

# REGEN PROJECTS

Boyle, Meka. "Hello and Goodbye." [Family Style Magazine](#) (March 17, 2026) [online]

## FAMILY STYLE

### Hello and Goodbye

Over 30 years after his first solo show with Regen Projects in Los Angeles, Jack Pierson's latest exhibition is both a meditation on the fleeting nature of life and a case for living in the moment.



Installation view of "Jack Pierson: Curtains." Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects.

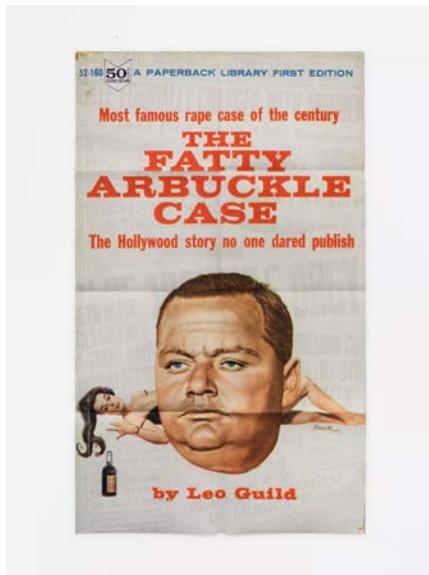
"There's a great joy to driving through LA," says Jack Pierson. "It's almost like scrolling." Maybe it's the sky, wide-open and blue. The billboards. The buildings, how they're at eye level and full of history. The streets that run forever, sweeping past neighborhoods and strip malls. Today, he stops by two or three times a year—sometimes to show work or

# REGEN PROJECTS

sometimes simply to decompress from life in Manhattan—on his way to his home outside of Joshua Tree. “In New York you’re in a canyon,” he says. It’s different in the high desert: “I see the sun rise. I see the sunset.”

Today, fresh from his opening at Regen Projects, Pierson is dressed in a navy blue button-down and dark pants. His red hair now blended into shades of silver. He’s relaxed with an easy smile and the sense of humor that comes with a life spent not just observing but participating. It’s part romanticism and part chance: He alternatively likens his work to shots documenting a scene, like those in old movie star biographies and serial killer books, as well as cinematic set-ups that capture the drama of a moment. But across his practice, each image, sculpture, and installation gives way to something real.

His solo exhibition, “Curtains,” is a collage or a painting depending on how you look at it. It is intuitive and full of connections both aesthetic and subconscious, but the artist resists easy or didactic answers. Of course, LA was the starting point, he concedes, but from there he let his mind wander, culling words and photographs from his studio in a sort of free-association response. “It starts with me going, *This is a blank space, how am I going to fill it?*” he explains. A little color, here, a row of text, an image, choreographed against the white walls until the space comes into focus as a work of art in and of itself.



Jack Pierson, *The Fatty Arbuckle Case*, 2026. Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects.

Near the entrance of the gallery, a row of silver wooden pieces are propped against the wall; they are the back sides of the letters that spell out "THE END," from Pierson’s work *THE END OF THE WORLD*, 2012, which he debuted at Regen Projects in 2013

# REGEN PROJECTS

and later installed at High Desert Test Sites in 2022. Nearby are two photos: one documenting the 1926 wake of Rudolph Valentino—the Italian actor from the '20s who often played heart-throb villains and was exoticized for his dark features—and one of the scandal around Fatty Arbuckle, the American actor from the same era who was accused of rape. The two (both buried in the Hollywood Forever Cemetery) represent fame in both its extremes, yet today the men are largely forgotten. “He was the first super star,” Pierson says of Valentino. “It was the first time we experienced somebody through photography, who put on all of the ephemera too, like posters and mugs.”

Inside the main gallery room, this sentiment is echoed in lyrics to Ronnie Spector’s 1977 song “Say Goodbye to Hollywood” painted across the bottom of the walls: “So many faces in and out of my life / Some will last / Some will be just now and then / Life is a series of hellos and goodbyes.” Above the text, hang drawings (initially published in a zine for his first exhibition with Regen Projects in 1994) with phrases like, “You could’ve tried harder that night on 2nd Ave.,” and words such as “dreams,” “away,” and “angel?” There is a romance, a nostalgia, a sense of something both fleeting and rendered permanent in Pierson’s handwriting. Folded up prints are displayed unframed, like a photo of clouds that Pierson took near his home in the desert and a shot of a nightclub that he staged for an exhibition. Cut-outs of palm trees and roses are extracted from the artist’s photographs and applied to the wall in vinyl.



Jack Pierson, *Homos Only*, 2025. Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects.

Large word sculptures sit higher up: “homos only” at the entrance. Elsewhere, “famous last words.” One wall simply has “beauty,” while another has phrases such as “you are

# REGEN PROJECTS

here,” “pure being,” and “profound gratitude.” They read like mantras, not uncommon in slogans and logos in this city notorious for wellness and positivity. “I think optimism is very deep,” he says of these phrases, which at surface level read the opposite. “It’s a hard discipline because everything that’s coming at us is trying to de-optimize us, make you feel deficient, make you need something that only they can give you.” For Pierson, whose work captured life during the AIDS crisis and its aftermath, it’s impossible to imagine a better future without hope. In the modern world, tragedy is on the periphery of every era, but as he sees it, “there’s nothing to be had from morbid despair,” he says. So he meditates, prays, and journals. He curbs his intake of bad news and focuses on the good. “It’s a privilege,” he acknowledges, but it’s also a way to survive. A life drive learned by living. “It’s hard to get to that baseline so you have to practice,” he adds “Sometimes it takes a Post-it note or a big sign; that’s what I feel like I’m providing.”

Across the show, a fascination with fame percolates, pushing up against Pierson’s hard-earned optimism: its sinister side, its fleeting grasp, the darkness and the glamor, Los Angeles then and now. When he’s in town, Pierson embraces this bubblegum Zen-like quality that emanates from his work. At night, he walks his small, black senior dog from his hotel on Hollywood Boulevard down the walk of fame. He stops along the way to take photos of lesser-known stars like Sophie Tucker, people who were once everything to his generation.

“The whole thing is intuition and offhand gestures,” he says of his practice today: a phrase, a face, a song not just remembered but inhabited. The first time Pierson spent time in LA was in 1989. “It had a big impact on my gestation as an artist,” he says. He was already making art, traveling through Boston, New York, and Miami Beach and documenting the world as he saw it. But Los Angeles imprinted on him a sense of cinema. He landed in the city without a car, so he walked, turning his camera to his immediate surroundings and snapping away: Bougainvillea, the facade of the hotel where Janice Joplin died, never pausing to consider formality—what mattered is that he was there. The results are not just images but artifacts. “I’m hoping that somebody would either say, ‘What the hell is that?’ Or they’d be like, ‘I wonder what happened there,’” he adds. These images became a book, *Angel Youth*, 1992, which set the tone for his work to come.

# REGEN PROJECTS



Installation view of "Jack Pierson: Curtains." Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects.

It all goes back to a portrait of an aspiring actor done-up with her red hair framed against a green palm frond, and what struck Pierson most was her uncanny resemblance to Lucille Ball—it was almost like she became her. This shot—the idea that the actor could both be Lucille and be decidedly *not* Lucille—became a guiding light in his practice. “I was intent on trying to make my life look cinematic and interesting,” he says. Other pages feature friends in nightclubs or on the city streets. As he continues through the book, it's clear that it's not that Pierson remembers every image but rather that he lives with them—they never go out of focus. The shots are narrative, but he doesn't think in the terms of arcs; it's purely in the moment. Nightlife and dreams, soft light that can't be contained, stories that crystallize with time.

“It took me until seeing a picture of Lucy and going, *I guess I'm about real or not real, and glamour or not glamour,*” he recalls. It was the early '90s when Pierson came into his own. He was 30 when he had his first show, documenting his own world. Soon a wave of photographers followed, sharing snapshots of their life. Decades later social media would bring in an influx of photographers looking to capture the same spontaneity. He recalls how in his early years he was complaining to a friend how everything has already been done before. “Yes,” they replied, “it's all been done, but it hasn't been done by you.” Everything clicked.

*“Jack Pierson: Curtains” is on view through April 18, 2026 at Regen Projects at 6750 Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90038.*