

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

By Roberta Smith, Martha Schwendener, Will Heinrich and Peter S. Green

April 21, 2022

*Want to see new art in New York this weekend? Start in Chelsea with Cameron Welch's ambitious mosaics packed with cultural references. Then head downtown to see Lukas Quietzsch's casual but meticulous paintings. And don't miss Peter Uka's paintings of the groovy Nigeria of his 1970s childhood.*

## Newly Reviewed

CHELSEA

### Cameron Welch

Through May 7. Yossi Milo Gallery, 245 10th Avenue, Manhattan. 212-414-0370; [yossimilo.com](http://yossimilo.com).



Cameron Welch's "Fugue State" (2021), marble, glass, ceramic, stone, spray enamel, oil and acrylic on three panels. Cameron Welch and Yossi Milo Gallery

Cameron Welch's solo show, "Ruins," at Yossi Milo is a knockout — in almost the physical sense. It is full of large, ambitious, brilliantly executed mosaics full of so many disparate cultural references, snarling faces and masks and intimations of violence that it can initially be hard to focus.

Such artistic confidence and artisanal finesse can feel like Neo-Expressionism all over again and is especially reminiscent of the art of Jean-Michel Basquiat, although Basquiat had a finer appreciation of empty space and breathing room. Welch seems guided by an unwavering horror vacui. His mosaics carom from the Greco-Roman-African worlds to our own uneasy time, with many stops in between.

At the center of his mosaic "Fugue State," is a Pietà, with some role reversal: A woman in a Burberry plaid shroud lies across the lap of a probably male figure, perhaps Christ enthroned. To the left, a cherub and the Lamb of God. To the right, a prone female nude out of Modigliani, a devil wielding a brush and palette and a protester holding an anti-police sign who resembles Jordan Wolfson's demonic animatronic puppet, ambiguously titled "Colored Sculpture."

Welch, who is 31, was making painting-collages before taking up mosaic four or five years ago. He has improved rapidly, enriching and updating his medium with pieces of marble, stone and several kinds of reverse glass imagery (abstract painting, photographs of ancient pottery, his handprints). To say that he might have discovered his artistic destiny is putting it mildly. *ROBERTA SMITH*

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LOWER EAST SIDE

## Lukas Quietzsch

Through May 14. Ramiken, 389 Grand Street, 917-434-4245, ramiken.biz.





Lukas Quietzsch's "Untitled" (2021). Lukas Quietzsch and Ramiken

Painting is always in an uncomfortable position. On the one hand, it harks back to basic instincts, like the marks made by children with whatever materials they can find. At the same time, it's an academic discipline that demands a measure of philosophical significance to exert its critical and economic value. Credibly bridging these poles is a challenge, which the Berlin-based painter Lukas Quietzsch pulls off in his show "Parallel Warnings in Simple Arrangements."

The seven large paintings here are simultaneously casual but meticulous, dumb and sophisticated. Quietzsch paints with gouache on canvas, giving the works a weathered look. The carefree acid-house approach is pushed further in canvases like "Untitled" (2021), which depicts an egg yolk wearing sunglasses at the center of a multicolored sunflower. Other works are more abstract and rigorous, with jigsaw compositions or blown-out centers, suggesting the collapse of painterly order and linear perspective.

Two "Untitled" (2021) canvases — one mostly black and white, and one dominated by passages of juicy crimson — include an elegant jumble of shapes that perform a perceptual bait-and-switch. Confusing background and foreground, the geometric forms here open into other possible paintings, like a series of portals.

As the exhibition title suggests, Quietzsch's practice aims to work on multiple registers. This applies to ethos and credibility too, which are established through painterly marks. After all, who do you trust more in today's world: the rational, cultivated painter or the transgressive naïf? Quietzsch attempts to split the difference and largely succeeds.

*MARTHA SCHWENDENER*

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CHELSEA

## Peter Uka

Through June 4. Flag Art Foundation, 545 West 25th Street, Manhattan. 212-206-0220; [flagartfoundation.org](http://flagartfoundation.org).



Peter Uka's "Front Yard Things" (2020). Peter Uka and Marianne Ibrahim

The first thing I heard about Peter Uka, a Nigerian painter based in Cologne, Germany, is that his father was a sign painter. I couldn't help finding echoes of this family business in Uka's New York debut, a suite of incredibly appealing scenes, painted from memory and imagination, of the groovy Nigeria of his 1970s childhood.

There's the mileage he gets out of large blocks of color, like a bright yellow door set in a cool gray wall in "Dengue Pose II." And there's the slick pop of the colors themselves — the orange wall behind a young woman in a white dress in "Front Yard Things," the deep red backdrop behind three giddy young men in "Sunday Folks." There's the graphic zip of his compositions, as jaunty and well-balanced as avant-garde record album covers. And there's his overall economy, the way he confidently foreshortens a pointing finger or builds convincing faces from nothing but highlight and shadow.

But in the end what struck me most was how comfortable Uka is giving visual pleasure. It's interesting in this respect to compare his "Basement Barbers" (2018) to Kerry James Marshall's 1993 masterpiece, "De Style." Where Marshall's painting is grand, political, aggressive and inspiring, Uka's is quieter and more intimate, a real everyday moment presented just as it is. *WILL HEINRICH*

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CHELSEA

## Stanislav Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova

Through May 14. Heller Gallery, 303 10th Avenue, Manhattan. 212-414-4014; hellergallery.com.





“Cross Head” (1988), a cast-glass sculpture by the Czech artists Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová. Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová; Heller Gallery

When the midday sun floods the windows of the Heller Gallery in Manhattan, the 19 pieces of cast glass by the Czech artists Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová illuminate the room like a medieval chapel. That’s no accident. Works by the internationally acclaimed couple — Libenský died in 2002, Brychtová in 2020 — include windows for St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague, and an extraordinary tiny chapel in the Czech town of Horšovský Týn. Applying their talents to what had long been the province of goblets and chandeliers, they explored glass as a sculptural medium, teasing out its secrets of light and color.

The exhibition showcases such gems as “Tall Head,” a foot-high casting with a reverse-relief head encased in its folds. Its color shades from amber to burgundy, varying with the light and the thickness of the glass. Heads were a common theme for the couple: With “Cross Head,” a brutally angular piece in orange, inner voids make the light play with the thickness and polished surface of the glass, while “T-Head,” a 400-pound half oval of gray-green glass, is inspired by bronze Hellenic helmets in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Some of the pieces here are maquettes, small trial versions of what would eventually be castings 3 or 4 feet tall. This includes the exquisite 8 ½-inch high “Arcus III,” a keyhole-shaped piece whose color ranges from sapphire blue to pinkish brown. The artists’ use of color creates a vibrant emotional pull: The pastel hue of “Diagonal,” a raspberry-sorbet-colored square arch seems to exude happiness. *PETER S. GREEN*

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## Last Chance

CHELSEA

**Jordan Belson**

Through April 23. Matthew Marks Gallery, 526 West 22nd Street, Manhattan. 212-243-0200;  
matthewmarks.com



Jordan Belson, "Untitled," circa 1970; paper collage and mixed media mounted on board. Estate of Jordan Belson and Matthew Marks Gallery

The exhibition of Jordan Belson's collages may be titled "Landscapes," but its true subject is light. Best known as a filmmaker who tried to represent interior states in mandala-like shapes and strobing color, Belson, who died in 2011, has become an almost mythic figure of cinema because of the scarcity in digital formats of his experimental films from the 1960s onward. But the collages here, all made from 1970 to 1973, seize the potential of reflected rather than projected light. Belson first trained as a painter, even showing at the Guggenheim Museum in the late 1940s. For the collages on view, all untitled, Belson followed the centuries old Japanese practice of chigiri-e, using torn colored paper to create seascapes, nested hillsides and backlit dawning ridgelines. The compositions recall Etel Adnan's lyrical paintings, but the effect, despite the humble materials used, brings to mind the California Light and Space movement of the 1960s and '70s. (Think James Turrell in miniature.)

Two elements especially vivify these works on paper. Intense spotlights cause the bright shades and brilliant fluorescents to almost throb with glowing color. Second, exposure to light over the decades has altered the backgrounds, creating slight variations where the shadow of the frame has offered some protection. Artworks keep living beyond the life of



their creator, sometimes slipping past the artist's own intentions. The once uniformly monochrome backing papers have been transformed by their environments, giving them a transcendent quality, creating visible auras that record a history of absorbed light.

*JOHN VINCLER*

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BROOKLYN

## Susan Meiselas

Through April 23. Higher Pictures Generation, 16 Main Street, Brooklyn. 212-249-6100; [higherpictures.com](http://higherpictures.com).



Susan Meiselas's "Shortie on Stage," Essex Junction, Vermont, 1973. Susan Meiselas/Magnum Photos; Higher Pictures Generation

"Carnival Strippers," the 1976 book by Susan Meiselas, was a landmark in photographic publishing. Its black-and-white images of "exotic dancers" came with documentation of how these women viewed their work. Photography's natural voyeurism seemed counterbalanced by genuine sensitivity. The project began Meiselas's distinguished career as a photojournalist, producing celebrated images from war-torn Nicaragua, El Salvador and Kurdistan.

She recently discovered color slides she'd shot alongside her black-and-whites. Higher

Pictures Generation is showing them for the first time in “Carnival Strippers Color, 1972-1975,” alongside the interview notes with her subjects.

The exhibition’s 14 color prints yield a “reality effect” absent from Meiselas’s black-and-whites. They bring us that much closer to these women and their garish surroundings in rural carnivals: red signage matches scarlet bras. That made me realize that the sensitivity in these pictures may come from psychic links between shooter and subjects: As a 20-something woman in the male-dominated world of 1970s photography — of ’70s *America* — Meiselas was facing the same issues of gender expectations and agency that the strippers discuss in their interviews. “I’m too bright to just sit around in the kitchen or just sit around and clean house,” said one performer named Lisa, who had done just that. She had “a splittin’ thing,” and needed to take off and “do something that I wanted to do.”

Was “Carnival Strippers” Meiselas’s own means of “splittin’” from expectations?

In “Shortie on Stage,” the four men ogling the dancer could easily stand for Meiselas’s male colleagues gawping as she dares to snap the shot. *BLAKE GOPNIK*

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CHELSEA

## Pier Paolo Calzolari

Through April 23. Marianne Boesky Gallery, 507 and 509 West 24th Street, Manhattan. 212-680-9889; [marianneboeskygallery.com](http://marianneboeskygallery.com).



Pier Paolo Calzolari, "Untitled" (2021), salt, pigments, oil pastels, gold leaf, walnut, feather, steel, lead on wood. Pier Paolo Calzolari and Marianne Boesky Gallery; Michele Alberto Sereni

Pier Paolo Calzolari is the rare conceptual artist whose paintings really look like paintings. Of course they look like conceptual pieces, too. Several recent works in the show "Painting as a Butterfly" are monochromes adorned with delicate objects like a walnut shell with a feather stuck in it, or a yawning, iridescent razor clam shell that casts a drooping shadow. They're funny, but Calzolari's attention to surface and color means that they also stand up to closer looking. Both shells hang in front of grainy, bright red surfaces made from pigments and salt, but the even application behind the walnut calls to mind a clay ball court, while the dry, white-streaked surface behind the clam feels more like a sunburned wall overlooking some Mediterranean beach.



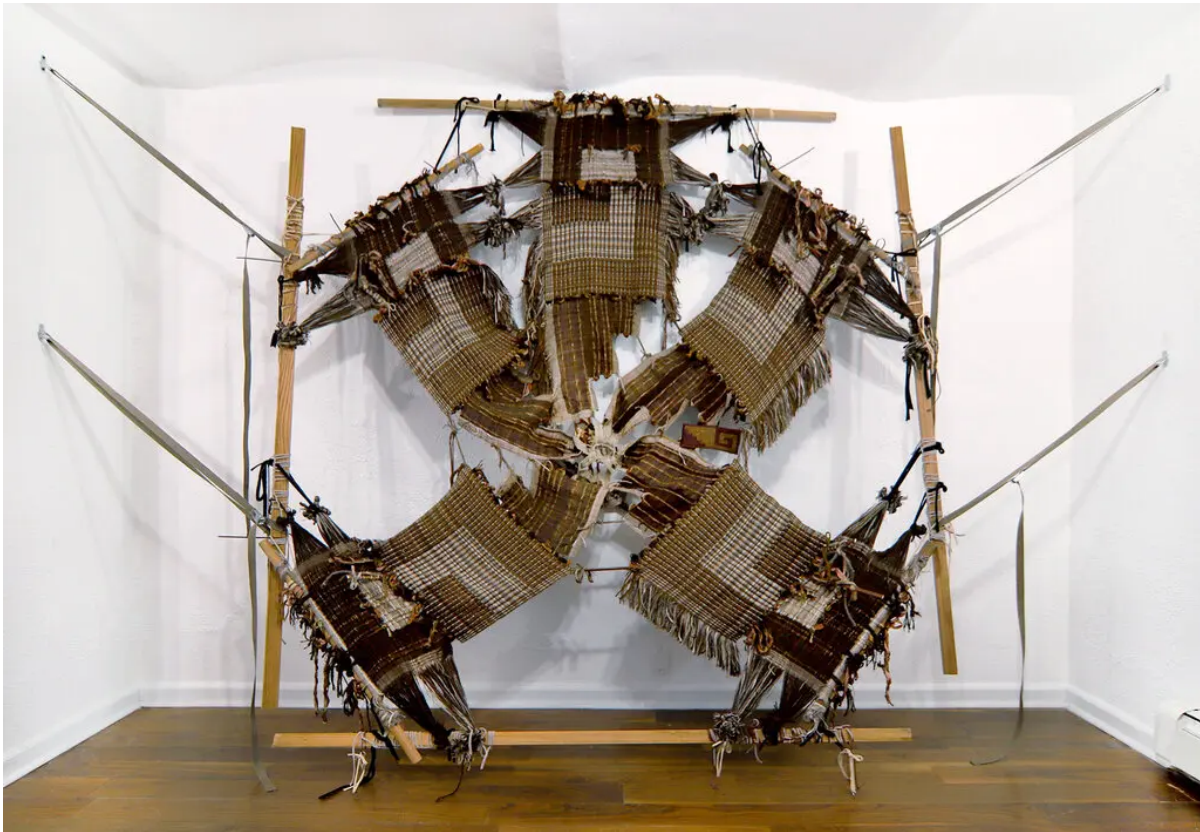
Calzolari came out of the radical 1960s Italian scene later known as Arte Povera, literally “poor art,” and like many of his peers, he sometimes lets the interest of an unusual material carry too much weight. But most of the time he adds just enough expressive gesture — a few yellow drips crossing a blue stain in “Venetian Landscape” (2017), or a cluster of blotchy red jellyfish on a nearby untitled triptych — to balance things out. “Monocromo blu,” from 1979, a movie-screen-size tempera on cardboard landscape showing in New York for the first time, takes this balance especially far. Thick ridges of tempera lend gravity to the painting’s storms of multicolored dashes, while the dashes serve to heighten the beauty of the tempera’s transfixing midnight-blue. *WILL HEINRICH*

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LOWER EAST SIDE

## Kira Dominguez Hultgren

Through April 23. Heroes, 162 Allen Street, Manhattan. 510-701-4684, [heroesgallery.gallery](http://heroesgallery.gallery).



Kira Dominguez Hultgrens “Colita de Rana or Zip Ties” (2022), in which five separate burlap-colored panels meet in a loose knot at the center. Kira Dominguez Hultgren and Heroes Gallery

The textile artist Kira Dominguez Hultgren cites the Nahua weaver, educator and artist's model Luz Jiménez (1897-1965) as a major influence. But not much work survives by Jiménez, so she appears in this exhibition only in a few reproduced drawings and photographs. What remains is essentially a New York solo debut for Dominguez Hultgren, whose textiles, which incorporate alpaca and camel fur, strips of her Punjabi grandmother's clothing, rope from a Utah climbing gym, her own hair, plastic zip ties, ratchet straps, and a shredded reprint of an exhibition catalog titled "Luz Jiménez, símbolo de un pueblo milenario 1897-1965," are draped and tied across ad hoc looms made of salvaged wood.

On paper, the gallery's explanation for this eclectic array of materials — that they represent the artist's multicultural heritage — sounds a little literal. But it's actually this kind of transparency that makes the work compelling. Three strips of yellow and blue woven fabric stretch down a ladder of wooden bars in "In the Silence Between Mother Tongues," with the rubbery-looking climbing rope snaking in and out between them, while five separate burlap-colored panels meet in a loose knot at the center of "Colita de Rana or Zip Ties."

No single knot or stretcher bar stands out more than any other, but they don't quite blend together, either. Instead, the impression made, say, by "Colita de Rana" is less like a singular picture than like a complex spiritual machine. *WILL HEINRICH*

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## More to See

CHELSEA

### 'Epistrophy'

Through April 30. Pace Gallery, 540 W 25th Street, Manhattan; 212-421-3292, [pacegallery.com](http://pacegallery.com).



Sam Gilliam, "A' and the Carpenter II (2022) in the exhibition "Epistrophy," in which three friends — Gilliam, Melvin Edwards, and William T. Williams — are showing together for the first time. Sam Gilliam/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The exhibition title links the name of a Thelonious Monk tune back to the Greek poetic device of a repeating line or phrase. The vocabulary of jazz is built partly on artfully working repetitions: rhythms, melodic lines, the standard. In the gallery, repetitions and revisions enact a call-and-response play across old and new works by three friends — Melvin Edwards, Sam Gilliam and William T. Williams.

I arrived as an unabashed fan of Sam Gilliam's work, particularly his immense draped cloth paintings. Here "A' and the Carpenter II" (2022) features layers of warm oranges, cool blues, brown-purples flowing in a parabola over a wooden sawhorse, with a gathering of cloth on the floor, knotted into a sphere larger than a basketball. Williams is represented by two paintings of geometric abstractions and three works of asemic writing nodding to Arabic calligraphy and graphic scores.

The revelation is Melvin Edwards's series utilizing chains and barbed wire, first in mixed-media paintings on paper from the 1970s and then in an untitled 2022 installation. The new piece is paired with a second Gilliam painted-cloth construction and his sketch of draped spilling cloth from 1969. It feels like Edwards has picked up Gilliam's theme in the drawing and transformed it some 50 years later in his deconstructed web of gleaming barbed wire and, at bottom, curtain-like arcs of chain. The result is a lively dialogue



across the decades on freedom versus confinement, and lightness versus heaviness.

JOHN VINCLER

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CHELSEA

## Joe Bradley: Bhoga Marga

Through April 30 at Petzel, 456 West 18th Street, Manhattan; 212-680-9467, [petzel.com](http://petzel.com).



“Outline,” 2022, in the show “Joe Bradley: Bhoga Marga” at Petzel Gallery. “His new paintings are strong-colored works that balance gracefully between representation and abstraction,” our critic says. Joe Bradley and Petzel

Joe Bradley has been having solo shows in New York galleries since 2003. But his latest at Petzel — his first in six years — feels like the first show of the rest of his career.

His new paintings are strong-colored works that balance gracefully between representation and abstraction. They may be the most conventional of Bradley’s career,

but they are also the most engaging.

Bradley devoted the first decade of his CV to what might be called ironic, anti-painting paintings. They were post-conceptual and challenging: You had to decide if they qualified as paintings. The best of these bare-minimum works was a series of enormous raw canvases that boasted a single motif outlined in black oil crayon. While monumental, they had the intimacy of doodles and were drawn all at once without adjustments, which was impressive.

Then came a transitional phase during which Bradley started applying paint with a wide brush to dirty canvases whose footprints and paint drips were part of the composition. These were rough and beautifully scaled. But the play of intention against accident was familiar, from somewhere between Julian Schnabel and Abstract Expressionism.

**ROBERTA SMITH**

*Read full review [here](#).*

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LOWER EAST SIDE

## Joana Choumali

Through April 30. Sperone Westwater, 257 Bowery, Manhattan; 212-999-7337, [speronewestwater.com](http://speronewestwater.com).



Joana Choumali's "I Am Enough" (2022), mixed media. Joana Choumali and Sperone Westwater

Embroidering on reality, Joana Choumali takes color photographs in her native Ivory Coast, prints them on cotton canvas and embellishes them with stitching. Shocking-pink balloons, flowering-branch headpieces or silver lines that radiate like energy fields transform a windswept beach or a littered unpaved street into a fairyland.

A sequence of twelve embroidered iPhone photographs that she made of Grand-Bassam, a beach resort that was devastated by a terrorist attack in 2016, won the prestigious Prix Pictet three years later. Choumali titled the series "Ça va aller," a local expression that translates loosely as "It's gonna be all right."

Those pictures are included in "It Still Feels Like the Right Time," her first solo exhibition in this country. Most depict solitary pedestrians with a melancholy stillness that is complicated by the colorful handwork. The instantaneous snap of the picture-taking is



countered by the laborious meditative process of the stitching.

In a subsequent collection produced this year, “Alba’hian,” which in the Anyin language denotes the energy of dawn, Choumali works on a larger scale, portraying groups of people, sometimes in multipanel compositions. These photographs have been collaged to create theatrically flamboyant skies and larger-than-life figures. The tropical scenes are lush, with luxuriant vegetation, and the embroidery denser. They are covered with a delicate voile, as if shrouded by a humid mist.

In one, “I Am Enough” (2022), a sorceress juggles planets as she stands alongside a beach pier, conjuring the cosmic in the quotidian. It could be Choumali’s self-portrait.

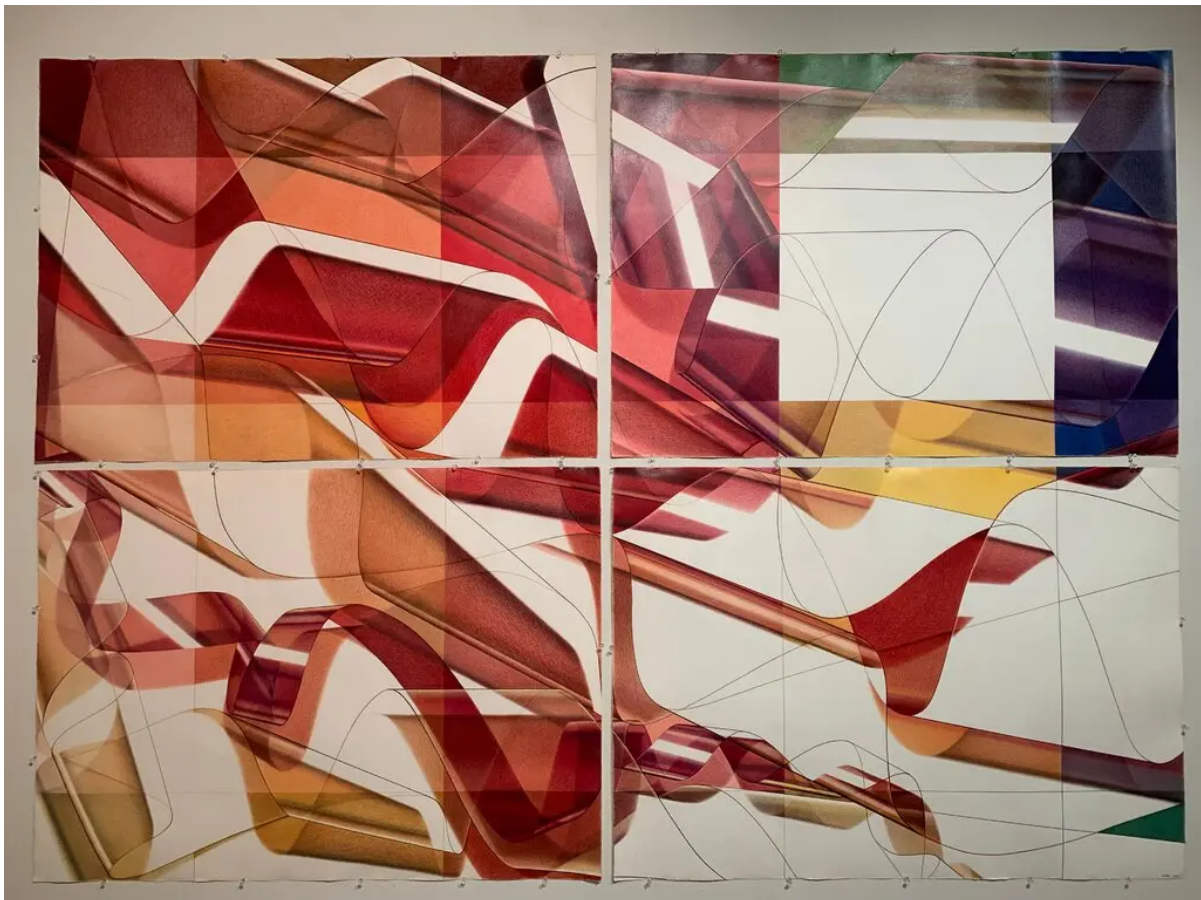
ARTHUR LUBOW

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CHELSEA

## Lula Mae Blocton

Through April 30. Skoto Gallery, 529 West 20th Street, Manhattan, 212-352-8058, skotogallery.com.



Lula Mae Blocton’s “SWPO-Shadows, Windows, Purple, Open,” 1990, colored pencil on rag



I encountered Lula Mae Blocton's art for the first time only three years ago in the traveling exhibition "Art After Stonewall, 1969-1989." In that febrile, figure-intensive show her 1975 abstract geometric painting "Summer Ease" was a meditative stopping point. The politics of the era were present but indirect: The colors were those of the rainbow flag, but tonally nuanced and applied to an off-center grid of rectangles. The work didn't directly read as gay or Black, or feminist, which may be one reason Skoto's tight survey of two decades of early work, from 1970-1980, curated by Barbara Stehle, is Blocton's first New York City solo since 1978.

It's a beauty. The early geometric oil paintings and wonderful colored pencil drawings, with their stroke-by-stroke textures and blurred contours, have the look of soft woven cloth. With the 1980s, their foursquare geometry splinters into diagonals in adjustable, multipanel compositions. Illusionistic space turns some of these paintings into galactic landscapes. And the interest in prismatic color intensifies: Light, optical and, one senses, metaphorical, becomes a primary subject.

Her work beyond the 1980s has been much influenced by African textile designs, as will no doubt be evident in future shows at Skoto, which is planning a career survey as a series of solo exhibitions shows. I look forward to seeing this visual narrative unfold and to being brought up-to-date on what's happening with this artist-illuminator, who is in her 70s, in the Now. *HOLLAND COTTER*

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CHELSEA

## Barkley L. Hendricks

Through April 30. Jack Shainman Gallery, 513 West 20th Street, Manhattan; 212-645-1701, [jackshainman.com](http://jackshainman.com).



Barkley L. Hendricks's "Father, Son, and..." (1969), oil and acrylic on canvas. Estate of Barkley L. Hendricks and Jack Shainman Gallery

The African American painter Barkley L. Hendricks (1945-2017) is best known for his portraits, but the sixteen Basketball Paintings now at Jack Shainman, made between 1966 and 1971, are just as exciting. (During lockdown, Shainman featured them in an online show.)

Some are straight-ahead depictions of hoops and backboards and balls. Others take the game's signature forms — the ball's circle, the arcs and right angles of a court's markings — and turn them into pure pattern.

The standard way to talk about such works is in terms of late '60s battles between abstraction and representation: They seem to hesitate between the two, as though Hendricks had yet to settle on his trademark figuration.

I prefer to read them metaphorically, less about issues of style as about the game of art, and the skills and positioning it takes to score in it. If art is like basketball, then painting becomes more verb than noun, more action than object. It's about a set of moves, and the rules that shape what counts as fair or foul — and who gets to play at all.

The Basketball Paintings stage a witty demonstration of all the ways there were to score points in their era, from the new hyper-realism to the latest in color-field art.

Hendricks was between college and graduate school when he made most of them, so we can think of him as still semipro but picturing life in the majors.

These brilliant paintings prove he was already there. *BLAKE GOPNIK*

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CHELSEA

## Maggi Hambling

Through April 30. Marlborough, 545 West 25th Street, Manhattan. 212-541 4900; [marlboroughnewyork.com](http://marlboroughnewyork.com).



Maggi Hambling's "Edge XIII," from 2021, in her show "Real Time" at Marlborough Gallery. Maggi Hambling and Marlborough

The British artist Maggi Hambling has painted churning seas, violent sprays and other roiling bodies of water for the last two decades, but the suite of pictures she made last year, emphatically rendered snow-capped peaks dissolving into glacial melt, on view in her current show, "Real Time," are sparer and sadder. Their calligraphic marks and

impressionistic application recall Chinese literati and Japanese nanga painting, but with reverence for the natural world displaced by rage.

Hambling's stuttering strokes seem to cascade like condensation, whorls of indigo and optic white weeping into marine and slicks of silver. In places the paint is caked onto the canvas in icing-thick impasto, elsewhere it's ghostly thin, so delicate as to seem to seep through from the back of the canvas — an elegy for the rapidly vanishing. The cool palette can feel soothing, until you remember you're looking at a cataclysm.

These are joined by another series of human crimes against nature: animals in captivity. Like Hambling's liquefying landscapes, these rattle between abstraction and figure, so that the defeated heap of a lion jolts into view as quickly as it fades away again, and the silhouette of a polar bear flickers as it's overwhelmed by a fluid blue-gray field. These are not happy paintings. Hambling depicts her creatures inching toward death or having already arrived there. They're also proxies for the rest of us, and the prisons of our own design. A dancing circus bear, its torqued face shifting between euphoria and agony, suggests there's more than one way to dissolve. *MAX LAKIN*

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CHINATOWN

## Morgan Bassichis

Through May 14. Bridget Donahue, 99 Bowery, 2nd floor, Manhattan. 646-896-1368; [bridgetdonahue.nyc](http://bridgetdonahue.nyc).





View of Morgan Bassichis's "Questions to Ask Beforehand" at Bridget Donahue. Morgan Bassichis and Bridget Donahue; Dario Lasagni

The comedic performer Morgan Bassichis is probably best known for shows that are a kind of queer, lefty, Jewish love child of cabaret and stand-up comedy. But the artist, who uses the pronouns they/them, has also made videos, albums and books, elements of which are featured in "Questions to Ask Beforehand," their first solo exhibition (accompanied by a few live performances).

It's a tricky transition. Bassichis's work turns so much on the energy of human interaction, I found the gallery a little lonely. But four videos provide good grounding. In one, filmed in a bathtub, Bassichis sings rousingly about how "you can do anything in the bathroom"; in the others, from a series called "Pitchy" (2020), the artist answers an interviewer's questions with coy, chanted improvisations, repeating phrases until they gain an incantatory power. Bassichis is masterly at creating a feeling that's simultaneously conspiratorial and uncomfortable, like when someone tells a joke, and you're not sure you totally get it, but you laugh anyway.

Bassichis's persona is a fool who's actually a wise man (I think). In the titular installation, made with DonChristian Jones, a set of pamphlets lists questions to ponder in advance of different situations. One for joining an organization reads, "Are we sure history will look

favorably on us?” along with, “I forget, we *are* or we are *not* anarchists?”

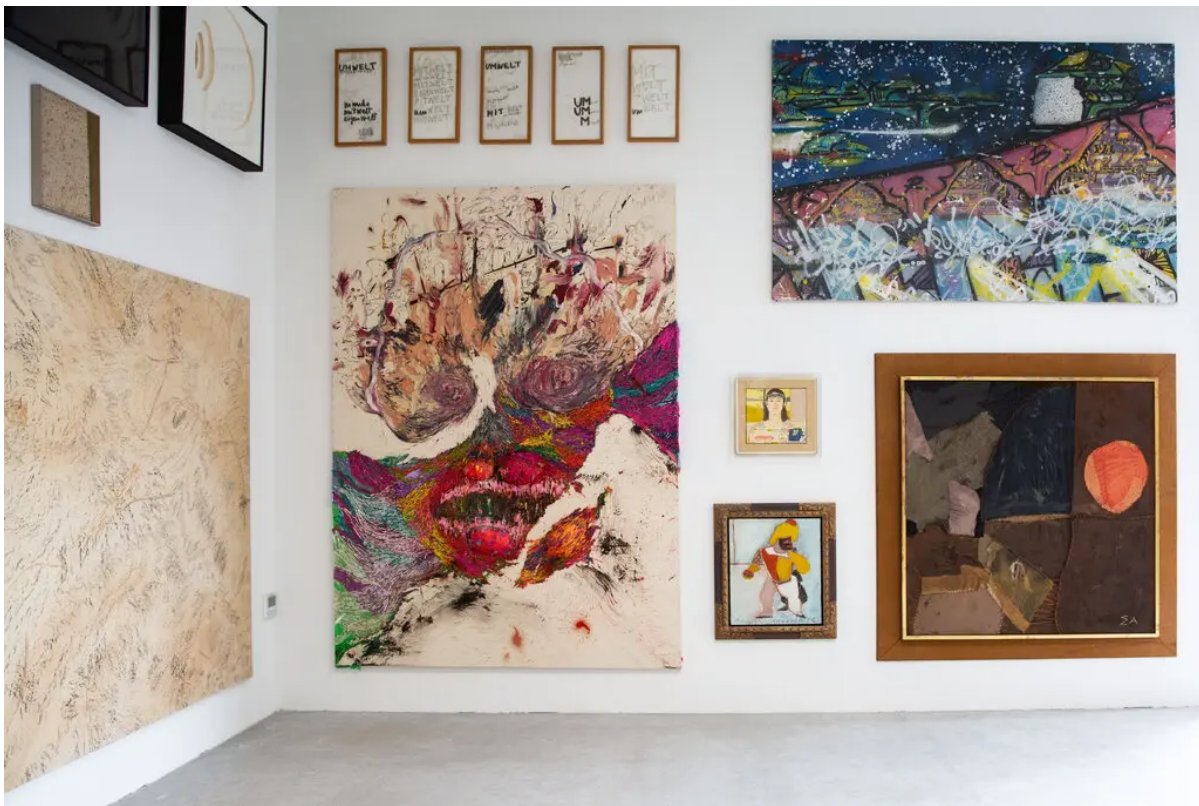
I relate to the anxiety that drives such inquiries, and I admire Bassichis’s ability to turn it into art. What I get from their work, in addition to much-needed laughter, are ideas for how to critically, caringly and creatively approach the daunting world. *JILLIAN STEINHAUER*

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LOWER EAST SIDE

## Amalgamation: 10 Years of Shin Gallery

Through May 21 at Shin Gallery, 322 Grand Street, Manhattan. 212-375-1735; [shin-gallery.com](http://shin-gallery.com).



Shin Gallery in Manhattan. On the righthand wall, clockwise from top left: Mira Schendel's five monotypes, 1964; Kool Koor's "Untitled," circa 1989; Stephen Antonakos's "Sun Over Field," 1956; John D. Graham's "Harlequin," 1941; Alex Katz's "Ada With Head Band and Lips," circa 1968; and Hyon Gyon's "Fire in My Brain," 2015. Estate of Mira Schendel; Shin Gallery; Stephen Antonakos; Shin Gallery; Alex Katz/VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY; Shin Collection

You may wonder whether you’ve found a curiosities shop upon entering Shin Gallery’s 10-year anniversary exhibition. The show charts the gallery’s history in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and its namesake collector’s wild but slyly judicious tendencies, with nearly

100 items filling three rooms.

The show, fittingly titled “Amalgamation,” creates groupings at times brilliantly intuitive, like a drawing of a reclining onanistic female figure by Egon Schiele paired with a monoprint on a pillow by Tracey Emin (who exhibited her own disheveled bed in 1999 at the Tate in London). Elsewhere, the connections are delightfully weird, as in Henry Moore’s sketch of huddled biomorphic fragments, “Ideas for Wood Sculpture” (1932), sandwiched between James Castle’s childlike composition of a figure in front of a house and the French master François Boucher’s “Death of Meleager” (ca. 1720), in black chalk, ink and wash on cream paper. A baby bird drawing by Bill Traylor (1939) in pencil on cardboard appears to be fleeing the scene, as the drawings that occupy the first room are hung mostly frame to frame, putting masters besides outsiders. *JOHN VINCLER*

*Read full review here.*

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UPPER EAST SIDE

## ‘Pompeii in Color: The Life of Roman Painting’

Through May 29. Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, 15 East 84th Street, Manhattan. 212-992-7800; [isaw.nyu.edu](http://isaw.nyu.edu).





“Hercules and Omphale,” date first century CE, part of the 35 frescoes on loan from the National Archaeological Museum of Naples. National Archaeological Museum of Naples

This unusual loan of Pompeian frescoes from the National Archaeological Museum, Naples, Italy — arranged by the curator Clare Fitzgerald — is a rare chance to catch ancient Roman visual culture mid-stride.

Consider one six-and-a-half-foot-tall portrait of Hercules and Omphale — a queen who briefly enslaved the famous demigod. At first, its colorful but faded surfaces give you the impression of a sketch waiting for final details, though you can still appreciate the cunning composition. Drunken Hercules, leaning on a helper, turns one way and severe Omphale the other, yet they’re both head-on to the viewer, with a discreet crowd of extras tucked neatly behind their shoulders. A delicate balance of pinks and blues makes the picture vivid but not aggressive — perfect dining room décor.

But enough detail does survive not only to make the picture engaging, but also to make its mythical scene seem less like a religious archetype than a homey fairy tale. Hercules,



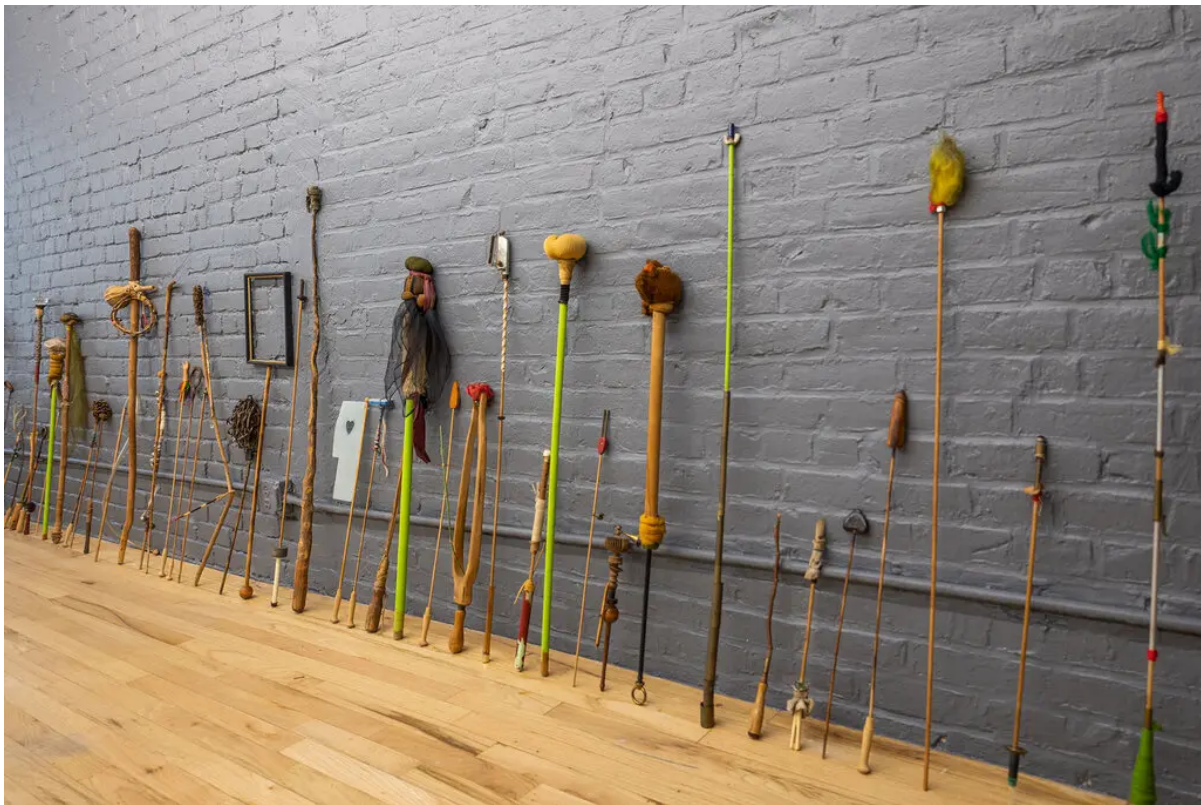
the strongest man in the world, is blind drunk and staggering — you can see it from the way his legs turn and his eyes gape open — and he’s put on Omphale’s clothes. Omphale’s look is harder to parse. Is it contempt? Indignation? Either way, she’s clearly unamused. Two attendants turn to each other, one with a gossipy “can you believe this?” look, the other praying; an old man supporting Hercules is too worried about keeping him upright to spare a thought for disapproval. *WILL HEINRICH*

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BROOKLYN

## Jerry Hunt

Through June 11. Blank Forms, 468 Grand Avenue, Brooklyn. 347-916-0833; [blankforms.org](http://blankforms.org).



Various objects by Jerry Hunt and David McManaway, ca. 1980s. Marissa Alper

Jerry Hunt (1943-93) was a lot of things: a “virtuoso talker,” according to a new book devoted to the artist; a modern-day shaman who was a cross between a 1950s insurance salesman and the Beat writer William S. Burroughs; and an electronic music pioneer who lived in Texas but was better known in Europe. “Transmissions From the Pleroma” at Blank Forms examines Hunt’s career, showcasing his videos, photographs of his outré performances, handwritten musical scores and enigmatic objects such as his totem-like

“wands,” made with the assemblage artist David McManaway.

Born in Waco, Texas, Hunt was trained as a classical pianist and plied his craft everywhere, from jazz clubs to strip clubs. However, he once said, “I might have given up on music altogether if it hadn’t been for John Cage and the new emphasis he gave to communication.” Cage’s experimental influence can be felt everywhere in Hunt’s work, from videos in which he carries on absurd conversations to musical scores that look more like abstract drawings. The curious “wands,” often used in performances, cobble together sticks, old gloves and hardware parts.

One deadpan video is titled “How to Kill Yourself Using the Inhalation of Carbon Monoxide Gas” (1993). The work calls to mind the famous existentially tinged quote by the French writer Albert Camus: “There is only one really serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide.” Hunt’s video adds to that proposition a consideration of everyone else who might be affected by that decision. Suicide, after all, as he stresses, involves more than the individual performer. *MARTHA SCHWENDENER*