



FRANK
IN THE CITY

Clockwise from right:
'Crash Landing' by Bode
Helm, Abel Alexandre's
'Camping In Style' (photo
credit: Tomas Musciconico)
and 'Ricky' by Tomas
Musciconico.



BLOWING OPEN
THE DOORS
TO DISCUSS
TABOO TOPICS
THAT OTHERS
WON'T, NEW
PHOTOGRAPHIC
ART SUBSCRIPTION
FRANK LA IS
BREAKING NEW
GROUND IN THE
PUBLISHING
WORLD, WRITES
KATE PRIDEAUX.



Take a walk through downtown Los Angeles and it's impossible to ignore the vast discrepancy between wealth and poverty. The largest community of homeless individuals in the country, known as 'Skid Row', lies just 15 kilometres east of Rodeo Drive, one of the world's most affluent shopping districts.

While there's no shortage of statistics on the homelessness issue, more than one person has found an original platform to shed new light on the problem—and other issues the city faces.

An initiative of publishing executive Alison Miller, the aptly named *Frank LA* is a combination of art, print media and fundraising. The tri-annual publication has a limited print run per edition—only 1000 copies are produced—and is a collaboration between local artists and contributors that displays photographic artworks relating to a topic. The inaugural edition, titled 'No place like home', features a set of 36 30cm x 40cm art prints encased in a linen box.

"In a nutshell, it's a new way to distribute art ... one in which we create a framework for a candid or 'frank' conversation in an environment that is unconstrained by the needs of advertisers," Alison explains of the publication she established with award-winning ad agency founder Patrick Gill and successful Los Angeles housing developer Cindy Troesh.

The trio share a passion for art and fine photography and a respect for design. Their target audience is "those who appreciate fine art and candid conversations about our fair city", Alison says.

For 'No place like home', artists produced the first known fashion shoot to directly examine the dichotomies between the haves and the have-nots living side by side in downtown LA. One artwork, titled 'Midnight Omission', staged a luxurious bacchanal-style meal where models dined, blindfolded, in front of a Midnight Mission lunch line. Tackling some of the less-than-pleasant monikers often given to the homeless, 'Bag Lady' features a Beverly Hills shopper clutching designer label shopping parcels. Behind her are actual Skid Row residents in a temporary encampment eating their lunch.

"It isn't a collection of statistics—each and every one are people with challenges, who need thoughtful solutions from our residents and community leaders," Alison says. "The project [also] brings to light some of the other at-risk segments of the community, including single mums, returning veterans and transgender people.



Above: 'Midnight Omission' by Bode Helm
Below: Tomas Musciconico's 'Taylor'

“We hope that by addressing the topic in an artful and highly unusual format, it will be a disrupter in the conversation and will make people pause and look at it differently than they have previously.

“It is widely believed, for example, that homelessness is primarily an African-American problem in our city. By exploring the issue through the use of portraiture and profiles, we hope to have humanised the issue, expanded the understanding of what it is and is not.”

A big advocate for the arts, Alison sits on several boards and committees in Los Angeles, including the Museum of Contemporary Art Directors Council and LAND Nomadic Council. “At the same time, we don’t take ourselves too seriously and are a bit tongue-in-cheek with our editorial approach,” she says.

Revenue is generated not by traditional sales of art or direct donation, but via subscriptions to *Frank LA*’s art-filled publications. Subscriptions cost \$775 per year and single issues are available at \$295 each.

“We wanted to appeal to a demographic with the highest discretionary income—key influencers with political clout and great potential to contribute to the challenge in a positive manner,” Alison says.

But why print as opposed to, say, putting on an exhibition?

“I suppose we are paper nerds at our core. The permanency of something collectable that one can revisit over and over, share with others and display for a longer period of time appeals to us. It’s also a new avenue for distributing art. World-class artists are available in a new way, rather than procuring and owning a painting or a sculptural work.

“It’s an easy price point as well, which makes it more accessible to a larger population than what has previously been the exclusive domain of more established art collectors.”

The second edition, out in mid-2015, uses a phenakistoscope—an early animation device that uses a spinning disk to create an illusion of motion—to depict the ever-present issue of traffic and is called ‘Ways to die trying’.

As the initiative attracts more attention, those behind *Frank LA* remain focused on why it began.

“Our number-one mantra is to be fearless. Our goal is to be unabashedly candid regarding social issues and other, often tongue-in-cheek topics that are singularly unique to Los Angeles,” Alison says. “If people are talking about our work, regardless of whether they love it or hate it, I believe we will have been successful in meeting our objective.”

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