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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

By John Vincler, Jillian Steinhauer, Max Lakin, Martha Schwendener and Travis Diehl

Oct. 13, 2022

Want to see new art in New York this weekend? Start on the Upper East Side to catch Issy Wood's pleasingly discomfiting paintings at Michael Werner. Then head to Chelsea for Zoe Leonard's photographs of the Rio Grande at Hauser & Wirth. And don't miss Jennie Jieun Lee's wildly colored ceramics at Martos in TriBeCa.

Newly Reviewed

Hours vary at galleries. Visitors should check in advance.

CHELSEA

Zoe Leonard

Through Oct. 29. Hauser & Wirth, 542 West 22nd Street, Manhattan; 212-790-3900, hauserwirth.com.



In Zoe Leonard's "From the Los Ebanos Crossing" (2019/2021), a helicopter circles over a tree line. Her show, "Al Río/To the River," is at Hauser & Wirth. via Hauser & Wirth, New York

A river is not a wall. Though it may be pressed into service to mark a border, a river will not stay still. Rivers flow, swell, recede, change course and meander. They may be passable or bridgeable but doing so may be dangerous, illicit, policed.

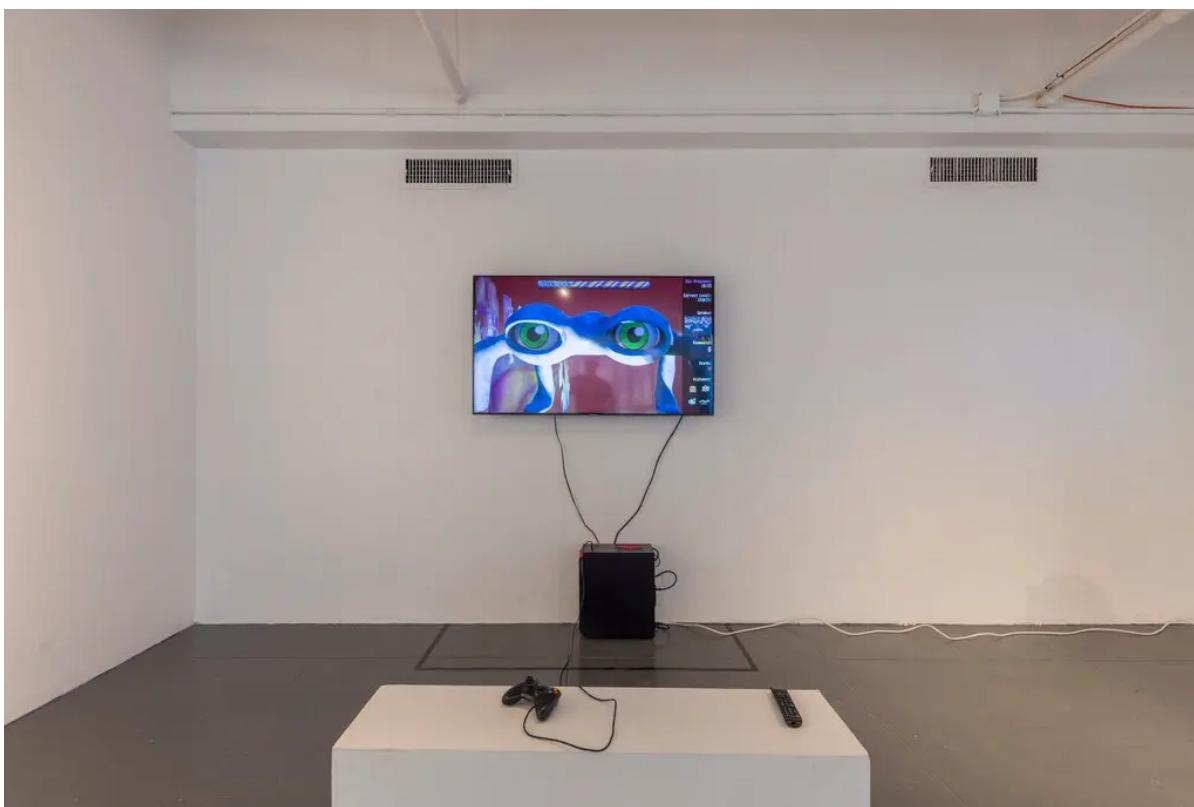
Zoe Leonard's "Al Río/To the River" documents the Rio Grande where it divides the United States from Mexico. Beginning in 2016, Leonard produced more than 500 photographs tracing its path from El Paso and Ciudad Juárez to the Gulf of Mexico over four years. At times this New York-based artist's camera stays still as the water and world keep moving: a family picnics bankside, a flock of birds take flight from a field. Other sets highlight the riverlike quality of a roadway or tire track. Is the circular dead-end of a dusty dirt road a drop-off point or just a turnaround? In another series, a helicopter rising above a tree line suggests the river as a site of surveillance.

Only a selection are on view, in this U.S. debut of the project, while a larger presentation is opening at the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, on Saturday. The accompanying photobook published by Hatje Cantz may be the best way to take in the entirety of the project, but this ample introduction will make you reflect on the languid beauty of rivers and the rigid force of borders. **JOHN VINCLER**

MIDTOWN

'Voluntary Attempts to Overcome Necessary Obstacles'

Through Oct. 29. EFA Project Space, 323 West 39th Street, 2nd floor, Manhattan; 212-563-5855, projectspace-efanyc.org.



Jeremy Couillard's "Fuzz Dungeon" (2021), a video game, at the EFA Project Space. EFA Project Space

The games in this group exhibition aren't exactly typical. For one thing, the objective of most is not to win. In Pippin Barr's "Let's Play: Ancient Greek Punishment" (2011), you can't, no matter how you try; instead, you're doomed to replay the punishments of mythical characters in comically lo-fi aesthetics. Even when there is a defined goal, it's not necessarily logical: In Jeremy Couillard's "Fuzz Dungeon" (2021), you're a creature journeying through trippy spaces in search of a "sasquatch sex amulet," whatever that is.

Curated by the artist Nicholas O'Brien, "Voluntary Attempts to Overcome Necessary Obstacles" gathers alternative and experimental games whose impetus is what you might find out while playing them (which you can do in the gallery). Angela Washko's "Mother, Player: Chapter 1 (Demo)" (2022) casts you as a pregnant character making decisions during a pandemic. In Robert Yang's "The Tearoom" (2017), you try to pick up men in a 1960s Ohio bathroom without getting caught by the police. The show's oldest entry, "Escape From Woomera," depicts you as an Iranian asylum seeker trying to escape an

Australian detention center.

A modification of a first-person shooter game, “Escape From Woomera” looks clunky compared to more artfully designed recent works. But it was clearly a touchstone for games meant to make players think critically about the world — an idea that comes through even in the show’s more abstract contributions. If you start to play but don’t know exactly what you’re supposed to be doing, maybe that’s part of the point. **JILLIAN STEINHAUER**

UPPER EAST SIDE

Issy Wood

Through Nov. 12. Michael Werner, 4 East 77th Street, Manhattan; 212-988-1623, michaelwerner.com.



Issy Wood’s “Go, Daddy! (Naming Names)” (2022), oil on velvet, at Michael Werner. Michael Werner Gallery

It’s hard to achieve a neatly folded corner on a velvet painting: No matter how tight you pull, you’re always left with a bulging mass of fabric. But then there isn’t much that’s tidy about the British painter Issy Wood’s pleasingly discomfiting pictures, often executed on black velvet, the short pile fuzzing out the image so it never fully resolves, like something experienced in a fugue and half-remembered. (The rest, on linen, are crisper, but not

enough to dispel the unplaceable dread.)

Wood's subject matter in her show "Time Sensitive" avoids the medium's 1960s black light kitsch. The material also assists in sly visual tricks, as in "Go, Daddy! (Naming Names)," 2022, a set of Op Art sports-car bucket seats, foreboding and napped, as if Bridget Riley got into modifying Volkswagen GTIs. Cast in dusky tones, as though seen behind a murky scrim, Wood's pictures are impenetrable to easy interpretation, which suits fine. Whether arrays of porcelain soup tureens and antique armor breastplates are personally talismanic or proxies for our compulsion toward accumulation, their dull glint telegraphs the same unease.

Wood is drawn to a just-tolerable degree of gruesomeness: a venal, distended cow udder, an open wound. A mouth of acid-marked teeth surges across the length of a seven-foot-wide canvas, gums bared to display a glistening canker sore, like a pearl lodged inside a sallow oyster. The paintings seem to wish to repulse — nothing about them can be accused of being pretty. Unfortunately for them, they're too compelling to be left alone.

MAX LAKIN

CHINATOWN

Jennie Jieun Lee

Through Oct. 22. Martos Gallery, 41 Elizabeth Street, Manhattan; (212) 560-0670, martosgallery.com.



Jennie Jieun Lee's "Range Anxiety" (2022), slipcast-porcelain and glaze. Charles Benton





Jennie Jieun Lee's "Moon Burn" (2022), slip-cast porcelain and glaze. Charles Benton

Jennie Jieun Lee might be described as a ceramic artist, but she reaches much further than that in "Marie" at Martos Gallery. Wildly colored vessels thrown in porcelain are filled with flowers Lee grew herself — zinnias, snap dragons, amaranth and dahlias. These are accompanied by ceramic human heads with crazy, runaway glazes, slabs of clay shaped into little garments and globs of slipcast-porcelain strung into an evocative "garland." At the center of the show is a re-creation of the tomb of Marie Laveau (1801-1881), a 19th-century Creole voodoo practitioner who was also a hair stylist to the wealthy of New Orleans and who even intervened on behalf of death-row prisoners.

There is a feral quality to Lee's work that fits her subject and approach: off-center vases covered with cryptic markings; ceramic heads that look like they're weeping or melting. After Laveau's death, her tomb became a shrine to supplicants who made desperate wishes marked by three X's. Visitors to Lee's exhibition are invited to ask for their own

wishes and many have done so, placing coins and trinkets at the base of “Marie’s Tomb” (2022).

The show might be called an “interactive sculptural installation” but Lee is obviously shooting much higher, asking, How do you mediate between different worlds? Can art still achieve this level of shamanistic engagement? Using history, malleable clay and a simple invitation to connect, Lee transforms the sterile gallery showroom into a more significant, sometimes even spiritual, space. *MARTHA SCHWENDENER*

TRIBECA

Adam Khalil, Bayley Sweitzer and Oba

Through Oct. 22. Someday, 120 Walker Street, Manhattan, somedaygallery.com.



Still from Adam Khalil, Bayley Sweitzer and Oba's 2021 mockumentary video, "Nosferasta: First Bite." via the artists and Someday, New York

Did you know Christopher Columbus was a vampire? It's true — at least according to the allegorically muddy "Nosferasta: First Bite," a mockumentary video by Adam Khalil, Bayley Sweitzer and Oba, a Trinidadian artist and musician. Oba also plays himself as the main character: a Rastafarian nightwalker, made by the bloodthirsty Italian back in 1492 as an entree into Indigenous society, navigating green card issues in present-day Brooklyn. The video flips between historical re-enactment and modern folly, mixing post-colonial satire with wacky tableaus like a pair of undead "moonbathing" on a beach in the 15th century or Oba studying for the U.S. citizenship test in the 21st. An ominous fisheye shot of Columbus Circle and its triumphal pillar rams home the fact that, even though

Columbus is dead (the dreadlocked protagonist claims he killed his master after trying weed for the first time), his name lives on.

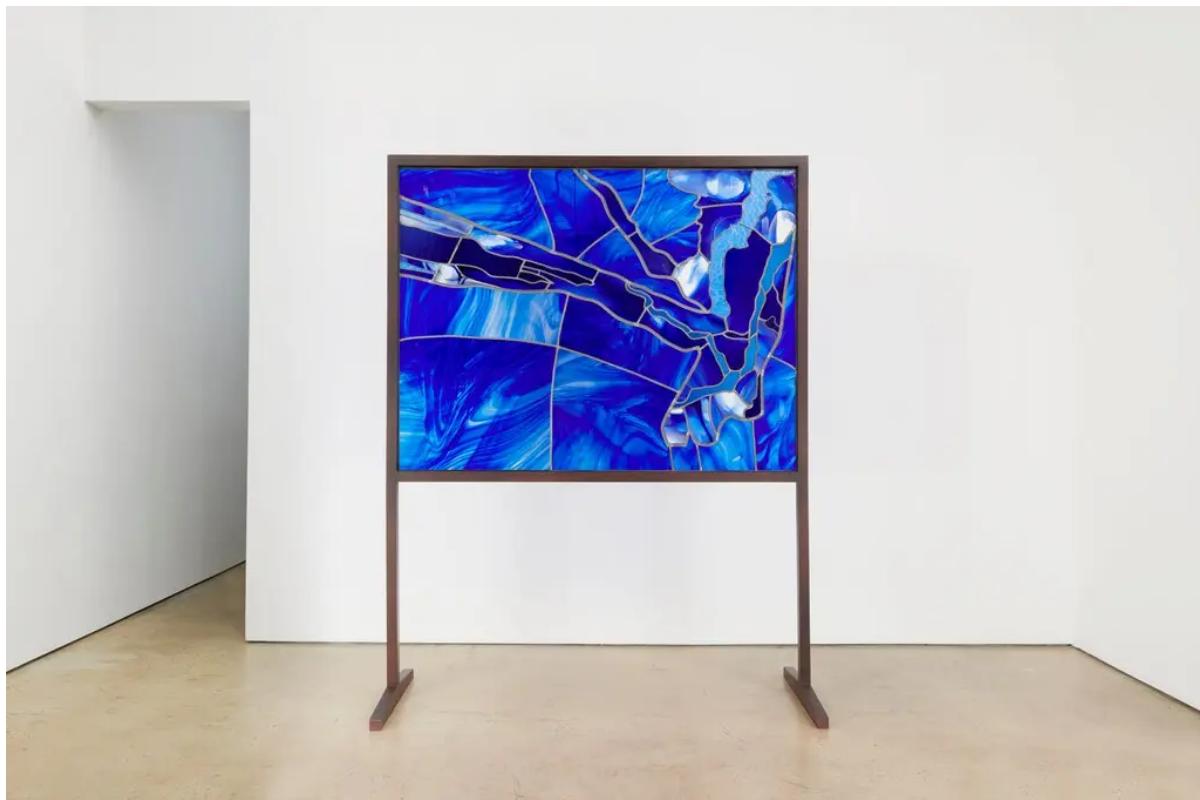
In the gallery, Oba's glittering sculptures reify spiritual traditions in the form of Day-Glo shrines and statuettes encrusted in costume jewelry, cellphones and Pan-African symbols. The teachings of Ras Tafari — respect for human life and resistance to Babylon — serve as shorthand for post-colonial hope, borne through time by racism. Jokes aside, the vampiric metaphor of “Nosferasta” replaces the heroic image of Columbus with that of a lecherous leech feeding on the blood of others, infecting them with his greed. This is different from tearing down statues. Instead, it dissolves them in the bootleg acid of myth. Just in time for the Day Formerly Known as Columbus. *TRAVIS DIEHL*

Last Chance

LOWER EAST SIDE

Rindon Johnson

Through Oct. 15, François Ghebaly, 391 Grand Street, Manhattan; 646-559-9400, ghebaly.com.



Rindon Johnson's “Slick meddling elbow deep errant ornament (canyon),” from 2022, in stained glass and patinated steel frame. Rindon Johnson; via François Ghebaly; Photo by Phoebe d'Heurle

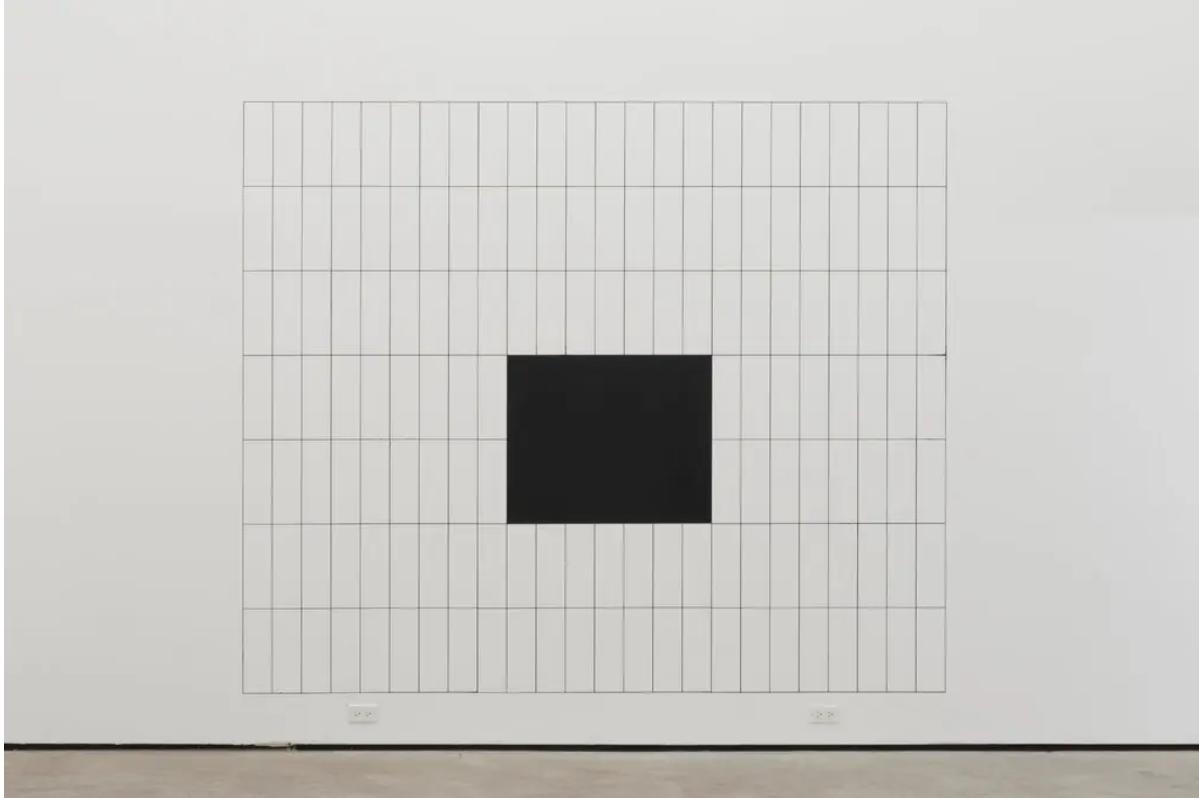
Rindon Johnson's show "Cuvier" at François Ghebaly tries the limits of interspecies small talk. Intensely formal works in stained glass, cowhide and software offer various kinds of knowledge — visual and aural, haptic and intuitive — that bump against a fundamental unknowability. A tall vertical panel of bleached, stretched leather, for example, tracks with Johnson's previous work in hides treated with chemicals and thrashed by the elements. In the new work, the lightened portions evoke ridges and valleys reaching for the sea. Or maybe I see a coastline because I know about the whales.

Specifically, Johnson's show pays tribute to Cuvier's beaked whales. And to know this, you need to read *something* — a Google search for the show's title, a news release, a review — before you go. Thus: Georges Cuvier, a French naturalist, established the extinction of species. The beaked whales that bear his name were thought to have vanished until live specimens washed up on shore; today, they are famous for mass strandings. Little in the show itself could tell you that the luminous smoky blue panes in one stained-glass piece depict a deep-sea trench where military tests induced one of the largest Cuvier beachings to date. A video game, developed with Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, supposedly lets two players conspire to hunt squid from the whales' perspectives. From mine, I slouched in a gaming chair mashing buttons and flicking joysticks while two blurry, grisaille screens beeped and shifted enigmatically. It's like explaining water to the whales. *TRAVIS DIEHL*

LOWER EAST SIDE

Ghislaine Leung

Through Oct. 15. Maxwell Graham/Essex Street, 55 Hester Street; 917-675-6681, essexstreet.biz.



Ghislaine Leung, "Hours," 2022. A wall painting the size of the artist's home studio wall marks her square of studio time. Ghislaine Leung and Maxwell Graham/Essex Street, New York; Charles Benton

Contemporary art tends not to discuss the difficulties of parenting. The rare artist daring to muddy the waters — to peek beyond Hallmark-ready ideas of parental bliss — often focuses on motherhood's chaos and bodily gore. (The soiled diapers Mary Kelly included in her feminist artwork come to mind, or more recent, Heji Shin's grisly-looking photos of babies being born.)

In "Balances," a tauntingly provocative, concept-heavy show by the midcareer artist Ghislaine Leung, parenthood is treated as something demanding diamond-like precision. Visually spare, the show consists of mostly found objects: a baby monitor, child safety gates, a soothing water fountain. The show also features an intentionally infuriating twist. Leung's objects come on display from only 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays — the same blocks of time during which the artist can work in her studio, unencumbered by the demands of child care. Beyond these times, visitors will find the gallery open, but empty.

On one wall, "Hours," an abstract black-and-white calendar marking the artist's time in the studio — drives home parallels between the unforgiving rhythms of parenting and the unyielding austerity of minimalism. "Balances" will certainly speak to caregivers juggling many roles. But Leung's simmering frustrations will also resonate with anyone feeling

defeated by workplace standards that held their grip, even as the pandemic made them untenable. This show defies expectations that, as good members of the work force, we must keep life's strains and stressors hidden from view, even when they leave us in an impossible bind. *DAWN CHAN*

LOWER EAST SIDE

Jutta Koether

Through Oct. 16. Reena Spaulings, 165 East Broadway; 212-477-5006, reenaspaulings.com.



Jutta Koether, "The World," 2022, which draws from the language of advertisements. Jutta Koether and Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York; Phoebe d'Heurle

European painting was historically saddled with big tasks: Show God creating humanity; depict a religious vision, martyrdom or political revolution. Modern artists largely

shrugged off the so-called “burden of representation” by embracing abstraction, but advertising still shoulders this responsibility, as the artist Jutta Koether shows in her exhibition “eVEryTHinG Will ChaNGe” at Reena Spaulings.

Drawing from advertisements in The Financial Times, the paintings here mine the bombastic and pseudo-sublime messages targeted toward wealthy consumers of yachts, private jets or Europe’s new high speed ICE train. They include texts drawn from these ads, like “The World” (2022), which proclaims, “When they ask you where you’re from. The World.” Other works include platitudes like “Dream until it’s your reality.” In contrast to glossy print ads, however, Koether paints in a nervous pink-red palette and a scrawled, post-punk idiom that mashes the florid figuration of Florine Stettheimer with the muscular modern marks of Cy Twombly.

There is also a taunting quality to the show — a modified version of what used to be called “critique.” After all, the upper-upper classes are winning in most parts of the world (hence the recent, sharp rise in union movements) and painting usually ends up in their hands. The first painting in a lineup of diminutive canvases here has the phrase “100% Malerei” (which translates, from German, to 100% Painting), as if to say, Yes, dear viewer, you may own a yacht or a private jet, but I still control the means of production for painting, the ultimate luxury product. **MARTHA SCHWENDENER**

More to See

CHELSEA

Diane Arbus

Through Oct. 22. David Zwirner Gallery, 537 West 20th Street, Manhattan; 212-517-8677, davidzwirner.com.



Diane Arbus's "Triplets in Their Bedroom, N.J." (1963) in the exhibition "Cataclysm: The 1972 Diane Arbus Retrospective Revisited" at David Zwirner Gallery. The Estate of Diane Arbus

When a retrospective of photographs by Diane Arbus opened at the Museum of Modern Art in 1972, a year after her suicide, it caused a sensation, inspiring passionate commentary, both for and against, and so much interest that lines formed around the block. Fifty years later, the show has been recreated as "Cataclysm: The 1972 Diane Arbus Retrospective Revisited," with all 113 prints (plus two that were removed from the MoMA exhibition after vehement protests by the subjects). This is many more than in the best-selling Aperture monograph that accompanied the show, and a few will be unfamiliar even to Arbus devotees.

Along with the exhibition, David Zwirner Gallery and Fraenkel Gallery have jointly published "Diane Arbus: Documents," a lavishly produced compendium of Arbus

criticism over the last half-century. (The book reprints three articles by this reviewer among several from The New York Times.) It includes a notorious review by Susan Sontag denouncing what she described as Arbus's "anti-humanist message" and "cut-rate pessimism" — an essay that originally led Doon Arbus, the artist's elder daughter, to exert tight-gripped control and deny permission to run Arbus photographs without her personally vetting the words that accompany them.

Does the shift imply that the work, surviving time's test, no longer requires such monitoring? Really, it never did. An extraordinary feature of Arbus photographs is that the best ones (and there are a great many of them) still provoke discomfited amazement. The initial hubbub has simmered down, but the art remains controversial — and sensational. *ARTHUR LUBOW*

CHELSEA

Sturtevant

Through Oct. 22. Matthew Marks, 522 West 22nd Street, Manhattan. 212-243-0200; matthewmarks.com.



Sturtevant's "Haring Tag July 15 1981," from 1985, sumi ink and acrylic on canvas. Sturtevant;

via Matthew Marks Gallery

Elaine Sturtevant (1924-2014), who worked under the mononym Sturtevant, made copies of other artists' work, but insisted that she wasn't an appropriation artist — and she was right. In this mind-blowing mini-retrospective, which includes a gray "Jasper Johns" number painting, a small "Keith Haring," and two "Robert Gober" sinks buried in dimly lit AstroTurf, authorship is the least of the concerns. It does come up, but only as a subset of the larger question, "What is an idea?"

The "Johns" and "Haring," though both perfectly recognizable, aren't exact. It isn't quite Haring's line, and the surface of the number painting isn't as labored as Johns would have had it. That is, I *think* — each piece made me question my own memory of what a "Johns" or a "Haring" was in the first place and what criteria I used for recognizing them. (Johns, Haring and Gober are all mentioned in the pieces' titles, but that only makes it all the more trippy.)

A 2010 video, also by Sturtevant, compiles snippets from two online archives, the BBC Motion Gallery and iStock, to show a running tiger, a human sprinter, an opening flower and other examples of life in motion to the accompaniment of a pulsing computer beat. When the tiger looked into the camera, its body undulating, its face still, I forgot for a moment which was the art work and which was me. **WILL HEINRICH**

UPPER EAST SIDE

Casa Malaparte

Through Oct. 22. Gagosian, 821 Park Avenue, Manhattan; 212-796-1228, gagosian.com.



Installation view of “Casa Malaparte: Furniture” (2022) at Gagosian, which is presenting new editions of furniture pieces from the celebrated house in Capri, Italy. Malaparte; via Gagosian; Photo by Thomas Barratt

“Why does money matter so much in what we do, in what we are, in what we become?” Michel Piccoli wails in the last reel of “Contempt,” the most commercial film of Jean-Luc Godard’s New Wave era. He delivers the line in front of a massive picture window looking out from Capri — a window of the Casa Malaparte, a faded red box thrusting from a limestone cliff into the Tyrrhenian Sea, designed and inhabited by the Italian novelist Curzio Malaparte. Both the author and the film director imbued this dramatic 1940s house with a rare highbrow sex appeal; now, for the right price, you can get the Casa Malaparte look at home.

Three pieces of furniture offered at Gagosian each comprise a long walnut slab supported by two thick cylindrical legs of various heights and materials: low, fluted Carrara marble for the bench; mid-height pine for the dining table; and tall volcanic rock for the console. They’re all-new editions of the house’s furniture, authorized by a Malaparte descendant; they appear before giant, actual-scale photographs of Casa Malaparte’s windows so stupendous that prospective buyers might consider their own Bridgehampton views rather dinky by comparison. Can you replicate propinquity to literary genius? Can a table suggest the presence of Brigitte Bardot? Like the movie adaptation of “The Odyssey” that Piccoli’s character is trying to write in “Contempt,” the fixtures here present a rather half-baked classicism — but for a little taste of Capri some of us will sacrifice a whole lot.

JASON FARAGO

CHELSEA

Do Ho Suh

Through Oct. 29. Lehmann Maupin, 501 West 24th Street, Manhattan; 212-255-2923, lehmannmaupin.com.



Do Ho Suh's "Inverted Monument" at his latest exhibition at Lehmann Maupin. via Do Ho Suh and Lehmann Maupin, New York; Photo by Daniel Kukla

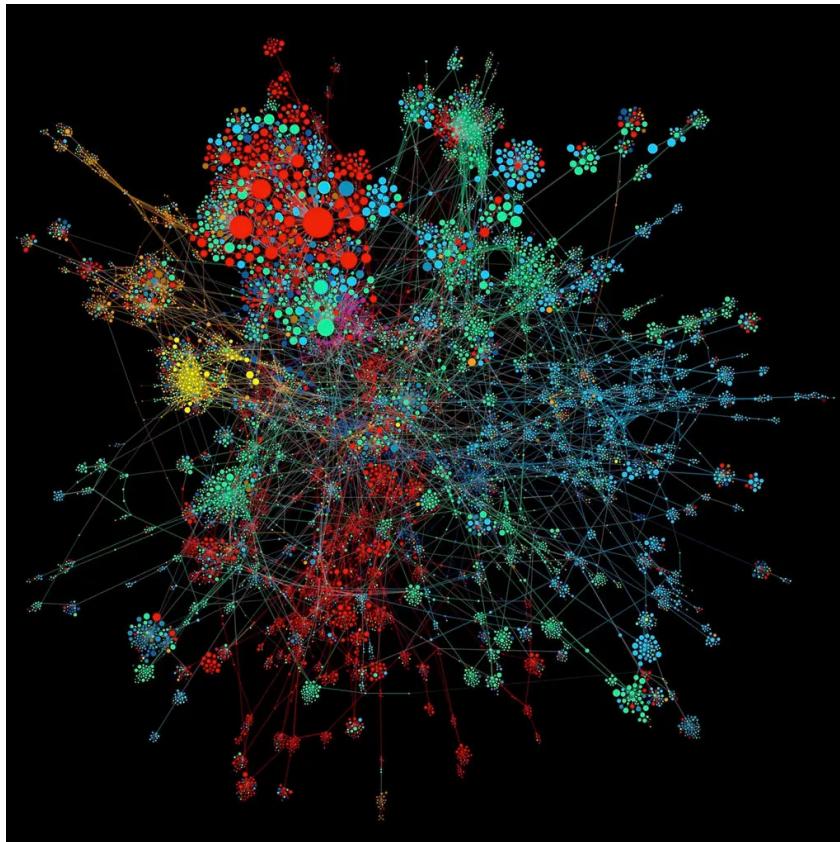
"Inverted Monument," the knockout work at the center of Do Ho Suh's latest exhibition, undoes the traditional sculptural trope of placing a great man on a marble plinth. In a poetic act of reduction and undoing, the South Korean-born and London-based artist replaces bronze and marble with blood-red thermoplastic polyester to create a weblike structure — paradoxically chaotic and legible, delicate and sturdy. Instead of rising from the platform on which he stands, the figure hangs from his feet inverted within it. The form that traditionally raises and honors now imprisons, invoking variously Dante's depiction of Lucifer seen frozen in ice, head downward with his legs turned up, in "Inferno," or more contemporary scenes of monuments of slave traders toppled into the sea.

The other works in the show feel like unnecessary add-ons. A video animation and works-on-paper look like exploratory sketches on the upside-down-figure theme. (Sometimes it is best *not* to show your work.) In the back room, a horizontal arrangement of landscape-oriented photos mostly of sky are all bordered at bottom with building rooftops suggesting various locales. Across from this, “Jet Lag” (2022) consists of a wall of multicolored architectural details rendered in diaphanous polyester: light switches, fire alarms, smoke detectors, a telephone, and a variety of wall outlets hinting at many geographies. These collected elements nod to Suh’s signature practice of recreating dwellings in translucent fabric. Good, but there is one anti-monumental reason this show is a must-see. JOHN VINCLER

SOHO

Albert-Laszlo Barabasi

Through Oct. 29. Postmasters, 484 Broome Street, Manhattan; www.postmastersart.com.



“Art Network” (2018) a backlit canvas that reveals the links between museums and commercial galleries: The bigger “nodes” represent major nonprofits — New York’s Museum of Modern Art, Tate in London —whose artists also show with major dealers. via Postmasters 5.0

Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, a scientist turned artist, promotes a movement he calls Dataism, documenting “invisible but objective societal processes, connections, associations, affiliations, correlations, causes, and consequences, aspects of reality that are simply not accessible to retinal art.”

To that end, in this show called “BarabasiLab: Big Data (Networking the Artworld),” one wall at Postmasters features what looks like a suite of Bauhaus abstractions, but whose nesting rectangles actually represent philanthropic spending by foundations in the United States, from 2010 to 2019. (Art museums reap 0.5 percent of that spending, so the rectangle that stands for them takes up 0.5 percent of the total surface area of the suite’s abstractions.)

A single canvas on another wall, bearing a squiggly abstraction in green, yellow, blue and red, might almost be a Kandinsky-inspired response to music; in fact it captures the connections among the few big artists, dealers and museums that dominate the art world.

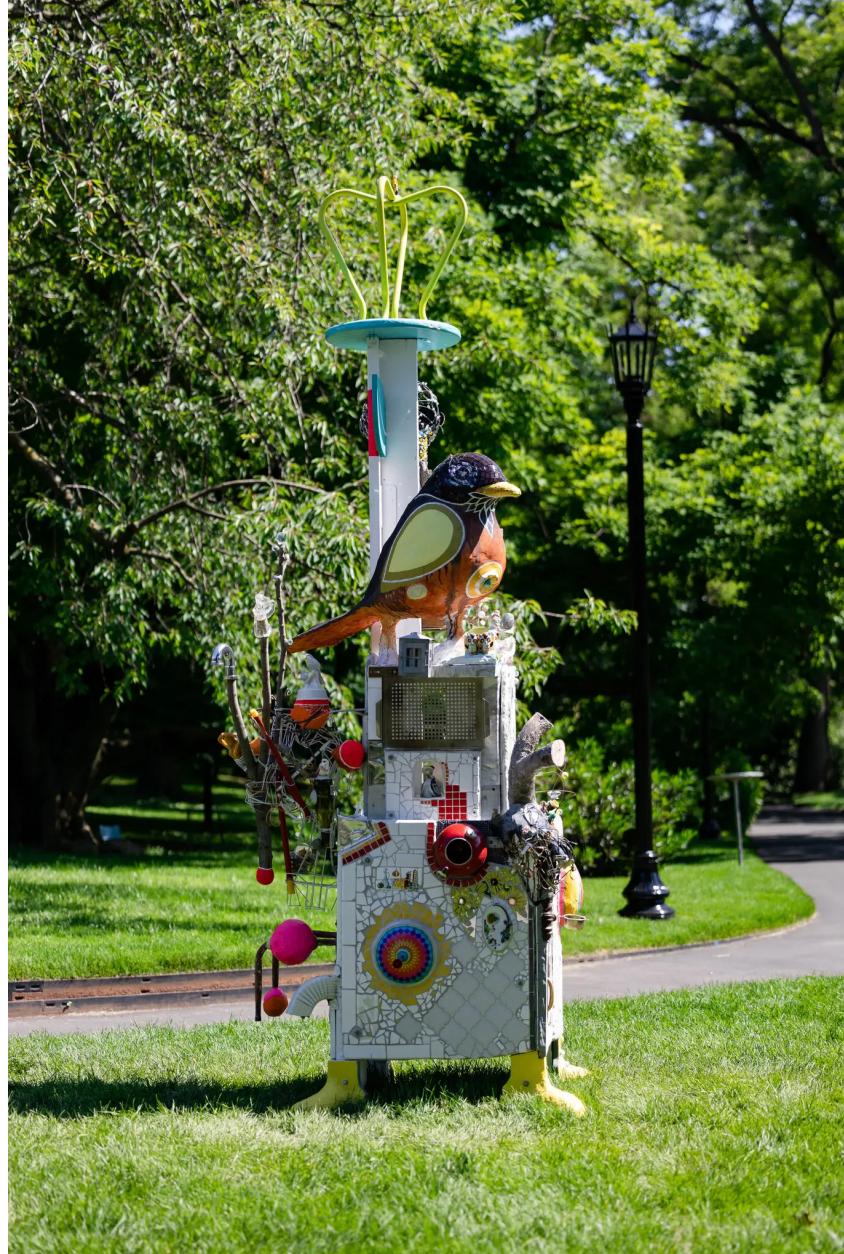
But here’s what’s weird about Barabasi’s information-heavy art: To squeeze the information out of his work — mostly paintings and prints, but this show includes one video and a sculpture — you can’t just look; you need to read a web page with the back story. That makes me think Barabasi’s work is more about capturing the vital feel of data in our lives than giving us specific facts.

Or maybe it’s about an ancient function of art we’ve come to neglect: To simply point at important things in the world — a mammoth to kill; a god to worship — without regard to beauty or style or anything “retinal.” All the work now at Postmasters could look pretty different and still capture the same information. Is it saying that deep down, all art wants to function that way? *BLAKE GOPNIK*

BROOKLYN

‘For the Birds’

Through Oct. 23. Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 990 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn; 718-623-7260; bbg.org.



Julie Peppito “United Birds of America (E Pluribus Unum).” Liz Ligon/Brooklyn Botanic Garden

You never need extra reasons to visit the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. But “For the Birds” has installed plenty of fresh excuses to make the trip, in the form of more than 30 whimsical new birdhouses scattered around the grounds. (The project also includes an album of birdsong-inspired music, among other things.)

Commissioned from both artists and architects, the birdhouses cover a wide range of visual possibilities. They’re as small — and as apparently inaccessible to anything larger than a baby hummingbird — as Mary Frank’s birch bark “Habitat” in the Shakespeare Garden, or as tall and extravagantly welcoming as Julie Peppito’s 14-foot pile of found objects and concrete, “United Birds of America (E Pluribus Unum).” They’re as rickety

and charming as an island of recycled mineral oil jugs, designed especially for blue herons, that Chen Chen and Kai Williams installed in the Japanese Garden's pond, or as sleek and ominous as the hardwood tower for crows lurking at the edge of Aster Field. (Erected by a collective called Bureau Spectacular, working with the architect Kyle May, that one is called "A Flock Without a Murder.")

Not every last birdhouse in the garden is equally compelling, or even well constructed. But in a way it doesn't matter, since the scavenger-hunt aspect of the show is so delightful. And anyway, the project's real audience — even its real art — is in the mixed flock of winged passers-by it's been attracting. **WILL HEINRICH**

TRIBECA

Mario Ayala

Through Oct. 29. Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, 18 Wooster Street, 212-343-7300, deitch.com.



The artist Mario Ayala is selling East Los Angeles in his solo show "Truck Stop" at Jeffrey Deitch Gallery. Mario Ayala and Jeffrey Deitch, New York; Genevieve Hanson

For "Truck Stop," his solo show at Jeffrey Deitch in Tribeca, the artist Mario Ayala is selling Los Angeles. His big canvases depict the vehicular familiars of those sunbaked

streets — a Baja-blasted mariscos truck and its chillaxing shrimp mascot; a brake-dusted recreational vehicle that looks like someone's primary residence; a handsome Ford pickup with a psychedelic airbrush design on its tailgate — lightning ripping, cops chasing and aliens abducting. Ayala's paintings heave with winking details: The shrimp smokes a bowl, the perfectly weathered Sunchaser R.V. logo incorporates a lewdly fluting Kokopelli. An actual billboard in the style of those for Work Boot Warehouse, looming over an office trailer set up to screen a video with radioactive road warrior themes, replaces the ad's wholesome pinup girl with the artist's head on the body of David Bowie from the "Diamond Dogs" cover. It's Los Angeles as semiotic sprawl. And Ayala, a virtuoso of this vernacular form, airbrushes all.

Then, there's the bus: a nearly life-size shaped canvas of the butt of a Metro coach. Its number, 90031, is the ZIP code for the heavily Hispanic east-side neighborhood of Lincoln Heights; the smarmy lawyer showing pearly whites in the middle of the ACCIDENTES ad — an injury attorney so ubiquitous in the Southland people dress as him for Halloween — is unmistakably Deitch. The tag reads: WWJDD22. What would Jeffrey Deitch do? He'd get you the money you deserve. *TRAVIS DIEHL*

Mona Chalabi

Through October. Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn. 718-638-5000; brooklynmuseum.org.



Mona Chalabi's installation "The Gray-Green Divide" at the outdoor plaza of the Brooklyn Museum. Danny Perez

Art is great, but have you ever stopped to really look at the wonder of a tree? The outdoor plaza of the Brooklyn Museum has been taken over by “The Gray-Green Divide,” a site-specific installation by the New York-based British data journalist Mona Chalabi that got me thinking about the contrasting pleasures and privileges of both seeing art and spending time in nature. Her ink and colored-pencil drawings of the 100 most common trees in New York City are reproduced across the walls and steps at the museum’s entrance. An accompanying pair of Brooklyn maps reveal that areas with more trees remain considerably cooler, while a chart shows a correlation between neighborhood wealth and the number of trees. My 5-year-old daughter was moved enough by the display to hug a tree along Eastern Parkway because trees are helpers. I too began to see trees differently, as indicators of urban social inequity.

Afterward you can walk from the plaza to the neighboring Brooklyn Botanic Garden or the nearby Prospect Park. I’ve spent countless hours these past two years here feeling as if I escaped the city as I trekked up Lookout Hill or by considering the park’s many old and impressive trees, like the Camperdown Elm imported from Scotland and planted near the Boathouse in 1872, later immortalized in verse by Marianne Moore. Chalabi’s installation reminded me of one of the most clarifying standards for art. How does any given artwork compare to a tree thoughtfully considered? **JOHN VINCLER**

SOHO

Fernanda Gomes

Through Nov. 5. Peter Freeman Inc., 140 Grand Street, Manhattan, 212-966-5154, peterfreemaninc.com.



Fernanda Gomes, "Untitled" (2022): wood, paint, thread, light overall. via Peter Freeman, Inc., New York; Photo by Nicholas Knight

The delicate yet rigorous art of Fernanda Gomes (born 1960, Brazil) is well known internationally, so her first New York solo since 2006 should not be missed. In this beautiful arrangement of over 30 spare wall pieces, floor pieces and installations, each effort makes you see more fully what has come before. Many are on the small side. Most are fit together from scraps of wood, chipboard or parts of furniture found on the street; judicious additions of white paint rarely disguises previous uses. Parts of more complex works can appear in other pieces at other times. Others are temporary and cease to exist at show's end. Here for example, the materials not used for this show are stacked to one side — and yet cited as a work on the checklist.

Among the echoes to be spotted here are a long jagged fragment of lathe broken off another one in a nearby work, or a second, more thoroughly painted version of a 2014 wall relief. The remake hangs in a scrim-topped enclosure — along with five small, seemingly flat squares of painted wood or linen, each reflecting light differently or containing a perceptual surprise. The relief's slightly scruffier ancestor is just outside. Gomes's art unites painting, sculpture and installation, while also drawing on multiple 20th-century traditions. Her ability to filter these precedents through her own sensibility is like her recycling of materials: She makes everything look not new, but fresh, which may be better. ROBERTA SMITH

BROOKLYN

'Black Atlantic'

Through Nov. 27. Public Art Fund in Brooklyn Bridge Park, 334 Furman Street, Brooklyn; 212-223-7800, publicartfund.org.



Leilah Babirye's "Agali Awamu (Togetherness)" (2022) at Brooklyn Bridge Park. Nicholas Knight/Public Art Fund, NY

When I sat down on a shady bench in Brooklyn Bridge Park recently to contemplate Leilah Babirye's "Agali Awamu (Togetherness)," a suite of nine-foot-tall carved pine sculptures that form part of the five-person show "Black Atlantic," an enormous ship called the SSI Magnificent happened to be gliding past right behind them.

Competing with the constant movement of New York Harbor — not to mention with the steel-belted, glorious Brooklyn Bridge overhead — isn't easy. But Daniel S. Palmer and the artist Hugh Hayden, who curated "Black Atlantic" for the Public Art Fund around the theme of African diaspora identities, use the incongruity to their advantage. Babirye's chunky, darkened figures, each adorned with rusty cogs and bits of metal plating like jewelry, turn their backs to the water, like friends, or maybe just countrymen, who've been put to shore in a strange land. Standing within sight of the Statue of Liberty, they serve as a forceful counterpoint to the idea of an America built chiefly by willing immigrants.

The show's other works ride a similar ambiguity, blending comfortably into the lush park even as they disrupt it with a different story line. Kiyan Williams makes a large version of the bronze "Statue of Freedom" that sits atop the U.S. Capitol, and then covers it in soil, as if it had been buried for four hundred years; Hayden contributes a surreal, unnerving rowboat with built-in wooden ribs and whale-like vertebrae; Tau Lewis's meditative, starfish-like steel plates are adorned with African patterns; and Dozie Kanu's concrete couch encapsulates the awkward beauty of a hybrid identity as it sits on Texas-style wire rims. **WILL HEINRICH**

UPSTATE

'Stressed World'

Through Dec. 3. The School, 25 Broad Street, Kinderhook, N.Y.; 518-758-1628, jackshainman.com.



The Cuban sculptor Yoan Capote aptly sums up the state of the world with "Nostalgia," 2004-2016, a brick wall in a rolling suitcase. via Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

How should art respond to difficult times? That's more or less the question of a new group show at the School in Kinderhook, N.Y., and it offers a range of answers.

El Anatsui's nearly 20-foot-long piece "Stressed World," which gives the show its name, is an irregular tapestry of brightly colored liquor bottle caps that finds transcendence in garbage and misery.

But it's the rare work of art that can do that. The next best strategy on offer is a kind of somber opacity, an acknowledgment of the world's complexity that doesn't aspire to penetrate it.

Malick Sidibé's "Vues de Dos" photographs, shot in Mali in the 1960s and reprinted in the early 2000s, show his subjects from behind. You still get a lot of information — age, dress, posture — but you can't overlook how much more is hidden from you. Michael Snow's long video "Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)," in which a curtain flaps to expose brief glimpses of a green Newfoundland backyard, works similarly.

And two sculptors seem to be exploring a new kind of surrealism, one which, instead of liberating us from the clutches of the unconscious, reveals instead how trapped we are. The squat, troll-like wooden figures of the South African artist Claudette Schreuders flirt maddeningly with psychological resonance, while the Cuban sculptor Yoan Capote, currently showing as well in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood, aptly sums up the state of the world by presenting a brick wall in a rolling suitcase. **WILL HEINRICH**

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