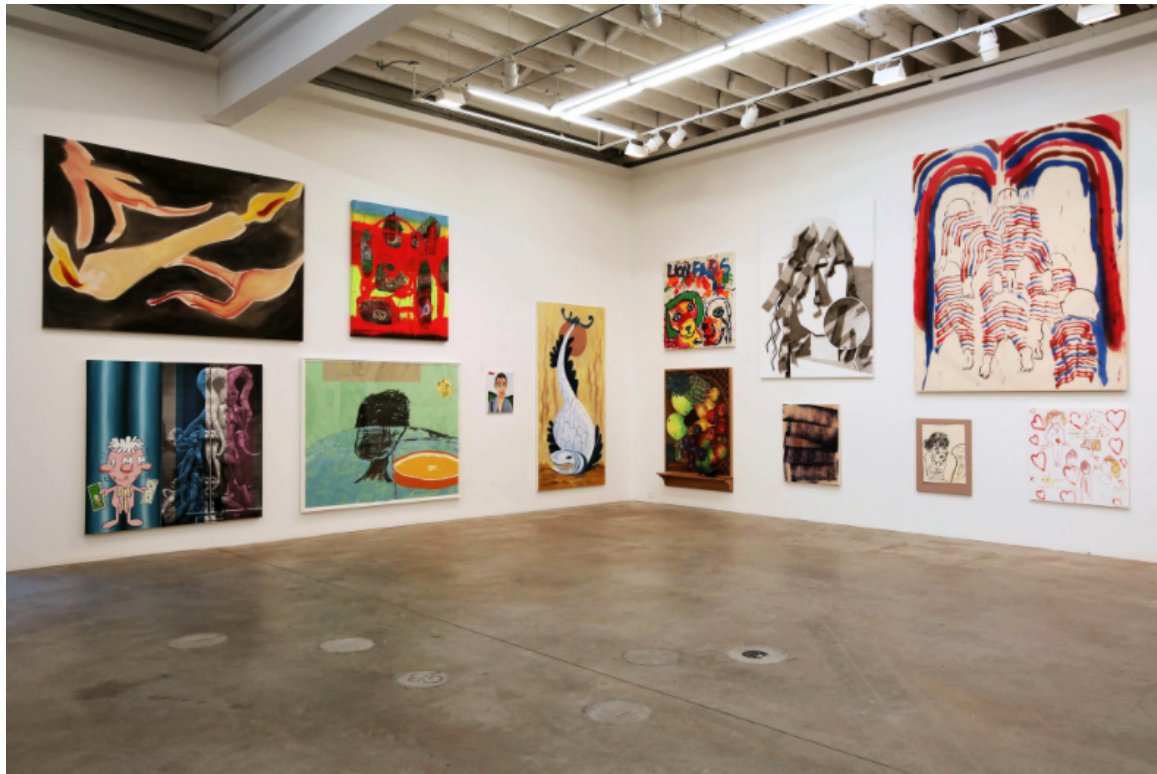


The New York Times

15 Group Shows Not to Miss

Art Exhibitions From Chelsea to the Lower East Side

By ROBERTA SMITH JAN. 29, 2015



A section of “Call and Response” at Gavin Brown’s Enterprise

Hiroko Masuike/ The New York Times

Group shows are a staple of the New York gallery scene, but right now they are not only more plentiful than usual, they are especially good. The 15 group shows reviewed or mentioned here form a welcome antidote to the deluge of monolithic, big-name, single-artist shows that have drawn most of the air in the art world over the last year. They take us to a place where money is not king and give us small snapshots from the gigantic disorderly sprawl that is contemporary art. These shows often represent dealers, their gallery directors or invited curators — usually artists or critics — thinking slightly or very outside the box, putting together disparate works often by younger or lesser-known artists, in new and illuminating combinations. The dizzying bounty here reveals not only the elastic nature of the words “art” and “artist” but also of the group-show format itself.

A STANDOUT

Forgoing some of the esoteric cliquishness found in its annual surveys of shows from New York museums and galleries, **White Columns**, the West Village alternative space, has mustered one of its most ecumenical, visually rewarding overviews in years. “Looking Back: The Ninth White Columns Annual” was assembled by the four members of Cleopatra’s, a Brooklyn-based exhibition space and

curatorial collective, and it is a great way to revisit shows you saw and glimpse others you missed. Works by Sigmar Polke, Maria Lassnig, Carrie Mae Weems and Charles Gaines allude to notable museum exhibitions. Certain gallery solo shows are acknowledged, as with Mike Cloud's "Removed Individual," a luscious star-shaped painting à la health food game board, and Robert Longo's bravura charcoal homage to Helen Frankenthaler's "Mountains and Sea." Some inclusions look stronger than they did the first time around, including Polly Apfelbaum's diaphanous dotted abstractions on white silk velvet. Peter Fend, Sam Anderson, Trevor Shimizu, Josh Kline and Greg Parma Smith also help commemorate 2014. (320 West 13th Street, through Feb. 21)

ART'S SPRAWL, IN ONE MEDIUM

"Call and Response" at **Gavin Brown's Enterprise** in the West Village is a boisterous affair: The efforts of 59 painters mostly from the United States and Europe hang cheek by jowl in one immense space.

The totality resembles a juried exhibition that still needs some jurying. Walk around, subtracting what you dislike in your mind's eye, and quite a bit worth considering will remain. Some high points are contributed by Katherine Bernhardt, Sean Landers, Bjarne Melgaard, Kerstin Brätsch, Henry Taylor and Brian Belott. Several artists raise their games strikingly, including Allison Katz, Silke Otto-Knapp, Tala Madani, Caragh Thuring and Ida Ekblad. And unfamiliar names impress, among them mix-masters like Raina Hamner (James Ensor meets Mad magazine) and Jamian Juliano-Villani (graffiti, action figures, Miró) as well as Avery Singer, who takes a more classical turn with a grisaille, geometricized face that looks computer-generated but isn't. (620 Greenwich Street, at Leroy Street, through Feb. 28)

SEEING THE NEW THROUGH THE OLD

One interesting group-show tactic is to use something by an older, preferably unappreciated artist to frame the work of younger ones. In "The Curve" at Wallspace, in Chelsea, this role is played by the small and exquisite black-and-white still-life photographs of Jan Groover (1943-2012). They bring out both the underlying still-life concerns and the formal purity of abstract paintings by Rebecca Morris and Monique Mouton, ceramic sculptures by Kristen Jensen and Zachary Leener, and Matt Paweski's complication of Minimalism in painted wood and metal. (619 West 27th Street, through Feb. 14)

At Clifton Benevento in SoHo, the artist Zak Kitnick has organized "The Gentle Way (Judo)" around his love of judo. (In Japanese the written word judo is composed of the characters for "gentle" and "way.") The older presence here is Roelof Louw, a South African artist who has lived in New York and London. He is represented by a stunning blast from the past: "Soul City (Pyramid of Oranges)" from 1967. Presaging relational aesthetics by some years, it consists of a large, gorgeous pyramid of oranges that are free for the taking, as with Félix González-Torres's piles of wrapped candy from the early 1990s.

Mr. Louw's simplicity and prescience and his effortless repurposing of everyday life echo throughout the show. A sculpture by Anicka Yi contemplates human isolation with enlarged versions of cellphone texts cast in slabs of foggy silicone that resemble nothing so much as dense air. Two wall pieces by Charles Harlan consist of found chunks of trees that have grown around bits of razor wire or chain-link fencing — vivid metaphors for acceptance. Meanwhile, drawings from 1990 by Edward and Nancy Kienholz dot the walls, announcing their titles and their original prices ("For \$788," "For \$455"). Nora Mapp, Kyle Thurman, Rochelle Goldberg and Mr. Kitnick himself make equally resonant contributions. (515 Broadway, near Spring Street, through Feb. 14)

A version of this review appears in print on January 30, 2015, on page C27 of the New York edition with the headline: 15 Group Shows Not to Miss.