

21 Art Exhibitions to View in N.Y.C. This Weekend

Oct. 18, 2018

Our guide to new art shows and some that will be closing soon.

‘CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI SCULPTURE: THE FILMS’ at the Museum of Modern Art (through Feb. 18). This show is built around works by the Romanian modernist (1876-1957) that have been longtime highlights of the museum’s own collection. But in 2018, can Brancusi still release our inner poet? The answer may lie in paying less attention to the sculptures themselves and more to Brancusi’s little-known and quite amazing films, projected at the entrance to the gallery throughout the duration of the exhibition. MoMA borrowed the series of video clips from the Pompidou Center in Paris. They give the feeling that Brancusi was less interested in making fancy museum objects than in putting new kinds of almost-living things into the world and convey the vital energy his sculptures were meant to capture. (Blake Gopnik)

212-708-9400, moma.org

‘CHAGALL, LISSITZKY, MALEVICH: THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE IN VITEBSK, 1918-1922’ at the Jewish Museum (through Jan. 6). This crisp and enlightening exhibition, slimmed but not diminished from its initial outing at Paris’s Centre Pompidou, restages the instruction, debates and utopian dreaming at the most progressive art school in revolutionary Russia. Marc Chagall encouraged stylistic diversity at the short-lived People’s Art School in his native Vitebsk (today in the republic of Belarus), and while his dreamlike paintings of smiling workers and flying goats had their defenders, the students came to favor the abstract dynamism of two other professors: Kazimir Malevich and El Lissitzky, whose black and red squares offered a radical new vision for a new society. Both the romantics and the iconoclasts would eventually fall out of favor in the Soviet Union, and the People’s Art School would close in just a few years — but this exhibition captures the glorious conviction, too rare today, that art must serve the people. (Jason Farago)

212-423-3200, thejewishmuseum.org

‘MARY CORSE’ at Dia:Beacon in Beacon, N.Y., and **‘MARY CORSE: A SURVEY IN LIGHT’** at the Whitney Museum of American Art (through Nov. 25). Light, and specifically the radiant light of Los Angeles, shaped Corse’s career. She became interested not just in representing light, but also in making objects that emitted or reflected it. This duo of shows features her light boxes — or “light paintings” — made with argon gas and Tesla coils, as well as her paintings on canvas that include glass microspheres, like those used in the lines that divide highway lanes. Both shows are overdue representations for Corse, who was an early member of the loosely defined Light and Space movement of the 1960s and ’70s in California. (Martha Schwendener)

212-570-3600, whitney.org

‘CROWNS OF THE VAJRA MASTERS: RITUAL ART OF NEPAL’ at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (through Dec. 16). Up a narrow staircase, above the Met’s galleries of South and Southeast Asian art, are three small rooms of art from the Himalayas. The space, a bit like a treehouse, is a capsule of spiritual energy, which is especially potent these days thanks to this exhibition. The crowns of the title look like antique versions of astronaut headgear: gilded copper helmets, studded with gems, encrusted with repoussé plaques and topped by five-pronged antennas — the vajra, or thunderbolt of wisdom. Such crowns were

believed to turn their wearers into perfected beings who are willing and able to bestow blessings on the world. This show is the first to focus on these crowns, and it does so with a wealth of compressed historical information, as well as several resplendent related sculptures and paintings from Nepal and Tibet. But it's the crowns themselves, the real ones, the wisdom generators, set in mandala formation in the center of the gallery, that are the fascinators. (Holland Cotter)

212-535-7710, metmuseum.org

'DOWN THESE MEAN STREETS: COMMUNITY AND PLACE IN URBAN PHOTOGRAPHY' at El Museo del Barrio (through Jan. 6). This show's title comes from the 1967 autobiography of the New York writer Piri Thomas, a community organizer of Puerto Rican and Cuban descent who grew up in what was then called Spanish Harlem. Five of the show's photographers — Frank Espada (1930-2014), Perla de Leon, Hiram Maristany, Winston Vargas and Camilo Jose Vergara — took as their beat that neighborhood, or Latino sections of Washington Heights, the South Bronx and Brownsville, Brooklyn. Others were working in Los Angeles. The pictures are a blend of documentary and portraiture. They see what's wrong in the world they record — the poverty, the crowding — but also the creativity encouraged by having to make do, and the warmth generated by bodies living in affectionate proximity. (Cotter)

212-831-7272, elmuseo.org

'EMPRESSES OF CHINA'S FORBIDDEN CITY' at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass. (through Feb. 10). Every emperor of the Qing dynasty had dozens of wives, concubines and serving girls, but only one of them could hold the title of empress. The lives of women at the late imperial court is the subject of this lavish and learned exhibition, which plots the fortunes of these consorts through their bogglingly intricate silk gowns, hairpins detailed with peacock feathers, and killer platform boots. (The Qing elite were Manchus; women did not bind their feet.) Many empresses' lives are lost to history; some, like the Dowager Empress Cixi, became icons in their own right. Most of the 200-odd dresses, jewels, religious artifacts and scroll paintings here are on rare loan from the Palace Museum in Beijing — you will not have a chance to see these again without a trip to the People's Republic. (Farago)

978-745-9500, pem.org

'THE FUTURE' at the Rubin Museum of Art (through Jan. 7). It flies and flows and creeps. You measure it, spend it, waste it. It's on your side, or it's not. We're talking about time, and so is the Rubin. It is devoting its entire 2018 season and all its spaces to time as a theme, with an accent on the future. There's a fine historical show devoted to the Second Buddha, Padmasambhava ("lotus born"), subtitled "Master of Time," and another, called "A Lost Future," that centers on a wonderful feature-length film by the London-based Otolith Group about a still-active, utopian-minded university founded almost a century ago by the poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore in West Bengal. And the Brooklyn-based artist Chitra Ganesh contributes a suite of bold large-scale drawings that weave references to South Asian religions, Indian pop comics and 21st-century feminism into a genre sometimes called Indo-Futurism. (Cotter)

212-620-5000, rubinmuseum.org

'THE JIM HENSON EXHIBITION' at the Museum of the Moving Image. The rainbow connection has been established in Astoria, Queens, where this museum has opened a new permanent wing devoted to the career of America's great puppeteer, who was born in Mississippi in 1936 and died, too young, in 1990. Henson began presenting the short TV program "Sam and Friends" before he was out of his teens; one of its characters, the soft-faced Kermit, was fashioned from his mother's old coat and would not mature into a frog for more than a decade. The influence of early variety television, with its succession of skits and songs, runs through "Sesame Street" and "The Muppet Show," though Henson also spent the late 1960s crafting peace-

and-love documentaries and prototyping a psychedelic nightclub. Young visitors will delight in seeing Big Bird, Elmo, Miss Piggy and the Swedish Chef; adults can dig deep into sketches and storyboards and rediscover some old friends. (Farago)

718-784-0077, movingimage.us

‘BODYS ISEK KINGELEZ: CITY DREAMS’ at the Museum of Modern Art (through Jan. 1). The first comprehensive survey of the Congolese artist is a euphoric exhibition as utopian wonderland, featuring his fantasy architectural models and cities — works strong in color, eccentric in shape, loaded with enthralling details and futuristic aura. Kingelez (1948-2015) was convinced that the world had never seen a vision like his, and this beautifully designed show bears him out. (Roberta Smith)

212-708-9400, moma.org

‘THE LONG RUN’ at the Museum of Modern Art (through Nov. 4). The museum upends its cherished Modern narrative of ceaseless progress by mostly young (white) men. Instead we see works by artists 45 and older who have just kept on keeping on, regardless of attention or reward, sometimes saving the best for last. Art here is an older person’s game, a pursuit of a deepening personal vision over innovation. Winding through 17 galleries, the installation is alternatively visually or thematically acute and altogether inspiring. (Smith)

212-708-9400, moma.org

LOWER EAST SIDE ART WEEK at various locations (through Oct. 21). Navigating the world of art galleries can seem daunting, but through Sunday, over 20 in Lower Manhattan will ease any misgivings by opening their doors extra wide. This inaugural event is designed to introduce visitors not only to the galleries themselves, but also to the artists and curators behind them, through panel discussions, artist talks and tours. The theme focuses on women, and the diversity and quality of their work on display here amplifies the notion that if you haven’t been paying attention to female artists, you should. The highlights include the painter Amy Hill at Front Room, the painter Coady Brown at 1969 Gallery and the interdisciplinary artist Maria Lai and the sculptor Jukhe Kwon at Ierimonti Gallery. (Peter Libbey)

lesartweek.com

‘LILIANA PORTER: OTHER SITUATIONS’ at El Museo del Barrio (through Jan. 27). This exquisite survey of 35 objects, installations and video by this Argentinian-born American artist covers nearly half a century, but feels unanchored by time and gravity. In pieces from the early 1970s, Porter adds spare pencil lines to a photographs of her own face as if to challenge optical perception: Which is more real, the artist or the artist’s mark? Later, she began assembling and photographing groups of toys and figurines found in flea markets and antique shops to tease out political puzzles. And despite a witty use of miniaturist scale, cruelty and loss run through the work. In the 2009 video “Matinee,” tabletop statuettes live tragic lives: A ceramic child is suddenly beheaded by a hammer. A new theater piece, “Them,” directed by Porter and Ana Tiscornia, with music by Sylvia Meyer, will be performed at the Kitchen on Oct. 25 and 26. (Cotter)

212-831-7272, elmuseo.org

‘THE PROGRESSIVE REVOLUTION: MODERN ART FOR A NEW INDIA’ at Asia Society (through Jan. 20). The first show in the United States in decades devoted to postwar Indian painting continues a welcome, belated effort in Western museums to globalize art history after 1945. The Progressive Artists’ Group, founded in Bombay (now Mumbai) in the afterglow of independence, sought a new painterly language for a new India, making use of hot color and melding folk traditions with high art. These painters were Hindus, Muslims and Catholics, and they drew freely from Picasso and Klee, Rajasthani architecture and Zen ink

painting, in their efforts to forge an art for a secular, pluralist republic. Looking at them 70 years on, as India joins so many other countries taking a nativist turn, they offer a lovely, regret-tinged view of a lost horizon. (Farago)

212-288-6400, asiasociety.org/new-york

THE LISTINGS

It's a big city and there's lots to do. See picks chosen by Times editors and critics for [theater](#), [pop & rock music](#), [classical music](#), [comedy](#), [dance](#), [movies](#), [art](#) and [events for children](#).

'SCENES FROM THE COLLECTION' at the Jewish Museum. After a surgical renovation to its grand pile on Fifth Avenue, the Jewish Museum has reopened its third-floor galleries with a rethought, refreshed display of its permanent collection, which intermingles 4,000 years of Judaica with modern and contemporary art by Jews and gentiles alike — Mark Rothko, Lee Krasner, Nan Goldin, Cindy Sherman and the excellent young Nigerian draftsman Ruby Onyinyechi Amanze. The works are shown in a nimble, nonchronological suite of galleries, and some of its century-spanning juxtapositions are bracing; others feel reductive, even dilettantish. But always, the Jewish Museum conceives of art and religion as interlocking elements of a story of civilization, commendably open to new influences and new interpretations. (Farago)

212-423-3200, thejewishmuseum.org

'SOUL OF A NATION: ART IN THE AGE OF BLACK POWER' at the Brooklyn Museum (through Feb. 3). It will be a happy day when racial harmony rules in the land. But that day's not arriving any time soon. Who could have guessed in the 1960s when civil rights became law, that a new century would bring white supremacy tiki-torching out of the closet and turn the idea that black lives matter, so beyond obvious, into a battle cry? Actually, African-Americans were able to see such things coming. No citizens know the national narrative, and its implacable racism, better. And no artists have responded to that history-that-won't-go-away more powerfully than black artists have. More than 60 of them appear in this big, beautiful, passionate show of art that functioned as seismic detector, political persuader and defensive weapon. (Cotter)

718-638-8000, brooklynmuseum.org

'TOWARD A CONCRETE UTOPIA: ARCHITECTURE IN YUGOSLAVIA, 1948-1980' at the Museum of Modern Art (through Jan. 13). This nimble, continuously surprising show tells one of the most underappreciated stories of postwar architecture: the rise of avant-garde government buildings, pie-in-the-sky apartment blocks, mod beachfront resorts and even whole new cities in the southeast corner of Europe. Tito's Yugoslavia rejected both Stalinism and liberal democracy, and its neither-nor political position was reflected in architecture of stunning individuality, even as it embodied collective ambitions that Yugoslavs called the "social standard." From Slovenia, where elegant office buildings drew on the tradition of Viennese modernism, to Kosovo, whose dome-topped national library appears as a Buckminster Fuller fever dream, these impassioned buildings defy all our Cold War-vintage stereotypes of Eastern Europe. Sure, in places

the show dips too far into Socialist chic. But this is exactly how MoMA should be thinking as it rethinks its old narratives for its new home next year. (Farago)

212-708-9400, moma.org

‘CHARLES WHITE: A RETROSPECTIVE,’ at the Museum of Modern Art (through Jan. 13) and **‘TRUTH AND BEAUTY: CHARLES WHITE AND HIS CIRCLE,’** at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery (through Nov. 10). What a beautiful artist White was. Hand of an angel, eye of a sage. Although White, who died in 1979, is often mentioned today as a teacher and mentor of luminaries like David Hammons and Kerry James Marshall, his is no case of reflected glory. In this career survey, he shines, from a 1939 mural called “Five Great American Negroes” to his astonishing late masterpiece “Black Pope (Sandwich Board Man).” As a valuable addendum to the MoMA retrospective, a group show at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in Chelsea includes, along with fine pieces by White himself, an array of work by artists, old and young, whom he worked with or influenced. (Cotter)

212-708-9400, moma.org

212-247-0082, michaelrosenfeldart.com

Last Chance

‘HUMA BHABHA: WE COME IN PEACE’ at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (through Oct. 28). This spare and unsettling sculptural installation for the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden Commission includes two figures: one that is somewhat humanoid but with a ferocious mask-face and that visually dwarfs the jagged Manhattan skyline behind it, and another bowing in supplication or prayer, with long cartoonish human hands and a scraggly tail emerging from its shiny, black drapery. The title is a variant on the line an alien uttered to an anxious crowd in the 1951 science fiction movie “The Day the Earth Stood Still,” but it ripples with other associations: colonization, invasion, imperialism or missionaries and other foreigners whose intentions were not always innocent. The installation also feels like an extension of the complex, cross-cultural conversation going on downstairs, inside a museum packed with 5,000 years of art history. (Schwendener)

212-535-7710, metmuseum.org

‘GEORGIA O’KEEFFE: VISIONS OF HAWAII’ at the New York Botanical Garden (through Oct. 28). Finding out O’Keeffe had a Hawaiian period is kind of like finding out Brian Wilson had a desert period. But here it is: 17 eye-popping paradisaic paintings, produced in a nine-week visit in 1939. The paintings, and their almost psychedelic palette, are as fleshlike and physical as O’Keeffe’s New Mexican work is stripped and metaphysical. The other star of the show, fittingly, is Hawaii, and the garden has mounted a living display of the subjects depicted in the artwork. As much as they might look like the products of an artist’s imagination, the plants and flowers in the Enid Haupt Conservatory are boastfully real. (William L. Hamilton)

718-817-8700, nybg.org

‘THE SENSES: DESIGN BEYOND VISION’ at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (through Oct. 28). There’s a serious, timely big idea at this exhibition: As social media, smartphones and virtual reality make us ever more “ocularcentric,” we have taken leave of our nonvisual senses — and need to get back in touch, literally. Thus “The Senses” features multisensory adventures such as a portable-speaker-size contraption that emits odors, with titles like “Surfside” and “Einstein,” in timed combinations; hand-painted scratch-and-sniff wallpaper (think Warhol’s patterned cows but with cherries — cherry-scented, naturally); and a device that projects ultrasonic waves to simulate the touch and feel of virtual objects. The show also

presents commissions, videos, products and prototypes from more than 65 designers and teams, some of which address sensory disabilities like blindness and deafness, including Vibeat, which can be worn as a bracelet, brooch or necklace and translates music into vibrations. And if you bring the kids, they will likely bliss out stroking a wavy, fur-lined installation that makes music as you rub it. (Michael Kimmelman)
212-849-8400, cooperhewitt.org

‘THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS: STANLEY KUBRICK PHOTOGRAPHS’ at the Museum of the City of New York (through Oct. 28). This exhibition of the great director’s photography is essentially Kubrick before he became Kubrick. Starting in 1945, when he was 17 and living in the Bronx, he worked as a photographer for *Look* magazine, and the topics he explored are chestnuts so old that they smell a little moldy: lovers embracing on a park bench as their neighbors gaze ostentatiously elsewhere, patients anxiously awaiting their doctor’s appointments, boxing hopefuls in the ring, celebrities at home, pampered dogs in the city. It probably helped that Kubrick was just a kid, so instead of inducing yawns, these magazine perennials struck him as novelties, and he in turn brought something fresh to them. Photographs that emphasize the *mise-en-scène* could be movie stills: a shouting circus executive who takes up the right side of the foreground while aerialists rehearse in the middle distance, a boy climbing to a roof with the city tenements surrounding him, a subway car filled with sleeping passengers. Looking at these pictures, you want to know what comes next. (Arthur Lubow)

212-534-1672, mcny.org

A version of this article appears in print on Oct. 19, 2018, on Page C23 of the New York edition with the headline: Art