

Unframed LACMA

Jones, Leslie.: *Take a Selfie and Stay a While in „Mark Grotjahn: 50 Kitchens“*

15 July 2018

LACMA UN FRAMED



Taken at LACMA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, by DapperDay.com on June 9, 2018

Take a Selfie and Stay a While in "Mark Grotjahn: 50 Kitchens"

JULY 15, 2018

Leslie Jones, *Curator*

Prints and drawings

Since the opening of Mark Grotjahn's [50 Kitchens exhibition](#) in May, the dynamic colored-pencil drawings (characterized as "butterfly" drawings by the artist) have become very popular selfie backdrops. Looking up #markgrotjahn or #50kitchens will bring you numerous images of individuals, families, a stuffed animal, even the artist himself positioned smack at the center of one of the more than 50 colorful and "explosive" compositions. Given the serial nature of the piece, the tendency is to pick a favorite (because it matches your outfit or mood or whatever). Since the 1960s, seriality in art has been associated with mass production and consumer culture (as in the work of Andy Warhol, for example) and, in a certain respect, the selfie phenomenon around Grotjahn's "kitchens" plays into this history by offering viewers a selection from which to choose and "collect" to your phone.



Installation view in the evening, *Mark Grotjahn: 50 Kitchens*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, May 20–August 19, 2018, art © Mark Grotjahn

What can't be digitally appropriated, however, is the experience of the entire work as uniquely installed here at LACMA. And by that I don't just mean seeing the work in person, but seeing the work in person in space, and over time. Firstly, *50 Kitchens* is a single work so, in order to see it, one must encounter all of the drawings presented together since, as our museum photographer will tell you, there is no possible way to capture the work from one angle. It should be experienced from multiple points of view through space, as well as in motion, to perceive how the different serial elements play off one another. Ideally, one could also stay awhile or visit at different times of day. The exhibition is installed on BCAM, Level 3, where no artificial lighting was used and skylights allow natural light to illuminate the galleries according to the angle of the sun and vagaries of the clouds.



Installation view in the morning, *Mark Grotjahn: 50 Kitchens*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, May 20–August 19, 2018, art © Mark Grotjahn

Early morning and late afternoon bring spectacular effects of light and shadow created by the building's architecture. Window patterns dramatically streak or delicately dapple the walls and drawings and, in a way, unify the images and space with light. Midday effects are more subtle under diffuse light but, even after 30-40 minutes, one can sense changes in perception of tone and saturation.



Visitors in *Mark Grotjahn: 50 Kitchens*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2018, art © Mark Grotjahn

Thirty minutes may sound like a long time for some museum-goers but, hey, it might just take that long to pick out a fave.

[Mark Grotjahn: 50 Kitchens](#) is on view in *BCAM*, Level 3, through August 19, 2018.