



EYEGAYS, ECSTATIC PAINTING, AND A GLORIOUS MESS: ANDREW RUSSETH ON THE YEAR IN, AND BEYOND, THE GALLERIES

BY *Andrew Russeth* POSTED 12/30/14



The Bed-Stuy Love Affair RV, parked outside Tomorrow Gallery on New York's Lower East Side.

PHOTOS BY ARTNEWS, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

It is not an easy time to be making and showing art in New York. Rents—for apartments, for studios, and for galleries, in seemingly every neighborhood—are climbing fast, too many jobs are tenuous, and ultra-blue-chip dealers are expanding their often-deadening influence. And yet, against long odds, there were displays of energy and nerve from artists and galleries, young and old, big and small, all over the place in 2014.

One of the most thrilling events of the year occurred just two weeks ago: the triumphant arrival in front of the Lower East Side's new Tomorrow Gallery of a battle ax of an RV that is the home and gallery (called Bed-Stuy Love Affair) of artist **Jared Madere**. Painted black, with bulky metal gates chained to its windows, it does not look remotely roadworthy, but Madere made it all the way from New York to Miami and back in it, after gutting its interior and loading it with art (and a bed). At

Tomorrow and in the RV he has organized, with L.A.'s **Bobby Jesus**, a glorious mess of a show stocked with young artists, among them **Jeffrey Joyal**, **Bradley Kronz**, and **Rochelle Goldberg**, who installed an explosive ceramic sculpture in the RV's toilet.



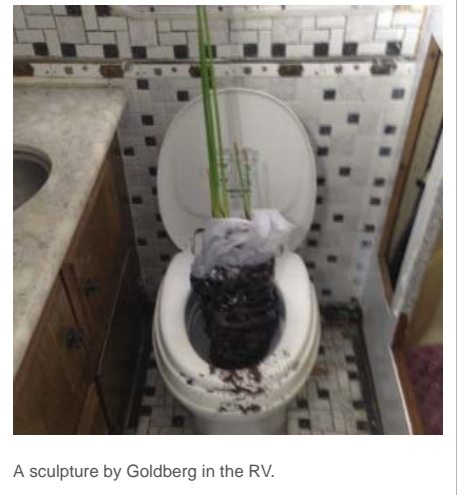
Work by Samara Golden at Hot House, May 9–11, 2014.
COURTESY BLACK ROCK WHITE ROCK

That kind of renegade, DIY approach is rare in today's super-professionalized art industry, but it *is* out there, and 2014 saw some other fine examples. Take, for instance, the **Hot House** show that Brooklyn's **Know More Games** gallery, **Black Rock White Rock**, and Los Angeles's **Night Gallery** organized in a gently dilapidated building in East Harlem during Frieze New York in May. It was packed with exciting work by the likes of **Samara Golden**, **Sam Anderson**, and **Mira Dancy**. There are also

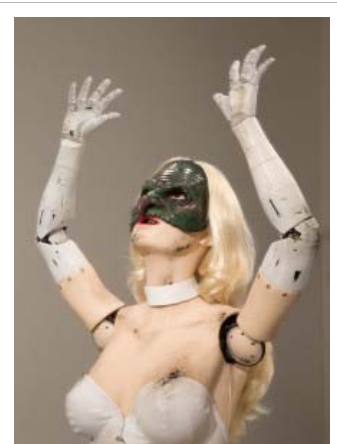
all the podcasts and radio stations that have popped up recently, like artist **Anicka Yi**'s **Lonely Samurai** and **Soulseek**, another KNG project. (Disclosure: I appeared on both. Also, Travis Diehl has a nice bicoastal look at the turn toward radio, [on Artforum's website](#).)

These projects weren't just about art programming. They also served as venues for communities to coalesce and debates to take place. A case in point: the fascinating, sometimes-contentious back-and-forth on Soulseek between a team of questioners and **Jordan Wolfson**, whose show at David Zwirner in March, with its grimy animatronic singer, was as ingenious as it was discomfiting. This much is clear: Wolfson is going to terrorize us all for decades to come.

The nadir of 2014, as almost everyone seems to agree (with the exception of a few vested parties), was the unending proliferation of wan abstraction, or zombie formalism, as it's been called. But don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. Some of the year's best shows in New York were rich with abstract paintings. **Dona Nelson** showed captivating melees of paint and string on freestanding canvas and cheesecloth [at Thomas Erben](#), and was one of the highlights of a lackluster **Whitney Biennial**. **Heather Guertin** couched quiet, clever narratives—about art history, painting, and comedy—in buoyant abstractions [at Interstate](#) and **Brennan & Griffin**. **Sarah Crowner**'s sewn-together numbers got even punchier, [at Nichelle Beauchene](#); her upcoming debut at Casey Kaplan will be one of next year's most closely watched shows in the city. [At Showroom in Gowanus](#), **Lauren Luloff** honed her toothsome, airy collages of fabric and paint—deceptively breezy, they're undergirded with darkness. Uptown, [at Tilton Gallery](#), the ecstatic paintings of Abstract-Expressionist **Ed Clark**, who is still delivering the goods at 88, were elegantly displayed in a show organized by **David Hammons**, who himself delivered a tour de force at **White Cube** in London.



A sculpture by Goldberg in the RV.



Detail of Wolfson's (*Female Figure*), 2014.

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DAVID ZWIRNER



Installation view of paintings by Dave Miko and Ned Vena at Albus Greenspon.

COURTESY ALBUS GREENSPON

While we're talking painting, it was also a strong year for the figurative variety, with [Albert York](#) and [Michel Majerus](#) getting the deluxe posthumous treatment at Matthew Marks, **Gina Beavers** pushing her meaty, taste-destroying élan even further at [Clifton Benevento](#), **Dave Miko** and **Ned Vena** showing large-scale, almost-too-good-to-be-true graffiti paintings at [Albus Greenspon](#), Miko offering up a sumptuous new batch of Immendorf-flavored creations at [Real Fine Arts](#), **Avery Singer** making a breakout appearance with incisive black-and-white computer-graphics-style paintings in the hardest of all venues, a booth at the [Frieze New York fair](#), **Ridley Howard** assembling a new suite of his eerie, sexy portraits at [Koenig & Clinton](#), and **Austin Lee** filling [Postmasters](#) with hazy, cartoony paintings that straddled the analog-digital divide effortlessly and with a nice helping of humor.



Melvin Edwards, *Homage to the Poet Leon Gontran Damas*, 1978–81.

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ALEXANDER GRAY ASSOCIATES

Other highlights from the year in New York, all across the spectrum: a jam-packed show of ferocious, sometimes-frightening metal assemblages from **Melvin Edwards** at [Alexander Gray Associates](#); **Nancy Grossman**'s take-no-prisoners, bondage-heavy assemblages at [Michael Rosenfeld](#); **Jory Rabinovitz**'s sculptures at [Martos](#), which crossbred Franz West and Claes Oldenburg with the U.S. Mint, everything **Darren Bader** did, at [Andrew Kreps](#), [Frieze London](#), and [Miami Basel](#) (how long can he keep his man-on-a-wire streak going?); the blowout group show that **Sam Gordon** organized this summer at [Andrew Edlin](#), **"Purple States,"** which paired outré-minded insiders and their self-taught favorites; **Matt Hoyt**'s latest sculptures at [Bureau](#), which have to be the most epic humbly-scaled artworks shown in this town in years; the jaw-droppingly inventive mid-1960s **Michelangelo Pistoletto** sculptures at [Luhring Augustine Bushwick](#); the latest intriguing turn in **Louise Lawler**'s work, evidenced in her show at [Metro Pictures](#), which was titled "NO DRONES" and had her again circling back to, and interrogating, her earlier images, showing them as blown-up drawings (drained of color and information, reduced to drone vision) that she printed as huge wall spreads; the bewitching techno magic lanterns that **Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho** showed at the new [47 Canal space](#), and the recreation of **Stockhausen**'s 1964 *Originale* happening at [the Kitchen](#), which had all sorts of artists (from Rachel Mason to Joan Jonas), doing their thing throughout the room, providing a microcosm of the frenetic energy that makes New York so overwhelming, and so great.

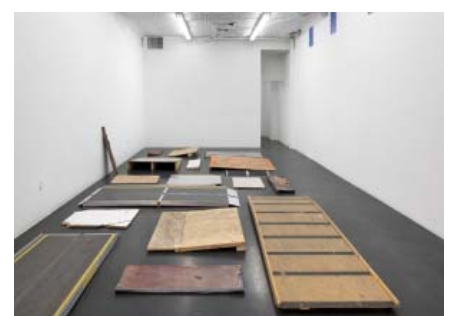


Installation view of "Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho: LEAK LIGHT TIME HEAT" at 47 Canal.

COURTESY 47 CANAL

All of those works have stuck with me, but my five absolute favorites of 2014 are:

5. **"Park McArthur: Ramps" at Essex Street:** Heartbreakingly concise, the show featured 20 handicap access ramps—from immaculate to battle worn—that the 30-year-old New York-based artist acquired from arts venues all around town. They are barometers of political commitment, readymades turned toward considered ends. Every time McArthur pops up in a show, she delivers a trenchant new work, and a new reason to be hopeful about the direction of art.
4. **"Nicholas Buffon: Hit the Road" at Freddy and Callicoon Fine Arts:** Who would have thought that piecing together miniature replicas of buildings, signs, and cars from bits of foamcore, paint, paper, and glue, then lovingly



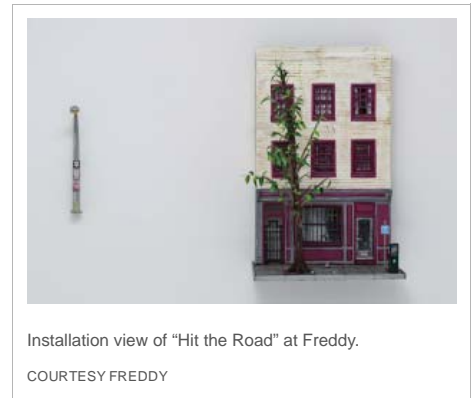
Installation view of McArthur's show at Essex Street.

COURTESY ESSEX STREET

painting them, would result in such marvelous artworks? In the hands of this 27-year-old New Yorker, the results are strangely moving—Proustian in their attentive regard for the minor details of a sidewalk scuff or the logo on a beer can. Stunning stuff.

3. **“Kerry James Marshall: Look See” at David Zwirner**

London: Kerry James Marshall, 60 next year, confirmed his status as one of America’s best living painters with this show of portraits, which were variously tender, raw, and uproarious, but always intimate. His subjects lazed on couches, basked in front of mirrors, and hammed it up for the camera, surrounded by thrumming, colorful patterns. Visiting the show, you felt lucky to be spending some time with them.



2. **“Geoffrey Farmer: Cut Nothing, Cut Parts, Cut the Whole, Cut the Order of Time” at Casey Kaplan and “Geoffrey Farmer: Let’s Make the Water Turn Black” at the Pérez Art Museum Miami:**

If one of the tasks of art right now is to wring a bit of poetry from the torrents of information and images that flow through contemporary society, few perform that arduous activity as elegantly and joyously as Geoffrey Farmer, who, despite his fame in Canada, remains relatively little known in the United States. (He had his first show in this country in 2011.) At Documenta 13, he delivered his masterpiece, a 124-foot-long display of some 16,000 pictures sliced from almost the entire history of *Life* mounted on wooden sticks—a sui generis history of the 20th century, its images, its art, and its people—and he has not let up since. At Casey Kaplan this winter, he showed a compendium of images of sculptures, similarly mounted and presented in the round. It was a teeming theater that encompassed thousands of years of human activity. References and rhymes accumulated the more time you spent with it. Down in Miami, at the Pérez, he went big, with a roomful of assemblages that bathed in colored lights, and that let out all sorts of comedic movements just when you were about to stop looking—as if they had minds of their own. It restored, with a child’s delight, the mystery one sometimes feels in objects, the strange lives we imagine they have when they’re just out of our reach. Outside of the room, a bit of text penned by Farmer summed up the vibe nicely: “Here, everything becomes melody or sculpture play.”



1. **Florine Stettheimer at Lenbachhaus in Munich:** This once-in-a-generation show united a choice selection of the early-20th-century artist’s raucous, witty paintings—from fantastical, fragile-looking bouquets (“eyegays,” she called them) to elaborate fêtes, with her upper-crust Manhattan family out in the country or with her artist friends, like Marcel Duchamp and Carl Van Vechten, down at the segregated beach in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Stettheimer’s confections—richly frosted in pinks and whites—conjure up, and invite elaborate fantasies about alternate modernisms and alternate histories of the past 100 years of art, ones focused on sociability and generosity and pleasure.

"Art of the City" is a weekly column by ARTnews co-executive editor Andrew Russeth.



Florine Stettheimer, *Ashbury Park South*, 1920.

COURTESY LENBACHHAUS

About Andrew Russeth

Co-Executive Editor of *ARTnews*

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