sold her work in life, but Maloof has made a minor empire out of the Art Horde she left behind.

[Naked Hollywood: Weegee In Los Angeles](#), at MoCA Grand Avenue is hype in its original, unadulterated form. 

**Pawn** has long known of and appreciated Weegee for his groundbreaking work in crime photography in New York, but knew little of his West Coast work in LA. Fear not, MoCA is here to help. Naked Hollywood is an unapologetic look at this most unabashed, self-promoting, cartoonish character. With hundreds of prints, dozens of original magazines, scores of other photographer's shots of Weegee... well, it's just a cornucopia of glamor-hype. Well worth the effort to see it all, and such a great counterpoint to Vivian Maier's guileless work.

[Under The Big Black Sun](#) (California Art 1974-1981), at Geffen Contemporary at MoCA is not at all *my* taste.  I don't know, color me clueless, but I just saw so much self indulgent work in this exhibit that it makes me hope very much that there is really a lot more that California has to offer us from this era than what I saw. There was the occasional bright spot, but so much of this was video-cum-performance-cum-found-cum-documentary-cum-family-portrait... Jeeze, give me a break! There was more ego-feeding nonsense here than you can shake a very long stick at. Not worth the ten block walk from MoCA Grand Ave. Give it a **pass!**

Here's some photos from today's excursion. Hope you enjoy!



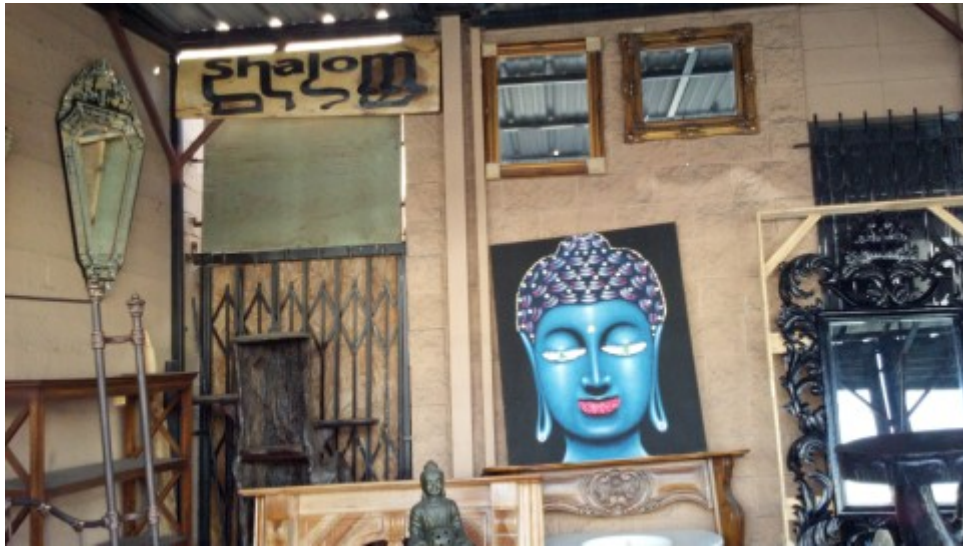
*Filming a commercial at Pershing Plaza*



*Window display in Fashion District*



*Window display in Fashion District*



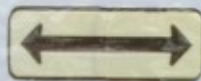
*Store front in Fashion District*



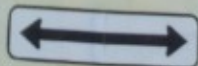




NOT  
THE  
SAME  
STORE



NO  
SOMOS  
LA  
MISMA  
TIENDA



822

*Sign in Fashion District*









*Variations on a theme*



*Sleek and moderne...*



*So many shops, so little time...*



*...and one thing leads to another.*