



Ai Weiwei, *Arch*, 2017, galvanized mild steel and mirror-polished stainless steel. Washington Square Park, presented by Public Art Fund.

AROUND NEW YORK

While engineers in San Diego were erecting prototypes for President Trump's US/Mexico border wall, fences of all kinds started appearing in New York.

For a show called "Paradise Lost" at David Zwirner, Chris Ofili installed a room within a room made of floor-to-ceiling chain-link fencing. Inside hung

four new mostly abstract paintings, dense agglomerations of black-and-white triangles that one could never quite fully see while walking along the fence's perimeter. On the gallery walls, Ofili painted murals in faint grays—swirling spirits fenced into a tropical garden. It was a striking but frustrating display—no doubt Ofili's plan. Meanwhile, in Zwirner's other Chelsea building was a coun-

terpoint: Ruth Asawa's hanging wire sculptures from the 1950s to 1990—the stuff of fences rendered light as air.

The Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, working under the auspices of the Public Art Fund, put up his monumental fences in public spaces: a bright-orange birdcage at the southeast corner of Central Park, a mirrored arch in Washington Square Park, and an undulating mesh bench in



Ruth Asawa, *Untitled* (S.563, Hanging Six Lobed Form with Two Interior Spheres), 1956, hanging sculpture of enameled copper and iron wire, 87" x 18" x 18". David Zwirner.

Flushing Meadows Corona Park. If Ai's message is that public space is under ever-increasing restrictions, that's not exactly a revelation, but you have to hand it to him: these were attractive behemoths, speaking to the allure of control.

At 47 Canal, Amy Yao adorned chainlink fences with bright synthetic silk cut with a fencing pattern; they resembled a construc-

tion site at a distance and, up close, suggested different types of barriers—economic, cultural—superimposed.

Uptown, an untitled presentation at **Gagosian** included a 1992 Cady Noland fence in the company of a Roe Ethridge photo of a smiling policeman, various foreboding Adam McEwen works, and an Andy Warhol screenprint painting of

a tabloid cover from 1983 reporting on the deaths of marines in Lebanon. The gallery walls were painted black. The darkly glamorous display stood in brutal contrast to a concurrent exhibition in an upstairs gallery of **John Chamberlain's** wildly joyful masks, made in the 1990s from paint-blasted shards of sheet metal, and rarely on display.

A vinyl print of a chain-link fence appeared alone on one wall of **Kahlil Robert Irving's** stunning debut at **Callicoon Fine Arts**, which featured accretions of stoneware and porcelain forms that the artist had fired dozens of times, so that ceramic casts of soda bottles and plastic containers, extruded stoneware ropes, and lumps and shards of glazed and fired clay melted into each other in sumptuous profusion. Onto these assemblages, Irving collaged decals of newspaper and photos relating to the 2014 police shooting of Michael Brown and the ensuing protests in Ferguson. That ghostly vinyl-printed fence was, perhaps, a passing acknowledgment of the vital connection these sculptures have to lived experience—to a real world marked by boundaries and partitions—as opposed to white gallery walls.

ONE OF THE THINGS I saw most often in New York galleries this fall were art dealers just back from a trip or getting ready for their next one, talking about jet lag remedies and art shipments. Even in an unsteady market, they continue to do art fairs at a vigorous pace. They were off to Chicago in September, then London and Paris in October, with a few stopping off for a new mini-fair in the Hamptons along the way. Shanghai and Miami beckoned. Bodies and artworks were in motion.

There's been no shortage of art and theory over the past decade addressing all this movement, including talk of networked painting, the circulation of images, and drag-and-drop exhibitions, but no exhibition I've seen captured it quite like **Aaron Flint Jamison's** at **Miguel Abreu**. For "The Stored Work," Jamison moved 373 artworks from the gallery's off-site storage into its two Lower East Side locations,



Installation view of “Nicolas Party: Pastel,” 2017, at Karma.

where they sat in their packaging. Labels on the plastic- and cardboard-swaddled objects indicated artist and provenance as well as more obscure instructions like “must ride with foam blocks.”

Jamison, who is based in Portland, Oregon, where he runs the alternative space Yale Union, stipulated that visitors could ask for any work to be unwrapped and put on view, and Abreu had art handling staff on hand for the occasion. This might all sound like a dry conceit, but the setup offered some intriguing possibilities, allowing visitors to stage their own temporary solo or group shows, juxtaposing pieces by, say, R. H. Quaytman and Sam Lewitt. In putting the gallery’s hidden holdings on view, Jamison posed

questions, both practical (why was the gallery holding these particular works?) and aesthetic (what is one’s experience of viewing a transparent acrylic Pamela Rosenkranz sculpture—or any work—when it’s wrapped in plastic?). What I liked best about the whole affair was that, unlike so many purportedly radical conceptual gambits these days, Jamison’s was not for sale. One could, however, purchase the gallery’s entire inventory, priced at around \$10 million.

Serendipitously, there was more packaged art a few blocks away at **Essex Street**, which was doing an encore presentation of **Jef Geys**’s bubble-wrapped paintings. Essex had done a larger show of these works just four months earlier;

these were the ones that hadn’t found buyers the first time around.

A SEASON OF MOVEMENT also included time travel. At **47 Canal**’s other space, **Trevor Shimizu**, beloved of young artists, revisited his past, showing raw videos that he made early in his career, some framed by canvases painted with his trademark slapdash touch. For one, he imagined himself as a tech bro getting into extreme sports. The most memorable piece was a slide show with photos he shot while employed as a professional party photographer in and around New York in the early 2000s. People give the finger, stick out their tongues, and dance. A young man and woman make out in

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OPPOSITE: CHARLES BENIGNO/ COURTESY THE ARTIST AND SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY



Emily Mae Smith, *The Riddle*, 2017, oil on linen, 67" x 51". Simone Subal.

one photo and grin for the camera in the next. Sting makes an appearance, with an impish smile, looking radiant. Unlike Jessica Craig-Martin's contemporaneous pictures, which have always struck me as one-note (she reveals the rich as banal and vulgar), Shimizu's have a loving touch. They are a composite portrait of an era told through the giddy, satisfied faces of people having a good time, and they are a self-portrait by other means

of an artist finding his way. Shimizu appears in some of them, deadpan, a bit drunk maybe, surrounded by revelers. In an accompanying text, he says that "the job, for the most part, was really fun."

Likewise reaching back inventively in time, the great **Polly Apfelbaum** covered the floor of **Alexander Gray & Associates** with a luscious hand-woven rug patterned with a stylized woman's face taken from the cover of the 1968 book *The Potential*

of Woman. The show read as a redoubt of sanity, of forceful creativity at a repressive, topsy-turvy moment. Apfelbaum was not the only underrated veteran in fine form. **SculptureCenter** presented a 50-year retrospective of the formidable New York mainstay **Nicola L.**, whose absurd, inventive sculptures, sometimes wearable or anthropomorphic, are both paragons of free thought, and slyly dark examples of how bodies, particularly women's bodies, can be objectified. One ingenious series consists of dressers shaped like women, drawer handles affixed to various body parts. They are at once discomfitingly comical and absolutely fearsome.

Mitchell Albus, meanwhile, was mining relatively recent New York art history with a show of archival and new work by **Colette**, whose life, for much of the past 40 years, has been a continuous goth performance involving fashion and interior design inseparable from her art. In one new piece a pink-haired mannequin, wrapped in fabric, emerges from a huge cardboard box. She looked elegant, determined—a vestige of a rowdier New York.

IF THERE IS ONE ENDURING trend right now it is richly colored, confidently rendered figurative work, sometimes with dashes of surrealism, though this art often seems to hover in a digital, rather than a psychological, ether. It started appearing in force a couple of years ago, and was everywhere this fall.

Derek Eller Gallery had a compact survey of paintings by a godfather of the genre, Chicago Hairy Who co-founder **Karl Wirsum**, in which alien-looking, insectoid figures fly across bright monochromes, dropping the odd bomb or cup of coffee. The Swiss **Nicolas Party** handles color with a similar boldness, but his bulbous-eyed figures, spooky landscapes, and faintly sexual still lifes with fruit feel empty once their initial razzle-dazzle fades, as happened in his outing at **Karma**. The show included a series of temple-like rooms—the walls were painted in bright colors as though to buoy the effect of otherwise minor paintings. Party



Cajsja von Zeipel, *Butch Bench*, 2017, styrofoam, epoxy, fiberglass, aqua resin, foam spray, metal, MDF, pigment, and wax, 57" x 45" x 85". Company.

has exceptional taste, cribbing liberally from David Hockney and a bit from Magritte, but he seems unsure what to do with it.

In contrast, **Emily Mae Smith's** biting canvases at **Simone Subal** deftly built on those same influences, with William N. Copley and M. C. Escher thrown into the mix. In her painting *The Riddle* (2017), the broom from *Fantasia* (1940) takes the place of Oedipus in Ingres's 1808 *Oedipus Explains the Enigma of the Sphinx*. Smith favors overtly suggestive imagery (in one work, a smoking gun pokes through a skyscape shaped like two breasts) and paints with the touching attentive-

ness of a portraitist, as if these cartoon creatures lived among us.

The decadently figurative is also cropping up in sculpture, perhaps nowhere as potently right now as in **Cajsja von Zeipel's** thrilling, life-size plaster and fired-clay pieces, which sport a variety of bewitching textures. At **Company** gallery, the up-and-coming Austrian artist presented a stone-faced couple copulating in a grocery cart and a swimmer on her back, urinating (via a modest water pump) onto a pedestal. In one particularly toothsome work, two gorgeous large people in puffy yellow jackets sit beside each other. Their pink pants are spread out as seats, and

you are welcome to sit atop the bench their form.

Similarly extroverted, **Jean-Marie Appriou's** cast aluminum, blown-glass, and bronze sculptures—of huge, fire-colored butterflies; a Pan-like flutist; a barnacled wall; a huntress; and, oddly enough, another swimmer—at **Clearing** in Bushwick seemed set in a partially submerged alien rain forest. The installation came dangerously close to looking like a set for the movie *Avatar* (2009). Yet it was so lovingly, tenderly wrought—and so out of left field—that its weirdness was irresistible. Against so much art destined for fairs and then storage—the kind lampooned by

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Installation view of “Jean-Marie Appriou: ABALONA,” 2017, at Clearing.

Jamison and Geys—it felt like a first vision of a bizarre new world.

Appriou can be grouped among a small cohort of artists currently working in a Symbolist mode, and it is notable that the Guggenheim’s venturesome “Mystical Symbolism: The Salon de la Rose+Croix in Paris, 1892–1897” ran concurrently with their gallery shows. At **Reena Spaulings**, **Alastair Mackinven** offered large, accomplished paintings of nude women and men bathing in moonlight under purple skies. A woman’s head grows from the torso of another in a spectral garden, and ghosts with skin of oxidized copper float above another body, one

hand reaching for his or her head. If there is irony here, it is veiled.

Dark humor lurks just beneath the surface of **Kye Christensen-Knowles**’s exquisite paintings. Those on view at **Lomex** were wonderfully overwrought, like death metal T-shirts or Magic: The Gathering cards—a ferocious bald eagle attacking a lithe nude Ganymede, a hipster sphinx posing gingerly atop a red skull, portraits of young men that Egon Schiele might have made if he’d grown up with comic books.

Christensen-Knowles, Mackinven, and Appriou find in this Symbolist-inflected language a deep well of untrammelled camp and kitsch that can be marshaled

to address psychosexual turmoil. A more recent influence might be **Peter Doig**, who has been drifting through mystical realms for years. The centerpiece of his latest outing at **Michael Werner** was an 11½-foot-wide painting, *Two Trees* (2017)—all clouds and deft strokes of blue, purple, and lilac, with three figures on a beach and a white sun on the horizon. One of the figures is nearly transparent, save for a yellow sweater, and holds what might be a fishing rod; the second, green-skinned, also has a rod in hand; and the last, in a diamond-checkered shirt, peers through a video camera. Gazing at that work, fences felt very far away.

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