

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## BEST OF THE YEAR | ART

REMARKABLY  
MEMORABLE**CHRISTOPHER  
KNIGHT**  
ART CRITIC

Contemporary art and solo retrospectives again dominated the schedules of Southern California's art museums, punctuated by a few outstanding historical surveys. Here are 10 unusually memorable museum exhibitions, plus some honorable mentions, from the year now ending, arranged in chronological order of their openings. Four are still on view.

**"Allen Ruppersberg: Intellectual Property 1968-2018," UCLA Hammer Museum.** The deeply engaging, 50-year retrospective of L.A.-based Conceptual artist Allen Ruppersberg provided a sundry catalog of art's dilemmas, big and small — how to grapple with nature, technique, success, symbolism and more.

**"Charles White: A Retrospective," Los Angeles County Museum of Art.** A movie (in theaters now) about Civil War icon Harriet Tubman is certainly a good idea but what's better than "General Moses," the monumental 1965 drawing of the Union Army spy and Underground Railroad heroine as an immovable mountain and ancestral muse in the bracing survey of work by Charles White?

**"Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power, 1963-1983," The Broad.** As a movement launched in the 1960s, black American art has languished in an institutional blind spot. Thanks go to a British art museum, London's Tate Modern, for telling a distinctly American story in

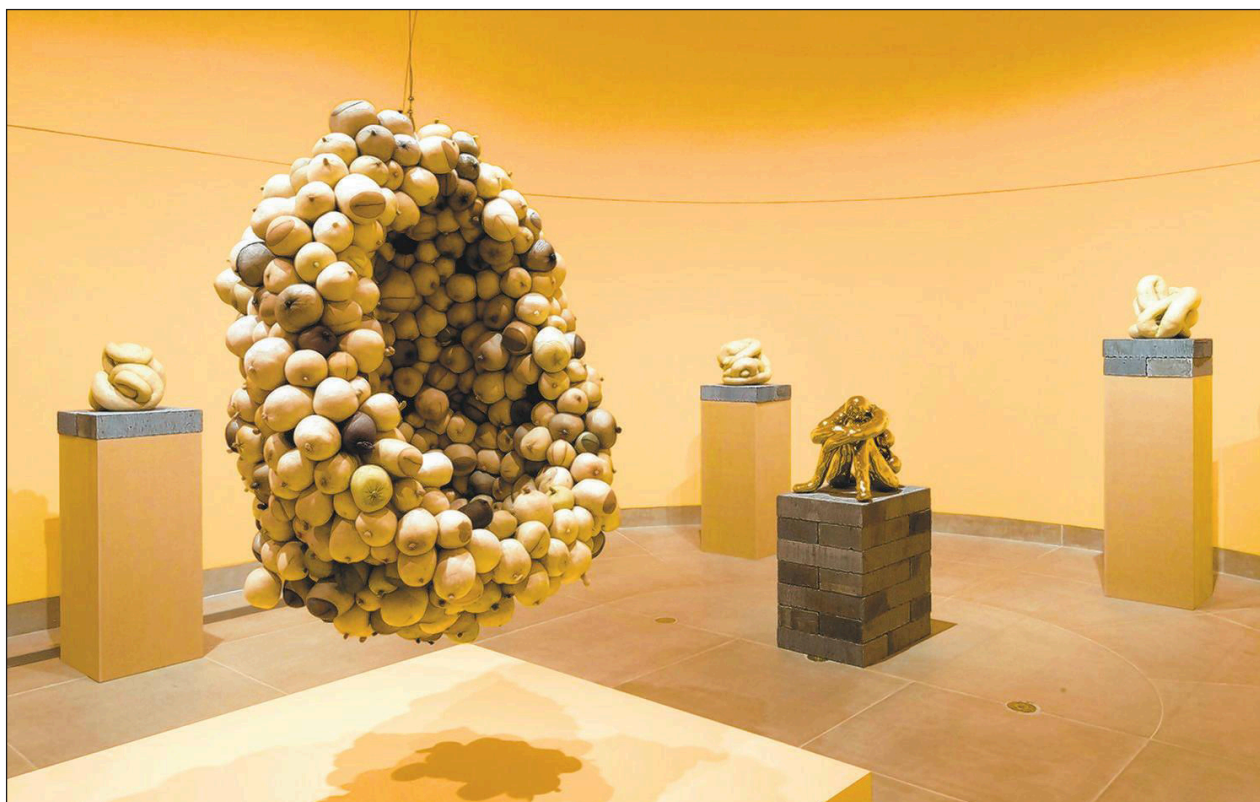
145 paintings, sculptures, drawings, photographs and prints by more than 60 artists.

**"Art and Empire: The Golden Age of Spain," San Diego Museum of Art.** This first full survey of mostly 17th century religious and secular art from Spain's European, American and Asian territories, crowned by three incisively chosen paintings by Diego Rodriguez de Silva Velázquez, was a marvelous introduction to a vast topic that has often been examined only piecemeal.

**"Buried by Vesuvius: The Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum," Getty Villa.** Thirty-four sculptures plus fresco fragments excavated from the ruins of a famous volcanic eruption outside Naples, Italy, in AD 79 found temporary refuge in the Getty Villa — a contemporary approximation of the ancient seaside house that held those very objects on the fateful day when the lava poured in.

**"Sarah Lucas: Au Naturel," UCLA Hammer Museum.** British artist Sarah Lucas is a burlesque maker of double-entendre objects that mow down stereotypes, often around art and sexuality, while often glancing off the inescapable fact of death.

**"Lari Pittman: Declaration of Independence," UCLA Hammer Museum.** Lari Pittman's labor-intensive paintings of complex states of agitated being emerged into prominence just as many other artists moved toward outsourced fabrication or ateliers with legions of studio assist-



JEFF MCLANE

**INSTALLATION** view of "Sarah Lucas: Au Naturel" at the Hammer shows her double-entendre objects.



FRANCINE ORR Los Angeles Times

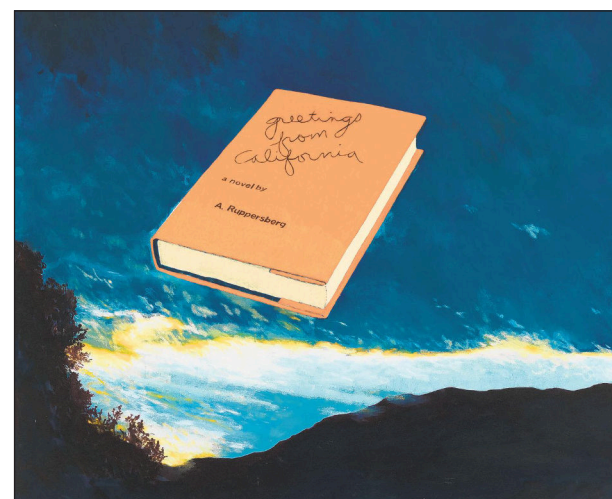
**BENNY** Andrews' "Did the Bear Sit Under a Tree?" (1969) was part of "Soul of a Nation" at the Broad.

ants. His hard work is on staggering display in 141 often over-the-top pictures. (Ends Jan. 5)

**"Manet and Modern Beauty," J. Paul Getty Museum.** In the lush paintings that Édouard Manet (1832-1883) made at the end of his too-short life, the brilliant French artist employed conceptions of femininity as a powerful

modern template for art. (Ends Jan. 12)

**"With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art, 1972-1985," Museum of Contemporary Art.** Long the Rodney Dangerfield of American art, Pattern and Decoration of the 1970s finally gets the respect it deserves as a catalyst for so much of what we take



UCLA Hammer Museum / Whitney Museum of American Art

**ALLEN** Ruppersberg's "Greetings From California" (detail) was in the Hammer's 50-year retrospective.

for granted in art being made today. (Ends May 11)

**"No Wrong Holes: Thirty 30 Years of Nayland Blake," Institute of Contemporary Art.** Power dynamics are the disconcerting subject of Nayland Blake's sculptures, videos and drawings, and the formidable forces at work include the power of aesthetics. (Ends Jan. 26)

**Honorable mentions**

Sally Mann, Jacopo Pontormo and "Book of Beasts" at the Getty; Tsurya Kokei at USC Pacific Asia Museum; Michael Rakowitz at REDCAT; Titian's "Portrait of a Lady in White" at Norton Simon; Shirin Neshat at the Broad; and Julie Mehretu at LACMA.