

CLAIRE TABOURET

“BEING HERE MAKES YOU FEEL THE OPPOSITE OF NOSTALGIC. THERE’S THIS EXCITEMENT OF BEING IN THE PRESENT.”



Claire Tabouret at her studio in LA. (Photography by Cameron Gardner)

Two years ago, painter Claire Tabouret made the move from Paris to Los Angeles to find space, an affordable studio, and a laid-back art scene. She is represented by LA’s Night Gallery, where her new paintings are exhibited until March 4. Tabouret’s work is featured in various international collections, such as the renowned François Pinault collection.

Why did you decide to make the move from Paris to Los Angeles?

I moved here two years ago from Paris. Since I’d never been to LA before, what was most important for me was just that it was far away from Paris. My first intuition when moving away was that I wanted to go very far, so it was more about leaving a place than arriving somewhere. The choice of LA was really the second step, where the

first step was just 'I'm leaving'. But then I found that LA has this special element about it, where its geographical location is so far removed from a lot of places, and has got its back turned towards the rest of the US and Europe. It feels a bit like the end of the world, bordering the ocean, you could say it like that. On top of that, LA has a different relation to time too, working in a different time zone than Europe or New York.



What I immediately fell in love with here, is the relation to space. My studio here is huge, the city is huge, and you feel this possibility to create since there's enough space for new things. So firstly, this notion of spaces translates to how I physically move through a city, or how I move through my studio. Secondly, this notion of space also translates to my mind: more space means more room for new ideas. Sometimes in cities like Paris and New York you just feel it's so packed with people, and there's so little space that you feel overwhelmed, which makes it difficult to feel free and formulate new ideas.

Another thing that I think is really interesting about LA is that you can either be alone, or in the middle of everything whenever you want. As an artist, as a creator, I can be super focused and put myself in this place of solitude. You can be completely on your own for days or weeks, but you know you're still in the middle of this exciting city, not far where it's all happening. You can easily look up the buzz and see all these places and interesting people when you feel like it. It's very different from Paris or New York, where it's quite the opposite. It's very difficult to be lonely there, even if you want to. As soon you step out of your studio you bump into people, or get drawn into things that suck your energy. Here you can be as anonymous as you choose to be.

Work by Claire Tabouret at her studio in LA. (Photography by [Cameron Gardner](#))

Do you think that this room for experimentation is related to the fact that LA is a much younger city compared to other, more established art capitals?

Yes, absolutely. This notion of space and time I mentioned, goes hand in hand with history. Working as a figurative painter, for example Paris especially has so much big, heavy history connected to the practice of figurative painting. So for me it's nice to be in a place like LA that's not as historically charged and more in the present. LA is such a young, dynamic and fast-moving city. Being here makes you feel the opposite of nostalgic, where you're not encouraged to think of the past so much, but instead you're encouraged to be accepting of this constant state of change and development. There's this excitement of being in the present.

So what is happening in the LA art scene that's making the international art world look towards LA?

I think the first movement is from the artist community, and then the rest follows. We've seen this happen in a lot of other cities, that once artists settle in an area, the neighborhood starts to change. This has been happening in LA now, because there's affordable space that appeals to artists. There are lots of artists coming in from Europe and New York, looking for bigger studios, and then it's only natural that galleries follow, boosting the art market here.

And then in LA itself there's this move further and further to the Eastside of the city, where neighborhoods are turning into artistic hubs, and this will continue to spread. Even this area of Frogtown by the LA river, where I have my studio, has completely changed over the past two years from a desolate area to a posh, artistic place. There's a different café, shop, gallery, or architectural building each month, and prices have gone up too. When I find a little spot I like around here, the next time I'm there it's different. But I like the challenge to accept and appreciate this constant change instead of fighting it.

How do you feel that modern technology has changed certain things for you as an artist, in regards to communicating your work to an audience?

Well, I like Instagram a lot because it's all about image, as opposed to other social media channels that are more text-based. I think Instagram is so popular with artists, because it's easy and it's almost like an everyday notebook, at least it is for me.



Claire Tabouret at her spacious studio in LA. (Photography by [Cameron Gardner](#))

The people that follow me, and the people that I follow, are mainly other artists, collectors, curators, and galleries. This kind of allows for a look behind the scenes, where you don't just get to see the official finished product that is presented. I love to see photos that other artists put up of works in progress, or photos of what's going on in the studio. It's less formal and more relaxed, but you're still in control of what other people see of your creation process. It can be intimate but it's still curated.

What are your thoughts on possible future scenarios for the LA art scene?

I think that now, the way people consume here –shops, restaurants, everything – is different here than in other cities because of how nothing is really centered in one location. I think the city is untamable in a way, because it's so spread out. For example, LA is missing the big art fairs that other international art capitals have, which is surprising when you think of the big artists, the big galleries and the many wealthy people here in LA. Why doesn't it work? You know, FIAC tried to start a fair here, Paris Photo LA tried and failed, so it seems that something doesn't quite work in the same way it does in other art capitals. But I'm very curious to see where it's going, and if all the money that's being brought into LA might change the shape of the city. I'd be happy if LA stays a bit of the grid the way it is now, if it stays a place that's more for artists than for the art market. We've already got New York as a center for the art market, and it's fine.

It's good to have a place like LA, where the focus is on experimentation and creation, where the rent stays affordable and allows people to start project spaces and not worry about money, and where young artists feel free to try out stuff. But you do have these different opinions of course. A gallerist would like to see this city develop in a certain way, whereas an artist might want to protect the city from this development. But it would be nice if LA can continue to be a place for inventing and inviting new people, and where things are still possible.