

Auto Focus:

Convention Center car show
to bring 1.1 million
Downtown.

3



■ **AROUND TOWN:** Two more Downtown residential projects move forward.

2

■ **CITY OBSERVED:** Bunker Hill and First Street will dominate design in '05.

4

BUSINESS • POLITICS • ARTS • CULTURE

Hang Time and Beyond

*The Downtown Art Rush Continues
With New Shows and Spaces*

BY KRISTIN FRIEDRICH
CALENDAR EDITOR

In Downtown spaces big and small, the art just keeps on coming. Museums from Bunker Hill to Exposition Park and places in between will take some noteworthy risks in '05: The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) hosts what will be a headline-making retrospective of late New York artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, while the Natural History Museum continues the quest to give its enormous collection a modern edge. In Little Tokyo the Japanese American National Museum opens an affiliate, and the Downtown gallery scene,



which has expanded rapidly in recent years, will continue to grow.

Big Name Art: MOCA's last name-cachet show was its wildly successful 2002 Andy Warhol retrospective. The museum will try to recapture the buzz with its 70-painting exposition of the work of Jean-Michel Basquiat.

The Brooklyn painter's career trajectory went from spraying graffiti in subways to living the jet set life of an art world darling. He overdosed in 1988 at the age of 27, and was cultivated, posthumously, into an '80s icon. The MOCA show will examine how his work stands the test of time. As with Warhol, expect media hype, hot

see Museums, page 9



photo courtesy of MOCA

Jean-Michel Basquiat's "Flexible" will appear at MOCA this July.

Museums

Continued from page 1
ticket opening parties and robust admission numbers.

The Artists Go to the Park: In its campaign to update its image, and the shows it presents, Exposition Park's Natural History Museum (NHM) will open *Conversations* Feb. 20. The exhibit pairs museum curators with contemporary L.A. artists Kim Abeles, Lita Albuquerque, Tony Berlant, Paul McCarthy, Ed Moses and John Valadez. Each artist will be given gallery space and the chance to mingle his or her own work with pieces from the museum's collection. Their perusal hasn't been a breezy one, incidentally — the

NHM's hoard of specimens is 33 million strong.

The Democratic Process: In April Little Tokyo's cultural status will ratchet up with the opening of the \$7.5 million National Center for the Preservation of Democracy. Across the plaza from the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), the facility will occupy a historic brick structure that once housed the city's first Buddhist temple. Features include a 200-seat forum and a "democracy lab" for public programming. Whereas JANM focuses on history, the new center will concentrate on current issues and themes like freedom and civic participation. It will only be accessible to the general public part of the time — teachers and students are the priority.

Galleries Galore: On the heels of the art cluster at Chung King Road comes Gallery Row, another art hub in the making. Already 19 spaces — from small joints to MOCA and

the Museum of Neon Art — participate in the Gallery Row organization's monthly art walk. Gallerist Bert Green says several more are on the way in early '05. With thousands of new residents arriving Downtown, that means more viewers, and potentially, more buyers.

Survey Says: *African American Artists in Los Angeles* is a massive, three-part survey of local African American artists working from 1945 to 2003. The second part of the show, *Pathways*, unfolds both at the Barnsdall Art Park and at Exposition Park's California African American Museum Jan. 13. The exhibit includes dozens of contributing artists. It is curated by Dale Brockman Davis, who, with his brother Alonzo, established the Brockman Gallery, one of the city's first and oldest galleries showing black artists' work.

Contact Kristin Friedrich at kristin@downtownnews.com.