

The New Home of the L.A. Clippers Is a Hot Ticket for Art

Seven artists with local connections, including Glenn Kaino and Charles Gaines, were commissioned to create pieces for the Intuit Dome, bridging sports and culture.

Greeting visitors at the main entrance to Intuit Dome is the sculpture “Sails” by Glenn Kaino. Alex Welsh for The New York Times



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By Robin Pogrebin

Reporting from Inglewood, Calif.

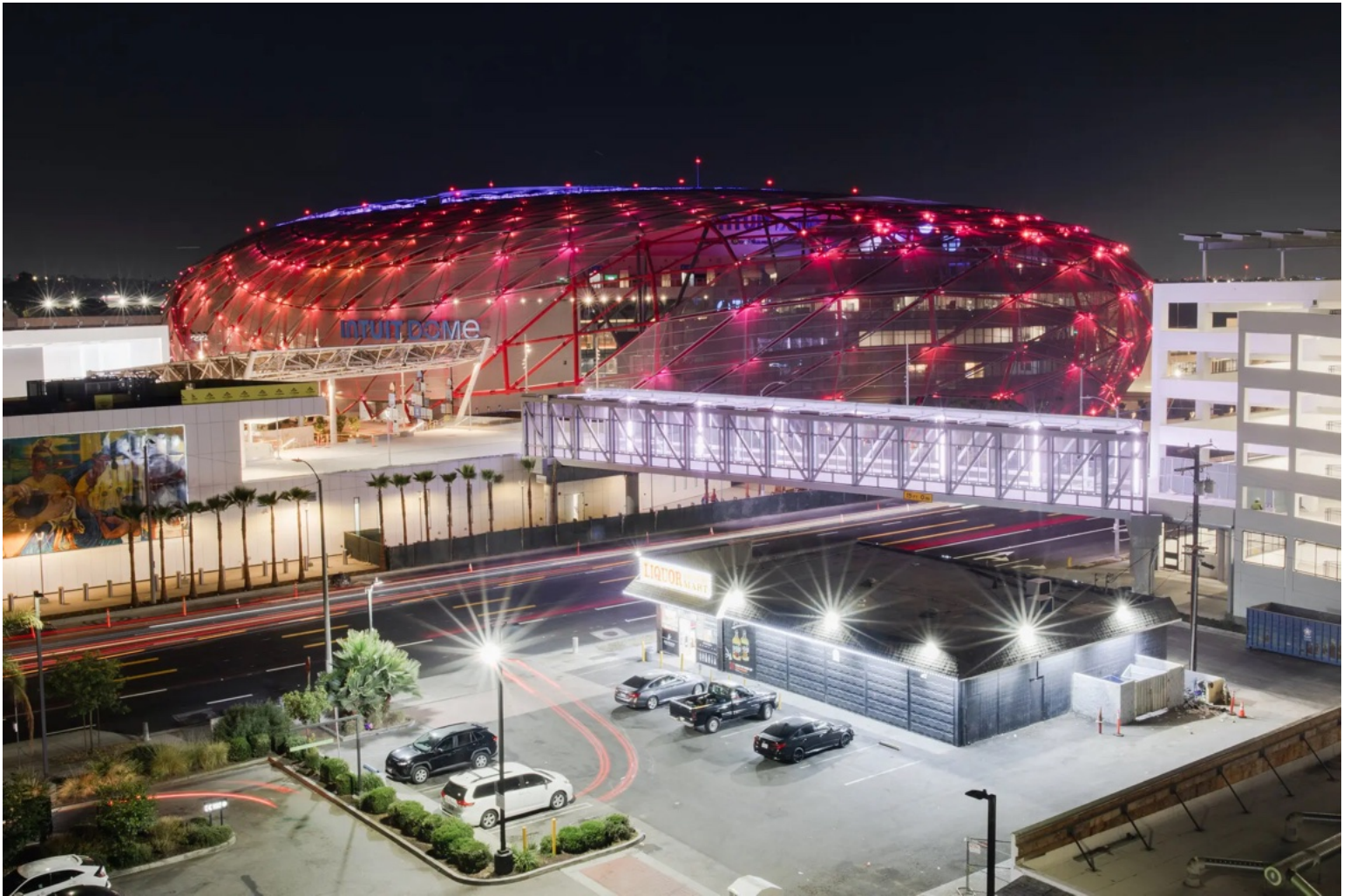
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When the \$2 billion home of the Los Angeles Clippers, Intuit Dome, opens next month with a concert by Bruno Mars, visitors to the 18,000-seat arena will not only be greeted by an enormous double-sided LED scoreboard, an outdoor community basketball court and food choices ranging from vegan cauliflower wraps to dulce de leche churros.

They will also encounter about \$11 million worth of ambitious, immense and site-specific artworks that have been commissioned from seven artists with Los Angeles connections.

Sculpture, murals and digital art installations by artists including Refik Anadol, Jennifer Steinkamp, Charles Gaines and Glenn Kaino will be on view throughout the campus of the privately funded new home of the N.B.A.'s Clippers.

The artists involved said they liked the idea of reaching people outside a conventional context. "I believe art should be for anyone and anywhere," said Anadol, whose A.I.-driven digital artwork, "Living Arena," is displayed on an LED screen 40 feet tall by 70 feet wide. "Museums and galleries are so last century. I don't think there are any more borders."



The entire surface of the Intuit Dome serves as the backdrop for Jennifer Steinkamp's digital artwork "Swoosh." Alex Welsh for The New York Times

The Intuit Dome is the latest sports arena or stadium to embrace art with its hot dogs and beer, a move intended in part to make the spaces more appealing as rental venues when the resident teams aren't playing. SoFi Stadium, also in Inglewood, which is home to the N.F.L.'s Los Angeles Rams and Los Angeles Chargers, last year presented a pair of exhibitions focused on African-American art and history.

Other stadiums that prominently feature art include AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, where the Dallas Cowboys and Anish Kapoor's "Sky Mirror" reside, and Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, home to the Atlanta Falcons and a more than 73,000-pound avian sculpture by Gabor Miklos Szoke called "Rise Up."

The Clippers say the art program — which includes another 40-plus pieces, budgeted at an additional approximately \$3 million — represents an effort to connect with Los Angeles and support the city's artists.

"We talked extensively with the community about what really mattered to them, and public art was something that we really wanted to have more of," said Gillian Zucker, the chief executive of Halo Sports and Entertainment, the Clippers' parent company, on a recent walk through the stadium.

"This is a global opportunity to really showcase artists," she added. "That's a big part of the spirit of this building — looking at the community around us."

The Los Angeles art world has welcomed the effort. "Some of the most moving experiences people have with art are when they don't expect to see it," said Johanna Burton, the director of the Museum of Contemporary Art. "When you run into art in the world, there is a different kind of reaction that's possible."



Kaino's sculpture evokes a clipper ship with a basketball theme, its sails made of backboards and hoops. Alex Welsh for The New York Times

The commissioning process was led by Ruth Berson, an art consultant who had previously served as the deputy director of curatorial affairs at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. There was no competition. Instead, with the help of an advisory group of curators, art historians and community members, Berson and the Clippers organization sought out artists that she said had a connection to Los Angeles by birth, education or residency; who “were at the top of their game”; and who knew how to scale, knowing that “these pieces would be enormous.”

Berson added that they wanted artists “who were really involved with the civic life of a place and who understood about community and knew that the audience for this would not necessarily be, you know, the art cognoscenti,” she said. “Inglewood is a place that has lots and lots of artist studios but doesn’t have a museum. So there was just some opportunity here to bring something that we didn’t already have.”

The artists were shown a 3-D model of the Intuit Dome and its plaza and encouraged to identify a site where they would want to create a work. They then proposed initial ideas, which were meant to “express the sense of community, creativity, and joy,” Berson said, adding that the commissioned art will remain in place for at least 25 years.

(Negotiations with Kehinde Wiley for a commission never came to fruition because of significant delays over two years, unrelated to recent allegations of sexual harassment against the artist, according to a spokesman for the Intuit Dome.)

Greeting visitors at the main entrance to Intuit Dome is the sculpture “Sails” by Glenn Kaino. His piece — made of concrete, stainless steel and wood — evokes a clipper ship with a basketball theme, its sails made of backboards and hoops. In research he did for the piece, Kaino said he looked at photographs of backboards all over the world where “people were playing the sport however they could.”

“I was inspired by the idea that basketball is such a wind behind cultural sails,” Kaino added. “I thought about honoring the global connectivity of basketball and also the delightful ingenuity that people have in their determination to play.”

The entire surface of the Intuit Dome, designed by AECOM and inspired by the form of a basketball net as the ball passes through it, serves as the backdrop for Jennifer Steinkamp’s digital artwork “Swoosh.” Five distinct animations, playing on different nights, weave around the structure’s geometric panels, alluding to natural forces like wind and gravity.

“It’s intriguing to make this building feel emotional,” Steinkamp said. “We’re pushing the limit here by animating the entire surface. When the Clippers win a game, the building becomes excited.”



Anadol's piece, "Living Arena," presents a continually changing narrative in four chapters, including one that highlights images from the state's national parks. Iwan Baan

Bordering the Intuit Dome's plaza, behind the campus's outdoor community basketball court, is the artwork by Anadol, a media artist who has helped pioneer the aesthetics of data and machine intelligence.

For the dome, Anadol's piece, created with artificial intelligence algorithms, presents a continually changing data narrative in four chapters: "Urban Dreams," featuring flight information from nearby LAX and other airports; "Nature Dreams," displaying live weather data from Inglewood including wind direction, temperature and humidity; "Culture Dreams," showcasing player tracking data from historic Clippers games; and "California Landscape," highlighting images from the state's national parks.

"I hope it is inspiring for society to think and look and meditate," Anadol said.

Across the plaza from Anadol's screen, Patrick Martinez created a glowing neon sculpture, "Same Boat," that is about nine feet square and reproduces a statement by the civil rights leader Whitney M. Young: "We may have all come on different ships but we're in the same boat now."



Patrick Martinez said his sign was inspired by Los Angeles storefronts. Iwan Baan

Martinez said his sign was inspired by Los Angeles storefronts — laundromats, pawn shops, notaries. “They were like messages speaking to the passer-by,” he said. “I like the idea of building a bridge to the person who doesn’t typically go to a museum or the person who doesn’t typically go to see sports.”

On a wall adjacent to Martinez’s sculpture, Kyungmi Shin — who works frequently in large-scale photo collage — contributed a glass mosaic “Spring to Life” measuring 22.75 feet by 7.5 feet, with stainless steel tracery that outlines the silhouettes of basketball players — including Jerry West, who died last month,

the Hall of Fame guard for the Los Angeles Lakers whose profile graces the N.B.A.'s logo. The mosaic also depicts Centinela Springs, the South Los Angeles water source that once supported the Tongva people.

“I just wanted to address the positive aspect of basketball and engage with the site,” Shin said.



Kyungmi Shin contributed a glass mosaic entitled “Spring to Life.”
Alex Welsh for The New York Times



Measuring 22.75 feet by 7.5 feet, the artwork outlines the silhouettes of basketball players, including the former All-Star Jerry West. Alex Welsh for The New York Times

Gaines — himself a tennis and soccer fan — is still working on the concept for his commission, which will occupy a large wall at the entrance to the arena. He said he liked the idea of having art that is integral to the architecture, such as the Gateway Arch in St. Louis by Eero Saarinen or Tom Bradley International Terminal in Los Angeles, which features a monumental Mark Bradford sculpture.

“It gives that site a very particular fingerprint,” Gaines said, adding that, while his work is still being designed, “it will be a reflection on an important part of Inglewood’s history and/or culture.”



Michael Massenburg’s mural features basketball, tennis, and soccer players as well as singers, musicians and dancers set in locations ranging from Inglewood’s Fox Theater to Chinatown. Alex Welsh for The New York Times

Last, “Cultural Playground,” a Michael Massenburg mural installed on three exterior walls of the Dome’s Team Store building, features basketball, tennis and soccer players as well as singers, musicians, and dancers set in locations ranging from Inglewood’s Fox Theater to Chinatown.

Berson said Massenburg’s piece reflects “what the Dome is intended to do, which is to be “a place for joy, a place for play, a place for the community to interact.”

Massenburg said he is pleased that his piece, “will be the first visual people will see as they drive down the street.”

“It gets people to look,” he added, “and say, ‘What’s that on the wall?’”

Robin Pogrebin, who has been a reporter for The Times for nearly 30 years, covers arts and culture in California. More about Robin Pogrebin

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