

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

By John Vincler, Aruna D'Souza, Blake Gopnik and Dawn Chan

June 22, 2022

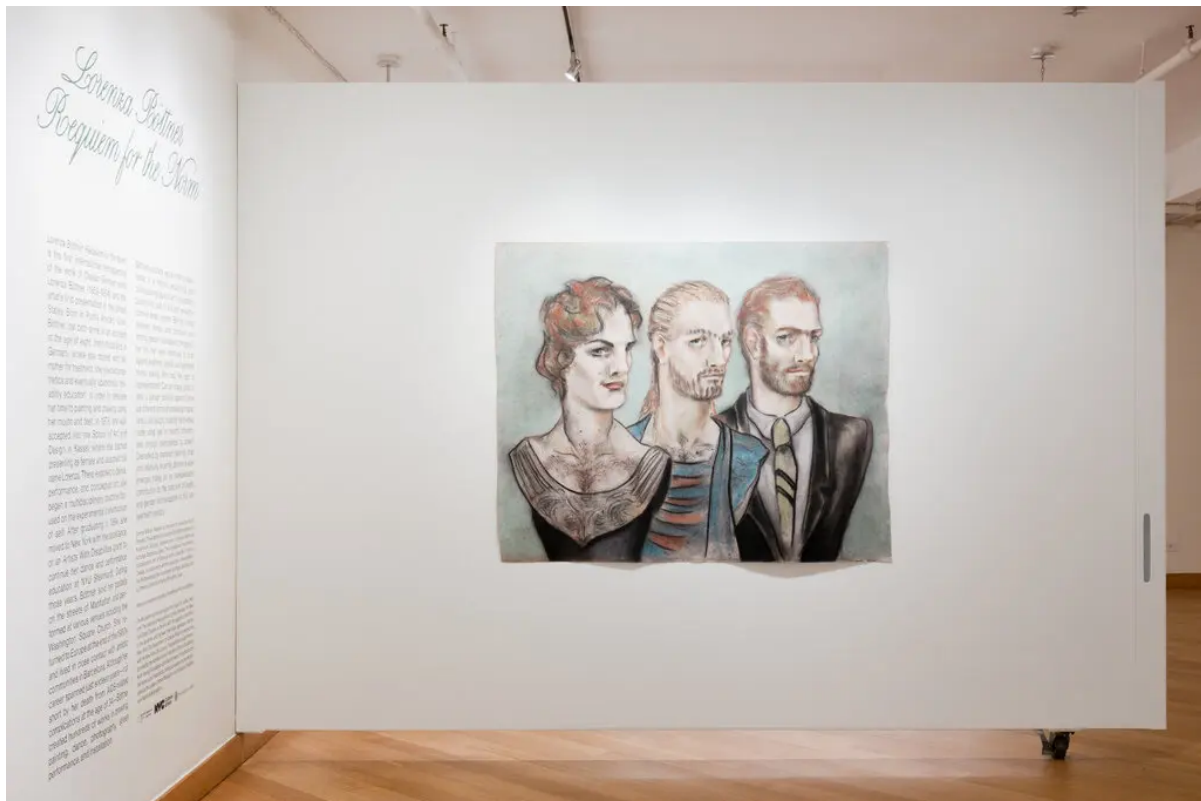
*Want to see new art in New York this weekend? Start in SoHo, at the Leslie-Lohman Museum, with the works of Lorenza Böttner, an artist who used feet in lieu of hands. Then head to the Lower East Side to see Ajay Kurian's shimmering-hot sculptures at 47 Canal. And don't miss the group show "Eyes of the Skin" at Lehmann Maupin Gallery in Chelsea.*

## Newly Reviewed

SOHO

### Lorenza Böttner

Through Aug. 14. Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, 26 Wooster Street, Manhattan; 212-431-2609, [leslielohman.org](http://leslielohman.org).



Installation view of "Lorenza Böttner: Requiem for the Norm" at Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. via the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art; Kristine Eudey

Growing up in Chile, Lorenza Böttner's fascination with birds compelled her at the age of 8 to climb a utility pole topped by a bird's nest. As she later told it, she was startled by the sudden opening of the mother bird's wings and fell, grabbing onto the surrounding electrical wires, seriously burning both arms, resulting in their amputation. Her medical care brought her to Germany, where she attended the Kassel School of Art. Here she took the name Lorenza, publicly presented as a woman and began incorporating gender play in her art following a tradition from Claude Cahun to the Cockettes. She also commenced the multimedia works casting herself as Venus de Milo, seen in this exhibition, "Requiem for the Norm," curated by the philosopher and transgender activist Paul B. Preciado. "I saw that many Greek statues without arms were admired for their beauty," Böttner said. "I wanted to show the beauty of the crip body." In her large-scale works on paper, Böttner used feet in lieu of hands, as dramatized in a Faber-Castell 1991 commercial, here on view, with the artist as a straitjacketed man drawing his way out of a white padded room with only his feet and a box of pastels.

One of her last works — a bouquet of flowers drawn on a hospital pad with markers most likely held in her mouth — brought me to tears. Completed in 1993, the year before her death from AIDS-related illness, it shows an unrelenting insistence on beauty. *JOHN VINCLER*

CHELSEA

## 'Eyes of the Skin'

Through Aug. 12. Lehmann Maupin Gallery, 501 West 24th Street, Manhattan; 212-255- 2923; [lehmannmaupin.com](http://lehmannmaupin.com).





Installation view of “Eyes of the Skin,” a group show curated by Teresita Fernández which brings together work by nine artists who are interested in ways of perceiving that are not strictly visual. via Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, Seoul, and London

Teresita Fernández is known for installations that coax viewers into an awareness of their bodies in space. Here she takes the role of curator, assembling nine artists who are also interested in ways of perceiving that are not strictly visual — it’s work that is as much felt as seen.

Adriana Corral transfers archival documents onto prepared gesso boards for her “palimpsests,” layering the imprints so some parts remain legible while others accumulate into impenetrable abstract veils. Occasionally, a word or image is decipherable, offering horrifying evidence of how 20th-century Mexican immigrants were subjected to toxic “disinfection” by U.S. authorities for fear they would spread disease. Close by, Francheska Alcántara combines Hispano cuaba soap — ubiquitous in Caribbean households, used for everything from washing clothes to healing wounds — with charred wood to make “Tiger Jaw,” III and IV, both 2022, which hang on the wall like protective amulets. “Star Spangled” (2019) by Esteban Ramón Pérez combines leather (remnants from his father’s upholstery shop) and other scraps to cobble together a map of America that looks like flayed white skin. The intricate thread-and-nail work in Glendalys Medina’s

“The Owl (El Búho)” from 2020, inspired by Taino myth, or the weaving in Kira Dominguez Hultgren’s “A Perpetual and Continuous Splitting” (2022), which draws on multiple South and Central American traditions, make you acutely aware of the precise bodily movements that must have gone into making them. Through a sensitivity to material and process, these artists reveal histories often invisible to the eye. ARUNA D’SOUZA

TRIBECA

## Elizabeth McIntosh

Through July 1. Canada, 60 Lispenard Street, Manhattan. 212-925-4631; [canadanewyork.com](http://canadanewyork.com).



Elizabeth McIntosh’s “Curious Trees” (2022) in her solo show “A Ball Is for Throwing,” at Canada. Elizabeth McIntosh/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; via Canada

Our planet will never avoid eco-disaster unless consumers start buying less stuff and reusing the stuff we have. “A Ball Is for Throwing,” Canada’s solo show by the Vancouver

painter Elizabeth McIntosh, can be read as providing a kind of picture, much abstracted, of what a world of reuse might look like. Its nine paintings are assembled from existing parts, like those stylishly “green” outfits that get re-cut and re-sewn from earlier fashion mistakes.

McIntosh’s “Curious Trees” features a single arboreal form presented in double, once in royal blue, and again, a few feet to the right, in shocking pink. Its image seems repurposed from some other place in our commodity culture where it was turned out in several colorways. Behind those trees sits hurricane fencing: Telltale breaks in the pattern tell us that, at some point, the image of that fence was crudely cut-and-pasted together in a computer before McIntosh transposed it into art.

Like almost all the paintings at Canada, including “Notes,” “Inside a Picture” and “Sappho’s World,” “Curious Trees” encloses its imagery inside the crude outline of an open book. That adds to the impression that we’re encountering McIntosh’s subjects (trees and a fence; a cute dog; yellow sticky-notes) at second hand — not out in the world, but as mere pictures such as ones you’d find on a page.

Could it be that these paintings imagine a world where the Land’s End catalog still exists for us to delight in, but no longer points to stuff we buy? *BLAKE GOPNIK*

LOWER EAST SIDE

**Ajay Kurian**

Through July 9. 47 Canal, 291 Grand Street, Manhattan; 646-415-7712, [47canal.us](http://47canal.us).





Ajay Kurian's "Tiresias" (2022) in his new show, "Missing Home." via Ajay Kurian and 47 Canal, New York

An air of sacred stillness envelops Ajay Kurian's latest show. A whiff of danger, too. The only way to approach his new sculptures is to traverse the layer of pine needles strewn across the floor. They can be slippery, so anyone less than sure-footed will need to walk with care. Kurian, a Brooklyn-based artist, turned heads in the 2017 Whitney Biennial with Nike-sneaker-wearing, Muppet-like effigies that combined pop culture and provocation. (One wore a T-shirt with the words "All holes matter.") Somber in comparison, this show is titled "Missing Home." Road trip? Prolonged exile? Both, maybe.

A series of striking new sculptures resemble Rorschach ink blots whose organic shapes suggest moths and pelvic bones, heraldic lions and many-armed deities. Casting dramatic shadows under spotlights, the vertically symmetrical forms evoke humanity's ongoing

attempts to depict a fearsome cosmic order, through icons past and present. But whose icons, from what century? One senses that the sculptures, at a loss for answers, mourn the ways that cultural memory can get jumbled and enshrined as part of diasporic experience.

An artwork in the back room looks more straightforward at first, innocuous even: a toy-model-scale house and palm tree set. But the bulky pedestal beneath hides ceramic heating elements that reach up to 1000 degrees Celsius when powered on. "Sculpture is hot please do not touch," reads a sign nearby. And with that caveat, shimmering-hot air rises around the figurines: an agonizing mirage for someone missing home. *DAWN CHAN*

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## Last Chance

CHELSEA

**Shikeith**

Through June 25. Yossi Milo Gallery, 245 10th Avenue, Manhattan; 212-414-0370; [yossimilo.com](http://yossimilo.com).



Shikeith's "grace comes violently" (2022), five-channel video and amp, at Yossi Milo Gallery. Shikeith and Yossi Milo Gallery

There are three sculptures in Shikeith's New York gallery debut, most notably a shoulder-high brown wooden cross, pierced with five peepholes to reveal flickering blue video screens, that gives the show its title, "grace comes violently." There's also a glass balloon, a tipped-over glass head and a delicate glass crib surrounded by hanging orbs, all using a color that this young Pittsburgh-based artist (whose name is pronounced like "shy Keith") calls "haint blue," a reference to the indigo paint that African-American Gullah Geechee people once used to ward off malevolent spirits.

Surrounding these are a series of large photo portraits of Black men, against black backgrounds, in black frames. They're all frankly homoerotic, but sometimes the artist also tilts their nudity, or semi-nudity, in different directions. In one, two men extend their hands over the arching, sweat-beaded torso of a third, possibly blessing or exorcising him. Another shows a tattooed man in a gold chain and do-rag licking his lips. Closing his

eyes, he seems at once present and remote, not fully captured by the camera.

It's the evocative but never overly revealing way Shikeith portions out all this information, his combination of intimacy and inaccessibility, that makes the overall show so memorable. His practice may not yet be fully rooted — I don't know whether “grace comes violently” is a photo show with sculptures, a sculpture show with photos or a single installation — but I'm excited to see where it goes. *WILL HEINRICH*

CHELSEA

## Ellsworth Kelly

Through June 25. Matthew Marks Gallery, 526 West 22nd Street, Manhattan. 212-243-0200, [matthewmarks.com](http://matthewmarks.com).



Ellsworth Kelly's "Manhattan Skyline at Night" (1985), collage on postcard, at Matthew Marks Gallery. Ellsworth Kelly Foundation and Matthew Marks Gallery

Ellsworth Kelly's art often feels like a platonic ideal of shape and color rather than the work of human hands. There's an immaculate presentation of five works, lit only by skylights, now on view at 522 West 22nd Street (which continues at 523 West 24th Street) in "Blue Green Black Red." But it's the exhibition "Postcards" next door at 526, that was a revelation precisely because the artworks are imperfect yet personal.



Purple, green, blue and yellow, in rough rectangles of printed ephemera, have been glued to the surface of a postcard of illuminated skyscrapers in “Manhattan Skyline at Night” (1985). The series of colors fits loosely with his visual style, but the nonchalance of the placement, the mix of torn and cut edges seems antithetical to his characteristic rigor. In others, fruit or fragments of bodies are overlaid onto the postcard’s landscape images. On view are 17 of the nearly 400 known examples of the artist’s collaged (and mailed) works.

After settling in New York in 1954 from his G.I. Bill stint in France, Kelly worked in the evenings sorting mail at the central post office in Manhattan, and soon befriended the patron saint of mail-art, Ray Johnson. Kelly (1923-2015) sustained his postcard practice across five decades from the earliest here, “Statue of Liberty” (1957) — a woman’s bare leg pasted over most of the sculpture — to the latest, “Basel III” (1992). These intuitive collages made me see the coolly perfect companion works next door as if for the first time. *JOHN VINCLER*

CHINATOWN

## Marc Kokopeli

Through June 26. Reena Spaulings Fine Art, 165 East Broadway, Manhattan; 212-477-5006, [reenaspaulings.com](http://reenaspaulings.com).





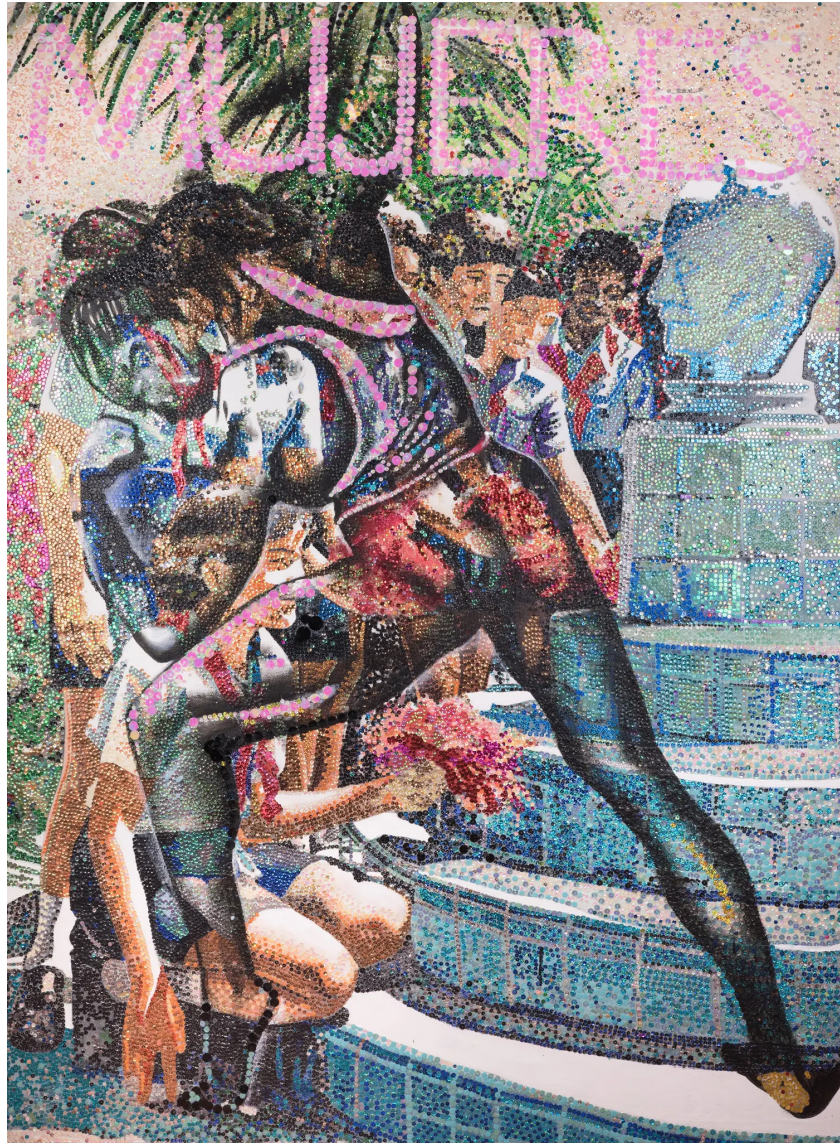
If the gallery scene were a baby shower, Marc Kokopeli would bring the most creative gift. "Die Pampertaarten," or "the pamper cakes," presents a veritable armada of trucks, tanks and trikes composed mostly of diapers — tightly rolled, wrapped around frames, bound into bristling pinwheels. In case this is your introduction to diaper cakes (if you missed that episode of "Sex and the City"), the idea is that every such confection provides a stash of new and usable diapers, garnished with useful accessories like pacifiers and bibs — while the memory of each fantastical arrangement will linger long after the last Pampers hits the landfill. As with expecting parents, so with jaded gallerygoers. These diaper cakes delight with their novelty, impress with their craft and amuse with their harlequin variety and wit.

Kokopeli, a New York artist in his mid-30s, isn't a parent himself — he draws inspiration from the teaching aids for kids that his mother used to make. Here, departing from the pudgy tractors and tiered towers seen on tutorials, he concocts muddy dirt bikes, a mammoth German-style coal excavator, a gory auto accident, a Pampers Popemobile trailed by two Swiss Guards. This infantile show indulges the kitsch of gender reveals and bridal brunches, so thoroughly that it satirizes the originality, skill and seriousness expected of high culture. Apparently, in this decadent day and age, both the late style of contemporary art and the latest trends in feting newborns prompt roomfuls of grown-ups to imagine eating diapers. *TRAVIS DIEHL*

LOWER EAST SIDE

## Gertrudis Rivalta

Through June 26. Thomas Nickles Project, 47 Orchard Street, Manhattan; 917-667-5016, [thomasnickles.com](http://thomasnickles.com).



Gertrudis Rivalta's "Cheerleaders" (2009) in her solo show "Selected Pages" at Thomas Nickles Project. Gertrudis Rivalta and John Nickles Project

There are two popular magazines — *Muchacha* and *Mujeres* — that the Cuban-born and educated artist Gertrudis Rivalta cites in "Selected Pages," her solo exhibition of dioramas and paintings. Rivalta aptly uses the show to represent her own psychological and intellectual development from girlhood to womanhood in a culture where immense forces sought to shape that transition, among them: Negritude, racism, colonialism, Soviet-Cuban solidarity, and the persuasive power of the language of publicity.

Mining the material culture of her childhood, Rivalta reinvents the magazine covers using nontraditional materials like sequins, at once visually seductive, commonplace and aspirational. But her canvases represent the confluence of even more intricacy. Take "Cheerleaders" (2009), with its underlying image of schoolchildren laying a wreath by a

bust of José Martí, a national hero venerated for his role in liberating Cuba from Spain. Superimposed is an image of an unnamed Black female athlete flexing her muscular body in the opposite direction, turning her gaze inward instead of fixing it on Martí's bust. The artist understands that what she calls "the euphoria of liberation" isn't enough to sustain her growth or nurture her self-determination.

Installed in the back of the gallery are very different works: paper and canvas dioramas that operate as small puppet theaters rich in narrative exposition and historical allusion. In all, "Selected Pages" has a wonderful, novelistic premise: We can grasp the complexity of a culture by seeing it through the eyes of an astute observer who came of age in it.

*SEPH RODNEY*

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## More to See

UPPER EAST SIDE

**Marina Adams**

Through July 1. LGDR, 3 East 89th Street, Manhattan; 212-979-0001, [lgdr.com](http://lgdr.com).



Marina Adams's "What Happened to DreamTime?" (2022) in her show "What Are You Listening To?" at LGDR. Marina Adams and LGDR

In her brilliant new paintings, Marina Adams keeps everything more effectively on edge than ever. Her latest canvases are dominated by diamond and half-diamond shapes that avoid symmetry and balance, seeming to expand and contract, like elastic harlequin patterns that have forgotten the rules. Sometimes the diamonds curve where they should point, as in the fat red boulder edged in a darker red that is holding things up in "What Happened to DreamTime?". The painting's palette of red, orange and magenta, with two wedges of blue and a double wedge of yellow, is symptomatic, reflecting Adams's preference for strong colors that hold their own against the eccentric ins and outs of her shapes.

With their changing textures and slightly rough edges, these shapes have the freshness of drawings. They operate in the gap between the geometric and the organic, the



representational and the abstract, and pronounce both distinctions obsolete. Often the female forms of early modernism are retrieved and cloaked in the privacy of abstraction without being completely obscured. In “EttaEllaEartha,” Adams’s stacks of irregular diamonds evoke the three powerful women of the title, as well as Constantin Brancusi’s “Endless Column.” “Heads Over Heels” revisits the wasp-waisted pointy-elbowed women of Picasso’s “Demoiselles d’Avignon,” framing them in a yellow light. “See-Line Woman 12” can be read as a torso clad in blue and protected by an enormous amulet. The show’s title, “What are You Listening To?,” seems to invite you to lend an ear to your own responses and interpretations. *ROBERTA SMITH*

UPPER EAST SIDE

## Anne Imhof

Through July 2. Galerie Buchholz, 17 East 82nd Street, Manhattan; 212-328-7885, [galeriebuchholz.de](http://galeriebuchholz.de).



Installation view of Anne Imhof’s show “Avatar” (2022) at Galerie Buchholz in New York. Galerie Buchholz

New gallery work by the German artist and Biennale darling Anne Imhof, known for fascist-lite performances featuring wire fences, waify models and Dobermans, presents a coy blend of petulance and elegance. Clusters of gray metal lockers line the walls or stick out in jetties. The checklist emphasizes that each set is a discrete piece (“‘Untitled,’ 5

aluminum lockers”) — and also reveals that many of them conceal a cinder block (“‘Untitled,’ 22 aluminum lockers, 10 concrete cinder blocks”). One row, out of sight around a corner, is cocked open, presenting its blocks placed just so. The combination of uniform bricks and featureless cubbies evokes the institutional aesthetics common to grade schools, factories and public pools. The possibility that the other lockers might not be empty, unexciting as it may seem, also suggests a roomful of Schrodinger’s cat boxes, their contents suspended between the states of “yes cinder block” or “no cinder block” by the prohibitions of gallery decorum. Open a locker, though, and you’ll find discarded packets of unused hardware and, in at least one, a smoldering photo of a shirtless model.

If this abstract cat-and-mouse game isn’t your thing, there’s a gorgeous three-panel painting of smoke or clouds rendered in red-and-blue 3D. There’s also a suite of loopy, disorienting contour drawings of figures, hands and huddles. Their pencil on paper fits the high school vibe. So do the many glossy acrylic-on-aluminum panels painted glittering green-to-black gradients and adolescently, maniacally scratched in long furrows. It’s so sullen, it’s almost luxurious. *TRAVIS DIEHL*

BROOKLYN

Heidi Lau

Through July 3. Green-Wood Cemetery, 500 25th Street, Brooklyn; 718-210-3080, [green-wood.com](http://green-wood.com).



Heidi Lau's "Creatures of the Yearning Wind II" in the exhibition "Gardens as Cosmic Terrains" at Green-Wood Cemetery. Heidi Lau and Matthew Brown; Lance Brewer

The Green-Wood Cemetery's catacombs are small and lit only by skylights and an open door. Such conditions make it an unusual place to exhibit art, yet the setting is incredibly evocative. A few years ago, the artist Janine Antoni created work that seemed to commune with this 1850s burial building (which is mostly closed to the public). Now Heidi Lau, the cemetery's first artist-in-residence, has done the same with "Gardens as Cosmic Terrains."

The Macau-born, New York-based Lau sculpts elaborate, craggy ceramic vessels whose intricacy is often astonishing. Even under ideal viewing circumstances, it can be hard to

get a visual handle on her works. Their luster and running colors mask the details, and they seem to shape-shift — from a mountain into a building into a fountain — before your eyes.

That slipperiness is heightened here, where Lau's sculptures, many hanging from skylights, alternately bathe in sun and dissolve in shadow. This feels right: to not fully know what you're looking at and have your sense of sight destabilized in a place where the living meet the dead. Urns, hands, faces and chains are identifiable, emerging from more abstract forms. For the project, Lau drew on Taoist mythology, Chinese gardens and ancient burial objects, as well as her own grief over the death of her mother. The resulting works seem to bridge realms, capturing both the materiality of clay and the ephemerality of the spirit. They haunt the space as handmade ruins, eerie and beautiful manifestations of the process of mourning. JILLIAN STEINHAUER

CHELSEA

## Minouk Lim

Through July 1. Tina Kim Gallery, 525 West 21st Street, Manhattan; 212-716-1100, [tinakimgallery.com](http://tinakimgallery.com).



View of “Minouk Lim: Fossil of High Noon” at Tina Kim Gallery, including the video



“Portable Keeper\_Sea” (2020) and, at foreground, “DuDu Mulmul No. 32” (2021). Minouk Lim and Tina Kim Gallery; Dario Lasagni

The marks we leave on the world and the forces of nature that erase them: These seem to be the twinned subjects of Minouk Lim’s latest show. The artist is better known in South Korea, where her works have explored the unsettling effects of urbanization. Here, she turns her focus seaward. In her 2020 video, “Portable Keeper\_Sea,” a woman drifts in deep water, encircled by a ring of buoys, appearing to bide her time with the intensity of someone awaiting rebirth. Nearby are three sculptures that depict cross-sections of seashore. Their resin holds together sand and kelp alongside household detritus, including electrical wire and a half-eaten Belgian waffle. The works seem to be poetic illustrations of the Anthropocene, speaking to the idea that Earth’s most recent crust now records histories of tidal cycles and sedimentation, but also landfill junk that tells the stories of boiler rooms renovated, closets Marie Kondo-ed, toys outgrown.

If what we discard is important to Lim, so, too, is what we preserve: as with the 12 walking canes in the gallery’s front room. Lim’s friend carved the wooden forms to memorialize the civilians massacred in Mungyeong, South Korea in 1949. Lim, in turn, adorned the sticks with shells, leaflike forms and glass balls. While artworks about epochal time and the loss of cultural memory are a dime a dozen, Lim’s art distinguishes itself via small details. A spindly line in one drawing, for instance, turns out to be precisely placed thorns from prickly castor-oil trees. *DAWN CHAN*

TRIBECA

**Robert Colescott**

Through July 1. George Adams Gallery, 38 Walker Street, Manhattan. 212-564-8480; [georgeadamsgallery.com](http://georgeadamsgallery.com).



Robert Colescott's "Frankly My Dear ... I Don't Give a Damn,"  
1993. Robert H. Colescott Separate Property Trust and George Adams  
Gallery/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

Robert Colescott, who died in 2009, was deadly serious about complexity and injustice, but the paintings he made about race in America also had a sense of humor — if not about the subject itself, then at least about the limitations of art as a way of confronting it. His wry, resigned, fiery approach is particularly well encapsulated by “Frankly My Dear ... I Don’t Give a Damn,” one of several 1990s-era acrylics currently showing, along with a few slightly surreal watercolors, at George Adams Gallery.

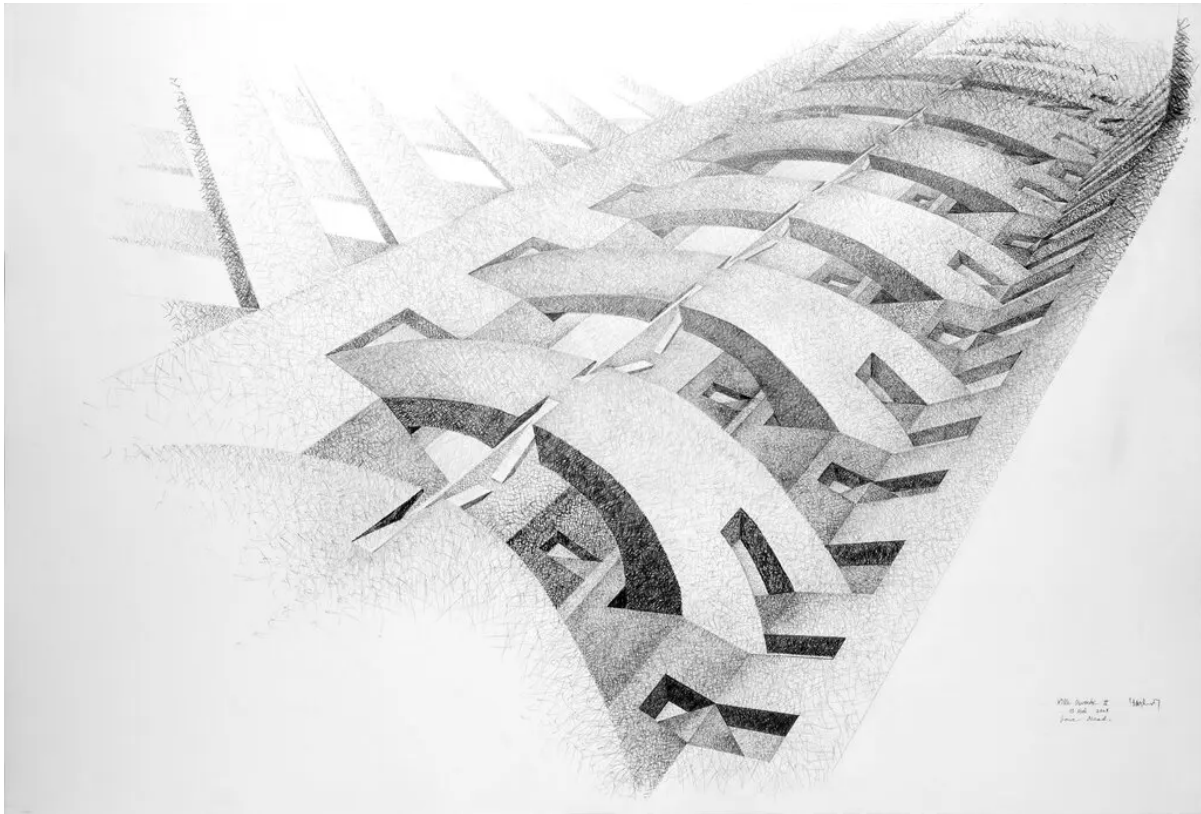
In the painting’s lower left corner, a maudlin white man with a pompadour and goatee holds a swooning Black woman in a checked gingham dress; two skeletons recap their pose on the other side. Imperious golden faces gaze down, a nervous woman leans against a burning planet down below, and a suggestion of hellfire whispers behind the skeletons. A ribbon of red and green, in combination with the angels’ gold, suggest a Pan-African banner. Everything is there to bring out the cosmic epic implicit in one famous line from “Gone With the Wind” — Colescott even letters the phrase across a starry blue sky.

But his color choices, the way he crowds all the figures to the front, and his quick and vigorous brushwork combine to give the piece the feeling of a magazine illustration, too. It's as good as saying, "Don't look to me for solutions. This is only a comment." *WILL HEINRICH*

SOHO

## Claude Parent

Through July 3. A83 Gallery, 83 Grand Street, Manhattan, [a83.site](http://a83.site).



Claude Parent's "Ville Ouverte II," 2003, pencil on paper. Claude Parent Archive

Claude Parent (1923-2016), a visionary French architect, imagined an evocative universe of architectural possibilities in exquisite graphite drawings. He is not well known in the United States, but was a central figure in the cultural and social tumult of Paris that began in the late 1960s.

The 44 "architectural fictions" — as Parent called them — on view in the show "Oblique Narratives No. 1" explore ways of freeing the perception of architecture from the tyranny of utilitarian Modernism. Parent's "theory of the oblique" was sensual and experiential, designs that people would feel with their bodies, thanks to sloping floors and tilting walls.

Parent built a few extraordinary buildings, restlessly reinventing his style each time.

Architects including Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, Thom Mayne and Jean Nouvel found a kindred spirit in Parent, as they designed fluid surfaces and fragmented structures.

He drew constantly until near the end of his life at age 93. In the dreamlike works the gallery has brought from the Claude Parent Archive in Paris, the oblique is represented as a point of view — an aerial perspective of the composition zooming off the paper at a diagonal, for example. He imagined enormous, monumentally sublime fragments of cities.

An elegant draftsman, Parent used a technique called scumbling to painstakingly build up layers of curved scratches to create a wide range of tonal effects. The result is as alluringly tactile as a fine swath of fabric, while sometimes possessing an undertow of menace. *JAMES S. RUSSELL*

UPPER EAST SIDE

## Frank Diaz Escalet

Through July 29. Meredith Ward Fine Art, 44 East 74th Street, Manhattan; 212-744-7306, [meredithwardfineart.com](http://meredithwardfineart.com); through June 18 at Anton Kern Gallery, 16 East 55th Street, Manhattan; 212-367-9663, [antonkerngallery.com](http://antonkerngallery.com).





Frank Diaz Escalet's "Prez 'n' Blue" silhouettes the saxophonist Lester Young and the trumpeter Blue Mitchell. Meredith Ward Fine Art

Two gallery shows celebrate the achievement of the Puerto Rico-born artist, Frank Diaz Escalet (1930-2012), who initially made paintings from stained leather before translating its rich flat colors into acrylic paint. Escalet's life had its share of sadness, but the condensed version centers on a man who, from 1958 to 1971, lived in a loft on the Bowery, frequented New York's jazz scene and enjoyed considerable success providing custom-made leather garments for celebrity clients, who included Aretha Franklin and the Rolling Stones. In 1971, he moved to Maine, where demand for his designs disappeared, and by the mid-1980s, he had turned full time to his leather paintings.

The two shows reflect the breadth of Escalet's subjects and sympathies, from mythic musicians to moments in ordinary, sometimes oppressed, lives. "Sing Me the Blues" at Meredith Ward reflects an ecumenical love of music with works titled "Taxi Dancers, 1940s," "Nite at the Opera," "Tango No. 12" and "Can-Can." "Prez 'n' Blue" silhouettes the

saxophonist Lester Young and the trumpeter Blue Mitchell in performance against big geometric planes of bright magenta and yellow.



Escalet's "Untitled" (1976), leather and acrylic on panel, at Anton Kern Gallery. Phoebe D'Heurle and Anton Kern Gallery

The show at Anton Kern, organized with the Andrew Kreps Gallery and Kaufmann Repetto, begins with an especially beautiful untitled composition in leather from 1975: a gramophone with a psychedelic sound horn, a muscular arm operating its hand crank and, floating before it, a pair of eyes and singing lips — all this against a background of pale buttery yellow. Other works feature a chain gang, a washerwoman and an airman about to hand-spin a plane's propeller. These shows are both great. *ROBERTA SMITH*

CHELSEA

## Nicole Eisenman

Through July 29. Hauser & Wirth, 542 West 22nd Street, Manhattan. 212-790-3900, [hauserwirth.com](http://hauserwirth.com).



Nicole Eisenman's "The Abolitionists in the Park,"  
2020-2021. Nicole Eisenman and Hauser & Wirth

Artists are models of freedom. It's part of the fantasy that sustains art's cultural relevance, but artmaking is work.

The star of Nicole Eisenman's "(Untitled) Show" is an oversized cartoonish figure sitting at the center of "Maker's Muck" (2022). The hands of this plaster sculpture are at a potter's wheel that's spinning away interminably producing rocklike forms that pile on its right. Surrounding, on the low sprawling platform, are numerous other sculptural attempts, among them: baked flatbread, an oversized ketchup bottle and what appears to be a time bomb. As a whole, the eclectic accumulation reads as an emblem about the necessity to fail and the need to keep at it.

The mischievous whimsy of Eisenman's sculptures shouldn't distract you from seriously looking at the paintings, which use a grab bag of modernist formal approaches and techniques (like raked paint for the texture of clothing or hair). The Brooklyn artist often uses several styles in the same work, as in the standout painting, "The Abolitionists in the



Park” (2020-21). There’s pizza and tender embraces among a crowd gathered on a blue tarp, with Guston-like caricatures occupying the margins and a realist dual-portrait of Hannah Black and Tobi Haslett occupying the middle. Black and Haslett are the authors (along with Ciarán Finlayson) of “The Tear Gas Biennial,” a 2019 essay protesting the presence of a weapons manufacturer on the Whitney Museum’s board. This is ambitious history painting thinking through freedom, asking whose? *JOHN VINCLER*

EAST VILLAGE

## Walter Pfeiffer

Through Aug. 28. Swiss Institute, 38 St. Marks Place, Manhattan; 212-925-2035, [swissinstitute.net](http://swissinstitute.net).



Walter Pfeiffer’s “Carlo Joh” (1973), pencil on paper, at the Swiss Institute. Walter Pfeiffer and Galerie Gregor Staiger

We are in a moment of gender upheaval, with individuals questioning the roles of biology and culture in establishing traditional binaries. However, the drawings, paintings, photographs and videos of the Zurich-based artist Walter Pfeiffer from the 1970s into the 2000s remind us that this is only another moment of inquiry, not the first one. Gender fluidity and performance of all types run through Pfeiffer’s career survey at the Swiss Institute.

Pfeiffer was born in a small Swiss village and moved to Zurich in 1966 to attend the



alternative art school F+F (Form und Farbe, or “Shape and Color.”) Many of the works here echo the experiments of that decade — as well as Dada, which originated in Zurich half a century earlier. Diaristic photographs and videos capture people dressing up in costumes and performing for the camera in a manner that echoes artists like Jack Smith, Jonas Mekas and Andy Warhol — but also pop stars like Elvis Presley. When Pfeiffer went back to F+F as a teacher, he recruited students as models for his photographs and his mock music videos.

Pfeiffer’s best and most poignant model, however, was a young man named Carlo Joh. Shape-shifting before the camera, Joh had all the chameleon trappings of an androgynous fashion model or a gender-bending rock star such as Mick Jagger, David Bowie or Marc Bolan. Unfortunately, Joh died of a mysterious illness in the mid-1970s. Like many great art muses, though, he seemed never destined to age. MARTHA SCHWENDENER

CHINATOWN

## Tyree Guyton: ‘The Heidelberg Project, New York City’

On view indefinitely. Martos After Dark, 167 Canal Street, Manhattan; 212-260-0670; martosgallery.com.



Installation view of “Tyree Guyton, The Heidelberg Project, New York City, Martos After Dark,” 2022. Tyree Guyton, The Heidelberg Project, Detroit, and Martos Gallery, New York; Charles Benton

Tyree Guyton came home to Detroit's McDougall-Hunt in 1986. The neighborhood — like many in the city's inner ring — has been gutted by decades of white flight and pointed neglect. Guyton cleaned up a string of fallow lots, then assembled the junk into bitter monuments of resilience. The resulting Heidelberg Project lines a long block with bleached mountains of shoes, harlequin tableaux of rusty cars and an acrobatic stack of shopping carts. Guyton's topsy-turvy paintings of clocks, some turned around or without numbers, dot the view like roadside Bible verses. "Time is running out," they seem to say: "Repent!" Bold designs cover nearby houses — some abandoned, but a few in solidarity with their residents against attacks from NIMBY arsonists and philistine politicians.

Gradually, the winds changed. Detroit's ruling class now see the value that public art and selfie-hunting tourists bring to real estate — or, less cynically, see art Guyton's way: as part of the blighted city's spiritual recovery. Today, Heidelberg Project enjoys official status. And Guyton is franchising: A corner storefront on Canal Street in Chinatown contains a slice of Heidelberg. Through the glass, blotchy, costumed mannequins sit around a cluttered table and a TV painted with the words "World New." A vacuum inhales an American flag. Clocks cover the walls. The domestic scene feels incongruous and vivisected at street level. Is this the neighborhood's past? Its future? Detroit? New York? The display advertises the larger project. It also invokes the specter of urban renewal in downtown Manhattan. Time, time, time ... *TRAVIS DIEHL*