

ARTSY

December 25, 2017

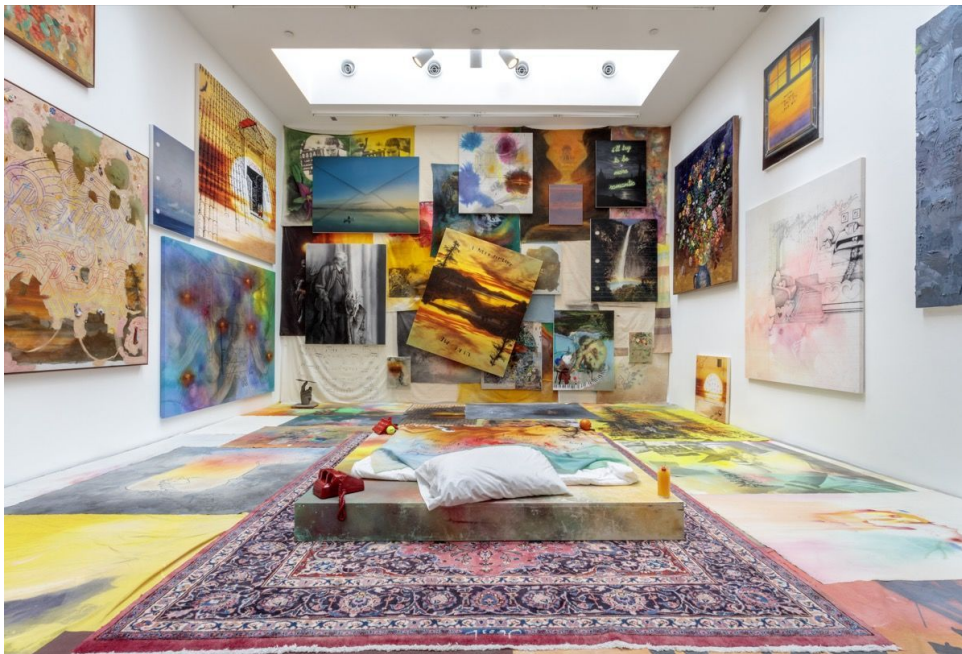
40 Artists Share Their Favorite Shows of 2017

By Scott Indrisek

At the end of each year, critics and editors eagerly (and oh-so-authoritatively) weigh in on what they found to be the best work of the last 12 months. But why not go straight to the source, asking some of our favorite creatives what thrilled, moved, and inspired them in 2017? Here, without further ado, we present a year-end wrap-up that lets the artists decide what mattered.

Joe Reihsen

Neil Raitt, "Misty Rock," at Anat Ebgi, and Friedrich Kunath, "Frutti di Mare," at Blum & Poe, both in Los Angeles



Installation view of "Friedrich Kunath: Frutti di Mare," 2017. © Friedrich Kunath. Photo by Joshua White/JWPictures.com. Courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/ Tokyo

"I have to say it is hard to pin down a favorite show, but definitely the most stand-out opening night in Los Angeles this year was experiencing Raitt and Kunath across the street from one another. Both shows were completely immersive, creating lush, fictive landscapes for the romantic ideal of the painter—through the lens of an L.A. transplant. For Raitt, the idea of the American landscape is informed by growing up in Britain and seeing Bob Ross on TV, but the latest works in the show seem to reflect his recent move to Los Angeles. And I'll quote Kunath for his take on his own exhibition: 'If Arte and Merv Griffin co-produced a reality TV show, it might go something like this.'"

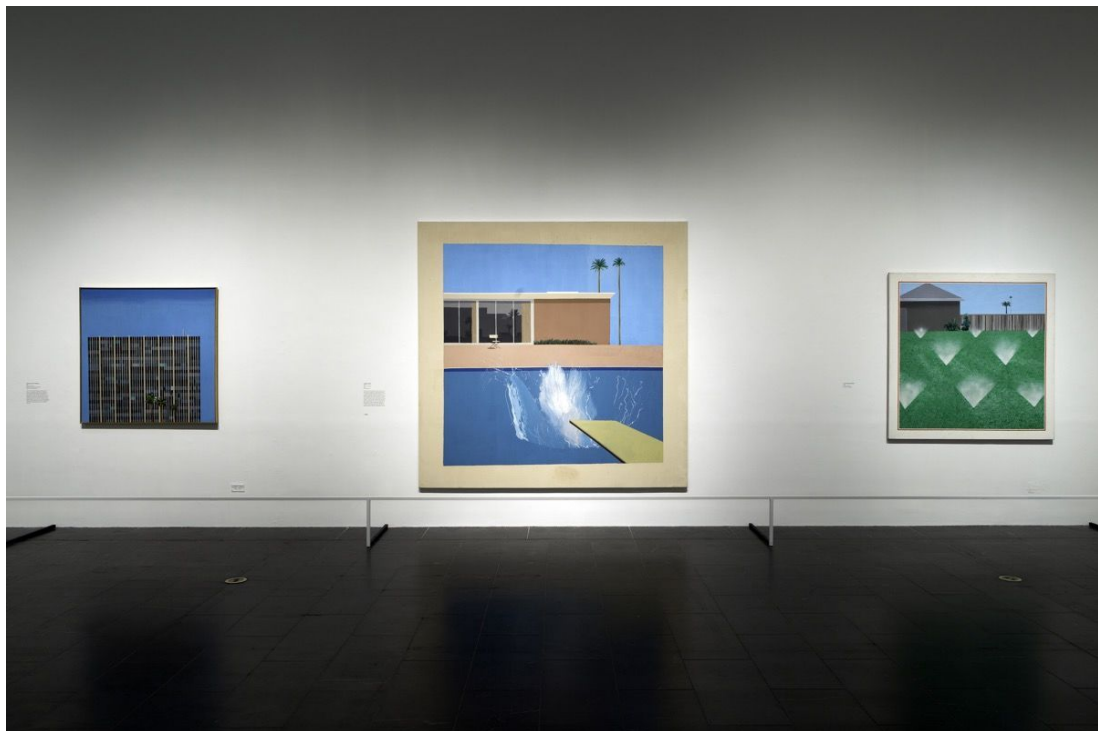
Jamie Felton

Milka Djordjevich's *ANTHEM*, performed at Bob Baker Marionette Theatre as part of Los Angeles Exchange (LAX) Festival

"This piece bubbles to the top of my brain when I think of all the art I saw over 2017," says Felton (whom Artsy picked out as an artist to watch at this year's Untitled art fair in Miami Beach.) "It might have been the 1970s outfits, the theatrical lights, the intimate audience sitting around a small dance floor. It might have been the four beautiful dancers that hit every beat. The sweat and the glow on their glittered faces. *ANTHEM* embraces virtuosity and sass. It touches on ideas of labor, play, and feminine posturing. As a painter I think of images that can play with de-sexualizing the female body, and Milka has choreographed movements that embrace that idea. *ANTHEM* is cool, sexy, and pretty amazing. I feel lucky to have seen it."

Sally Saul

David Hockney at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (through February 25th)



"David Hockney" at The Met, 2017. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"Previously, I was on the neutral side regarding Hockney's work, but this show changed that.

"The early work is bold in style and subject, especially considering homosexuality was illegal at the time. By the later 1960s his paintings have become refined, meticulous, and cool, but always with an underlying tension: beneath the equidistant lawn sprinklers are Van Gogh-like blades of grass; a totem pole mirrors the collector Marcia Weisman's expression. Within the contemporary Los Angeles homes are a few odd, specific details and décor, clues to the inhabitants who hold their own in the large, illusionistic space. By contrast, the later paintings are freewheeling, bright, with several perspectives as if seen with many eyes, vertiginous. I loved the show."

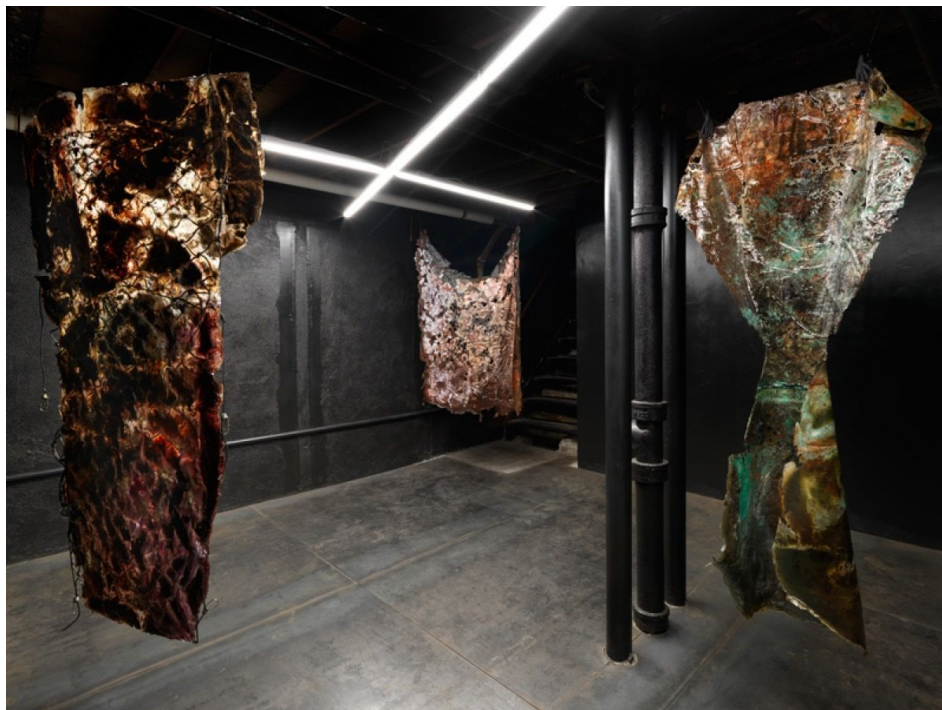
Dashiell Manley

"Calder | Miró Constellations" at Acquavella Galleries in New York (in collaboration with Pace Gallery)

"I didn't see many shows this year, but this one stuck with me. It was beautiful without having to be glamorous. The Miró works in particular vibrated in an otherworldly way and seemed to transcend a historical moment. There were ten thousand different ways to look at each one, or at all of them: from the sides, or with your eyes closed, trying to remember. It's everything I love about painting. When I was younger I'd see an exhibition that would challenge my idea of what art could be, and I would immediately retreat to the studio and work. I would also see shows that were just so good that their afterimage would paralyze my own production. This did both."

Dan Herschlein

Vanessa Thill, "Bivouac," at Bible in New York



Installation view of "Bivouac." Courtesy of Bible Gallery.

"The artist suspended three 'paintings' made from things like cough syrup, shampoo, tobacco and resin

from the ceiling of Bible, a black-painted basement in Chinatown. The works looked wet, like animal skins clumped with fat and wet leaves, and they had postures like the clothing hanging off a scarecrow's frame. There was an expectation that they would waver or ripple in the air but their rigid material made the way they hovered so still in the room feel supernatural, as if they were caught in a flashbulb. It was eerie and peaceful down there, everything I want from a show."

Kenya (Robinson)

Sanford Biggers, "SELAH," at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York

"Growing up an unlikely Evangelical, our radio was almost always tuned to the Bible Broadcasting Network. An aural fixture of my memory, its ubiquity was only rivaled by the hum of our refrigerator. The weekday lineup featured this segment called 'Take A Minute,' and at the end of each of these 60-second devotionals, the host would chime brightly: 'Selah! Meditate on this.' It was a catchy phrase in both content and delivery that could easily be mimicked and turned for comedic effect—or served shady, if you were caught slipping on your good Christian bidness. Art is my religion now, the studio acting as my home church, but occasionally I can be convinced to visit another congregation. And so, Sanford Biggers' 'SELAH' lured me. An aesthetic sermon of homespun conceptualism. Quilted motifs, sacred geometries, mutilated deities and tactile sequins, so measured in their presentation, that Biggers deftly coaxes the intellectual from the emotion of contemporary violence—upon which we must all meditate."

Ryan Wallace

Matt Kenny, "Landscape Paintings" and "Landscape Paintings (Part 2)" at the National Exemplar in New York



Work by Matt Kenny in "Landscape paintings (PART 2)." Courtesy of The National Exemplar.

"In a year that championed sophomoric figuration, it was great to see Matt Kenny's masterful representational paintings," says Wallace, whose work will be on view this January at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) at Maine College of Art (MECA). "The first part of this show included an authentic, untitled Francis Picabia from 1903, and featured three copied paintings by Kenny (of a Pissarro, a Bonnard, a Cézanne; all given a "Picabia" signature at bottom right), as well as two naturalist paintings of One World Trade Center as viewed at a distance from the Meadowlands and Secaucus, New Jersey. In the Meadowlands painting, the building is re-animated as a cartoonish monster, while from Secaucus, the building is painted in true realism. It is easy to be seduced by the craft, but registering the throughline in all of Kenny's projects is where the spoils lay. Here, it was a fun leap to consider a scenario without forged signatures, and with an agenda that was political rather than visual—in which the 'fakes' could be used to raise illicit funds, and the views rendered with such care in the Trade Center paintings could just as easily be snapshots from a reconnaissance mission, or from residences housing indoctrinated recruits just beyond city limits, like the ones discussed in *Coercive Beliefs* (2017), Kenny's just-released first book: A 300-page nonfiction poem on the origins of Al Qaeda."

Mira Dancy

Becky Kolsrud, "Allegorical Nudes" at JTT Gallery in New York

"This show featured a warm, electric blue—a flatly-handled, brilliantly-hued kind of 'body of water' or 'wave' throughout. This bombardment of blue created a warm electric buzz in the room, and gave buoyancy to her figures, a cast of repeating characters that stare out from the paintings in resolute, classical poses. In almost every painting, the blue of water threatens to wall-over or erase an unflinching figure. The body and the blue are equally constant and unpredictable—and each painting unravels a slightly different riddle. Kolsrud's protagonists are in jeopardy—but her strong, confident strokes of color, and inventive turns of logic, push the figures to the front. The wall of blue, the symbolic, destructive force of water, is held impossibly at bay by the confident and effortless rendering of a hand with red fingernails."

Adrianne Rubenstein

Sally Saul, "Knit of Identity" at Rachel Uffner Gallery in New York

"Sally's work is a subtle commentary on social concerns, particularly having to do with the environment and women's bodies," says Rubenstein, whose paintings are on view at Reyes Projects in Birmingham, Michigan through January 20th. "Her ceramics are like a warm hug. They echo the sentiments I feel when progressive action is taken by my feminist heroes. At first glance her sculptures are homey and goofy even, they have a magical, disarming sensibility. Sally is getting attention for her work somewhat later in life, which to me is symbolic of tides turning. This exhibition helps to rewrite history a little bit, and it's the kind of history I want to be a part of."

Mitchell Anderson

Rico Scagliola & Michael Meier, "Together," at Kunsthalle St. Gallen, Switzerland

"A hermitage hanging of giant photographs of the everyday transformed drunk bros at McDonalds, grotesque children, and unflattering couples into painterly portraits of the intense beauty of the human and urban form," says Anderson, a Zurich-based artist whose work can be seen at Fri Art Kunsthalle Fribourg through the end of January. "The show's titular video has engrossed me since August. In it, teenagers—filmed on a carnival ride—attempt to stay stable as their smallest gestures and gazes are

slowed to reveal the ways in which they, and all of us, try so hard to effortlessly present ourselves to others. The sexual tension was transcendent.”

Eric Yahnker

Froggyland in Split, Croatia (permanent installation)



Installation view of Froggyland in Split, Croatia. Courtesy of Froggyland.

“In a year that found me traversing the globe to several world-class art destinations, no exhibition occupied my mind quite like Froggyland in Split, Croatia—an attraction that is exactly what it sounds like. Knowing a minor amount about taxidermy, stuffing, and posing frogs is tantamount to posing a freshly launched snot rocket—no small feat—and, yet, this place is chock full of century-old, drama-filled, mini-dioramas from the fanatic, mesmerizingly OCD melon of Hungarian taxidermist Ferenc Mere. A true masterpiece of outsider art, it represents nearly every aspect of early 20th-century Western life in exacting detail: the classroom, the courtroom, the gym, the circus, the billiards hall, the public plunge, the barbershop, the bedroom, and more. Unlike Jim Henson’s heartwarming, googly-eyed brand of anthropomorphism, all of Mere’s subjects must spend eternity staring blankly up at the sky (or the ceilings of their fingerprint-laden glass tombs)—perhaps praying for rapture for their finely lacquered, rock-hard amphibious souls.”

Jean-Michel Othoniel

Sophie Calle and Serena Carone, “Beau doublé, Monsieur le marquis!” at Le Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris (through February 11th)

“One of the strangest exhibitions that I saw this year was Sophie Calle’s exhibition with her guest, the artist Serena Carone, curated by Sonia Voss,” says Othoniel (who opens a solo at Perrotin New York in March of the coming year). “The exhibition is magical and Musée de la Chasse is the perfect space for such incredibly personal works, which consistently and brilliantly incorporate autobiographical and fictional narratives. For this show, Calle reinvented and reinterpreted much of her previous work, which

often explores themes of hunting, of stalking, and she's also created new works. At the same time, she incorporates and magically investigates the animal kingdom."

Sophie Hirsch

Eamon Monaghan, "The Rube's World," at the Hand in Brooklyn, New York



Installation view of "The Rube's World." Courtesy of The Hand Gallery.

"Monaghan is a rare breed of artist capable of accessing creativity in its most genuine form. He creates a captivating world that is both tender and full of longing, but also absurd and hilarious. His filmmaking process is meticulous and unique. His story develops hand in hand with the building of an extremely elaborate set consisting of endless detailed sculptures made from painted insulation foam. It's a magical world that you don't have to understand in order to be in awe of it. I am reminded how refreshing it is to be in the presence of something that just is. Monaghan's work leaves you giddy, triggering the type of curiosity that inspired you to make art in the first place."

David Colman

Damien Hirst, "Treasures From The Wreck of the Unbelievable," at the Pinault Collection in Venice

"Art's biggest irony of 2017? Damien Hirst made a brilliant show in Venice about an ancient shipwreck—a multilayered allegory about himself and all humanity—and everyone missed the boat. The art media got stuck at the entry-level outrage (the money it cost and made), blinding them to the show's amazing and complex exploration of human morality and materialism, the real entry point of which was one of today's more debatable binaries: good creator vs. bad collector. Conflating medieval demons with modern monsters, Hirst merged 27 of Dante's circles of hell, purgatory and heaven with today's 12-step addiction canon. The is the story of a man and a ship and a race that have all hit bottom, and the gaudy, gory glory of Hirst's inventory celebrated everything that being human means—anger, love, desire, greed, faith, hope, lust, et. al.—fiercely, beautifully and candidly. Priceless."

Katie Stout

Nicola L, "Works, 1968 to the Present," at SculptureCenter in Queens, New York

"The artist has been a huge inspiration ever since the late, great Jim Walrod showed me his Nicola L female boudoir," says Stout, whose sculptures are on view at Nina Johnson in Miami through early January. "She's a full blown icon to me, so I was shocked to learn that this was the first comprehensive survey of her work. She started her career in art over 50 years ago and her skin suits and furniture based on the human form feels as fresh and relevant as I imagine they felt then."

Josh Reames

Jacqueline Humphries at Greene Naftali Gallery in New York



Installation view of Jacqueline Humphries at Greene Naftali, New York, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York.

"After an intense year of sociopolitical upheaval, Humphries's exhibition might be the first show I've been able to look at without wondering where the social commentary is," says Reames. "I've had a lot of conversations over the past year about how artists have an obligation to be politically engaged, since being apolitical is a stance in itself. Somehow this show has taken me back to a place of being able to look at paintings for what they are instead of what they mean. The group of large square canvases were intensely detailed with alphanumeric keystrokes, stenciled on with thick oil paint, with the occasional bleed or gestural smear. They're austere, elegantly brutal, and impressive. It's the kind of show that made me jealous, wishing that I made those paintings; and ultimately excited to get back into the studio."

Margo Wolowiec

"Post-Truth," a symposium presented by Culture Lab Detroit

"During two panel discussions, artists, writers, and architects discussed the antagonisms of our current political climate and possibilities for the future, especially in the arts," says Wolowiec, known for her hand woven, dyed textile works. "I love the challenge of critically dissecting a topic that is so new there aren't yet cohesive dialogues to talk through it, requiring on the spot thinking and honest self-assessments. During the 'Alternative Facts' panel, moderator Juanita Moore asked, 'Does the artist have a moral imperative to be politically engaged?' Artist Martine Syms poignantly answered that not only is it a privilege to not be political, but institutions that exhibit presumably radical projects don't always align their own politics along those same ambitions. Artist and educator Edgar Arceneaux simply answered 'No.' I loved both of these answers because it's absolutely a privilege to not be political, and if your work is politicized by others in ways you don't agree with, you have the right to direct that conversation elsewhere—or say 'No,' and leave it at that."

Thomas Nozkowski

"World War I and the Visual Arts" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (through January 7th)



Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson, *Returning to the Trenches*, 1916. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"This exhibition, drawn largely from the Met's own holdings, encompassed a wide range of responses to World War I," says the painter (who opens his own solo exhibition at Pace Gallery in New York this coming January). "Not another eat-your-spinach, didactic kind of exhibition, the curators got this one exactly right by focusing on the quality of the individual works included. Folk art, vanguard art, industrial art, commercial art as well as traditional art are interwoven in a provocative and exciting way. Younger artists today, investing more and more of their efforts with social and political concerns, could find a

wealth of options in this exhibition. Any opportunity to see Otto Dix's fifty-one-piece aquatint and etching suite 'Der Krieg' is always welcome. I am still thinking about this show."

Scarlett Bowman

Rose Wylie, "Quack Quack," at the Serpentine Galleries in London

"Play, color, comic, nostalgic, texture, bold, narrative, clumsy, jubilant, pink, red, thick, haste, honest, modest, fearless, joy, spontaneous, cartoon, caricature, heraldic, coincidence, eyelashes, ducks, bats, planes, happy, primitive, memory, experience, sifting, love, joy, sports, news, celebrity, dogs, collage, football, composition, literature, form, curiosity, hope, landscape, memory, ice-skating, blonde, cinema, routine, scale, parks, filmmaking, imagery, discipline, girls, text, paint, canvas, smell, Hollywood, dreams, fashion, vast, uncompromised, boys, bold, irreverent, abstract, original, irrelevance, relevance, everyday, awkward, seasons."

Beverly Fishman

"Elizabeth Murray: Painting in the '80s" at Pace Gallery in New York (through January 13th)



Installation view of "Elizabeth Murray: Painting in the '80s." Courtesy of PACE Gallery.

"It was so inspiring to see how brilliant, innovative, and totally surprising Murray's work was when she was painting at the top of her game. Each canvas seemed like its own unique universe—a play on the still life genre with its connotations of domesticity, but blown up to the size of an enveloping world. She had total command of the shaped canvas. I was blown away by the way each dynamic painting slipped between representation and abstraction, as well as solid and void. And how funny and wild and bold they were. She played by her own rules, and how lucky we are to experience this."

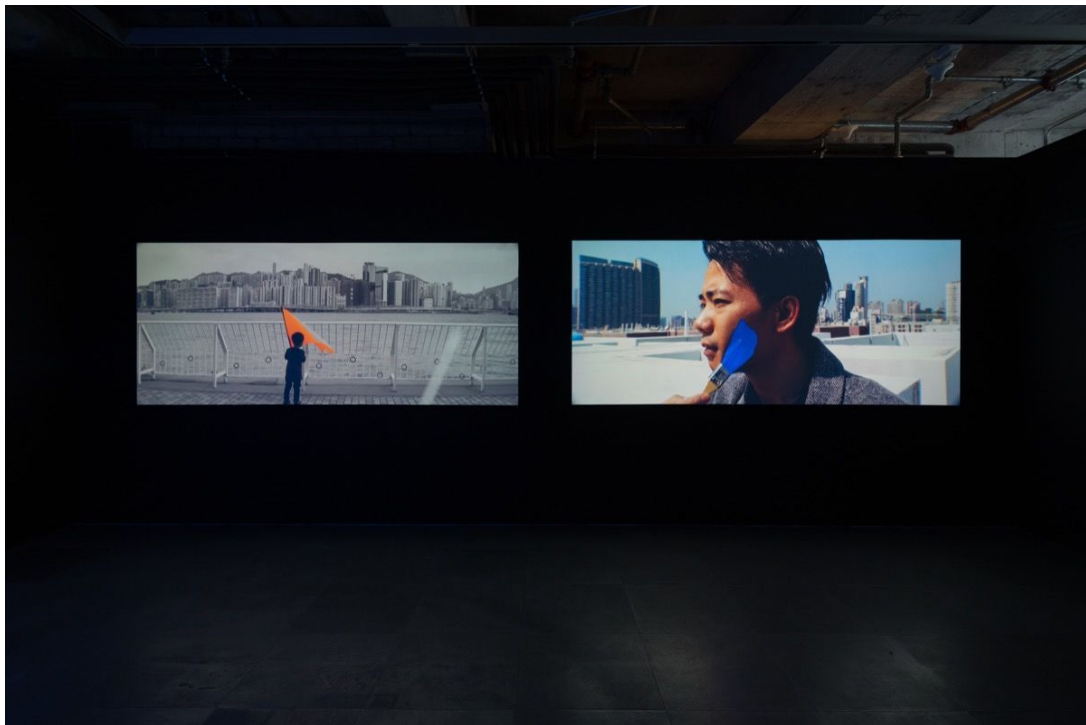
Margaret Lee

"Unholding" at Artists Space in New York (through January 21st)

"I was fortunate enough to view this exhibition in conjunction with a conversation and book launch for *No Reservation: New York Contemporary Native American Art Movement* (2017), published by AMERINDA Inc., which gave me a new understanding of what it means to fight for aesthetic sovereignty while also maintaining community building within one's ambitions," says Lee, whose next show opens in January at Marlborough Contemporary in London. "In a time when activism and political engagement has become a necessity more than a passing interest, 'Unholding' presents an inspiring example of how to navigate the interconnectedness between the personal and political within contemporary artistic practices."

Christopher K. Ho

Kwan Sheung Chi, "Blue is the New Black," at Edouard Malingue Gallery in Hong Kong



Kwan Sheung Chi, "Blue is the New Black," installation view at Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong, 2017.

Courtesy of the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery.

"Bewilderment is an ever-rarer response to contemporary art, in the shadow of over a century of Western avant-garde antics. Kwan Sheung Chi elicited such a response in this Hong Kong-born, Western-schooled viewer," says Ho, whose next major project will open in October 2018 at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. "Imagine an elevator that opens onto a room crisscrossed with blue tape; two unmatched monitors mounted front-to-back inches apart respectively depicting a bust of David being bashed, and a hand silently gesturing in sync; an actual halfpipe, in Yves Klein Blue; and footage of a remake of Pierrot Le Fou's closing scene, starring the artist's young son. Kwan's masterstroke is to make

his Western references too obvious. An interpretive feint that belies intercultural operations as labyrinthine as the city's colonial history and capitalist streets below, they insist: Look again, through your Hong Kong eyes."

Marie Herwald Hermann

Biba Bell and Jessie Gold, Body Factory, in Detroit

"This two-dancer performance (scored by Ivan Berko) was a combo field-trip and performance during the hazy Detroit summer. We were met in a roofless structure and bussed out to a dilapidated theater some miles away. In here, Bell and Gold performed, moving in and out of sync, incorporating objects at times, and continually encroaching on audience's space. The performance was both physical and tactile and the border between the audience and performers slowly broke down; the musical score turned into a DJ set, and the beer-drinking crowd slowly became part of the dance floor."

Jennifer Coates

Jackie Saccoccio at 11R in New York



Installation view of work by Jackie Saccoccio in "Sharp Objects & Apocalypse Confetti" at 11R, New York. Photo by Charles Benton. Courtesy of 11R/Van Doren Waxter.

"This show blew my mind: Rapturous works on paper comprised of tangles of linear drips meant as portraits, and large-scale paintings where Saccoccio began to fill in the tiny empty spaces between her signature drips and pours that splayed in all directions. The portraits were like decaying psyches while the paintings, with titles like Place (Group), Time (Splinter), and Apocalypse Confetti, evoked the decay of digital information, buildings, civilization, the end of everything in a spastic rush of heightened beauty. Nuclear meltdown mixed with the most dramatic, saturated sunset in these images of ecstatic ruins."

Sarah Meyohas

Richard Mosse, "Incoming," at the Barbican Centre's the Curve in London

"Mosse created 'Incoming' like the military targets enemies: using a camera that is formally classified as a weapon," says Meyohas, who opened a large-scale exhibition at Red Bull Arts New York this year. "Long range surveillance of thermal radiation reveals a maelstrom of bodies. They are refugees. The camera textures them in black and white, an effect that is alien and anonymizing. The brilliance of the piece is that this spectral rendition actually serves to humanize. The epic drama looms before you across a trio of monolithic screens. 'Incoming' (created with cinematographer Trevor Tweeten and composer Ben Frost), felt more poignant than any other footage I had seen of the refugee crisis."

Andrew Kuo

Peter Halley, "Ground Floor," at Greene Naftali Gallery in New York

"In the wake of our changing experiences within the internet, Halley's exhibition felt as urgent as ever. His cell paintings continue to discuss ideas of power, money, and flow, helping in our attempt to define neutrality and the mechanisms behind the things we're shown. The nine new paintings, hung in a bright yellow room, looked like rotating prison bars painted in the far extremes of color, or maybe circuit boards that parse the information we see and don't see."

David Humphrey

Celeste Dupuy-Spencer at Marlborough Contemporary in New York



Celeste Dupuy-Spencer, *Early Snow – Rhinecliff Hotel*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Marlborough Contemporary, New York and London.

"Moving paint around to make pictures can be a complicated behavior," says Humphrey, whose own pictures can be seen through early January at Real Estate Fine Art in Brooklyn. "Dupuy-Spencer's mark-making has a warmth and jaunty muscularity that suggests she both cares about her subjects and is in awe of, if not disoriented by, their inscrutable reality. Painting can be a way to process feelings by spending time with people and events in their absence. Dupuy-Spencer conjures concerts, parties, and political demonstrations in a painterly equivalent of fiction's free indirect style, where first and third person are blended. Dupuy-Spencer's fictions tangle her voice into the bustling of life inside the Rhinecliff Hotel, a socializing crowd of family and friends on a porch, the ungroomed intimacy of a head rub. Her work reveals the weird and powerful ways we are defined, hurt, disappointed, and amazed by other people."

Richard Tinkler

Jack Pierson at Regen Projects in Los Angeles and Maccarone in New York

"Often when Jack Pierson is talking about one of his photographs he will say that he likes it because it looks like the 1950s. I have a similar feeling about my paintings when they remind me of the 1970s. What I connect to in Jack's work, both the photographs and the word sculptures, is what I see as a desire to rescue and preserve something of the past and to find a way to honestly communicate it in the present. At Maccarone in New York, Jack was showing photographs that were first shown in the early '90s but were taken in the 1980s, and printed in a low-tech way—that welcomed hairs and scratches and uneven color—that made them seem as if they might have been found images. I can see how this connects to the recent word sculptures at Regen Projects in L.A. where found letters from old signs have been given new life as sculptures that are both poetic and formally rigorous. In both bodies of work something of the past is saved and transformed into a message for the present day."

Franck Chalendar

Sadie Laska, "Nudes," at Galerie Ceysson & Bénétière in Saint-Étienne, France



Installation view of Sadie Laska's work in "Nudes" in Saint Étienne at Ceysson & Bénétière. Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière.

"In this exhibition, Sadie Laska keeps very little of the magazine images she initially projects on the canvas," says abstract painter Chalendard, who also shows with the gallery. "What remains are simplified shapes and curves that our imagination can still associate with the female body. I quite like these paintings for everything that is accentuated and exaggerated: gestures, shapes, points of view. The sensuality and brutality expressed by these canvases go way beyond erotic imagery. Painting takes over with its expressive power."

Kate Shepherd

"Epic Tales from Ancient India: Paintings from the San Diego Museum of Art," at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas

"It's rare for me to see a show that requires so much careful scrutiny that I don't 'finish,' and promise to return the next day. Classic Indian and Persian stories were explained on wall texts that served as user manuals for the paintings. On each work, segments of narrative coexisted to show a progression from the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Oddly, the sumptuous graphic embellishment and decorated borders typical of miniatures weren't the primary appeal. Rather it was the lore expressed through repeated patterns of figures in movement and tiny expressive heads in profile, housed in what seemed to be proscenium stage architecture. The effort was worth it."

Kurt Kauper

"Alice Neel, Uptown" at David Zwirner in New York, curated by Hilton Als



(Left) Alice Neel, Benjamin, 1976. © The Estate of Alice Neel. Courtesy of David Zwirner, New York/London and Victoria Miro, London. (Right) Alice Neel, Woman, 1966. © The Estate of Alice Neel. Courtesy of David Zwirner, New York/London and Victoria Miro, London.

"Several paintings in the exhibition helped me realize what a brilliantly ironic painter Neel was," says Kauper, whose own show of new paintings and drawings opens this January at Almine Rech in New York. "Not ironic in the way that term has been used—or misused—in recent discourse, but in the true sense

of the word: an expression that seems to mean one thing, but communicates something entirely different. The awkward, almost hamfisted diffidence of each paintings' initial visual utterance allows the viewer immediate access to the sitter, without having to pass through the authorial presence of the painter. But Neel's unparalleled ability to make you believe that you're sharing space with a real human being, and empathizing with them, is possible because of the profound mastery that reveals itself in her pitch-perfect evocations of specific light (glinting off flesh), perceptual color, place, and character. Nobody's portraits are more authentically real, and it's largely because of irony."

Cindy Ji Hye Kim

Teto Elsidique, "a distant fire" at 6BASE in the Bronx, New York

"The show featured a group of paintings that are basically frottage rubbings, using a unique printmaking technique Teto invented over the years. Objects are laid on an ad hoc air vacuum bed, and a thin sheet of plastic is put over them. The film gets air-sprayed over and it's covered to be suctioned in the vacuum bed. He then takes the now air-sprayed sheets of film onto the canvas as a transfer. This process is repeated, with multiple images layered and transferred onto the canvas. As a friend I got to see each stage of his work process (from the sourcing of materials to the actual making) and it was meaningful to see, each painting containing the history of its own making."

Tracy Thomason

"Hot Mud" at Spook Rock Farm in Hudson, New York



Installation view of Amy Brener's work at Hot Mud Arts Fest. Courtesy of JAGprojects.

"In late July, the artist Colby Bird and I are on our way to a farm in Hudson, New York to finish installing his fleet of outdoor sculptures for this giant and rambling group show," recalls Thomason. "It was curated by Jesse Greenberg on the family farm of Nick Payne. Our arms are literally full of melons to

install on Colby's hand-bent iron staffs to mark a sweet, but fleeting, occasion. Smelling like Backwoods DEET, we pull up to a barn where Amy Brener's translucent corporeal sculpture is vaulted and draped so high and large that it exists as its very own cathedral. I like to believe this is what was meant to happen when you were told as a young girl to treat your body like a temple. The joy of life covers every inch of every fleck of straw and splashing stream during Hot Mud's day and night. Pooneh Maghazehe's ceramic heads float in creeks; Nick Payne's sensitive scratches of pastel are placed atop late 19th century wallpaper. 2 a.m. rolls around with fires still roaring, microphones screeching, and I'm left possibly begging the largest question of them all: How did we end up here?"

John Miller and Aura Rosenberg

Trevor Paglen, "A Study of Invisible Images," at Metro Pictures in New York

"The current status of photography is a question that few photographers bother to address. Paglen not only broached this question but also went on to offer a structural critique of photographic technology as an apparatus. He showed images that were either produced by Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs or that were interpreted by them. Since many of these were dye sublimation prints, we can nominally call them photographs. But if photographs reproduce reality—even if that's the constructed realities of artists like Jeff Wall or Thomas Demand—these images are of a different order. They too 'reproduce' reality but it is a reality that AI software generates from selected data sets. These, in turn, synthesize a 'worldview,' so to speak.

"Technically, two AI programs were involved; one produced an image; the other analyzed it. These functioned as a feedback loop. For example, to produce an image of a vampire, the first program creates a composite image. The second reads it and notes that traits like 'fangs' are missing. The first then incorporates that information. Nonetheless, the results are still fragmentary and contingent and point to gaps in the artificial cognitive process.

"As machine learning develops, these differences will become increasingly less apparent. What's most threatening, then, will be the perfect realization of otherwise 'invisible' images, because once this is achieved, who will be able to tell the difference?"

Ethan Greenbaum

"Philip Guston: Laughter in the Dark, Drawings from 1971 & 1975" at Hauser & Wirth in New York

"2017 was a year when I, like many people, was looking to art with a need sharpened by our ongoing political crisis. A show of rarely exhibited work by Philip Guston was one of the most haunting exhibitions I saw. It opened days before the election and featured a suite of satirical drawings centered on the life and career of Richard Nixon. Guston made 'Poor Richard', the first and largest group of work, in a few frenzied months following his highly criticized Marlborough Gallery show in 1970 (and the leaking of the Pentagon Papers). I imagine he was feeling both angry at the world and sorry for himself—the drawings look it. They are brutally hysterical, depicting the arc of Nixon's life from parochial tot to resolutely confused young man. They culminate in his misadventures as a literal dick head.

"A lot of people have drawn comparisons between Nixon and Trump. The timing of this show made the association inevitable. There is an absurd horror in the drawings that visualizes our current disaster like very little I've seen before or since. It was cathartic, but also damning. The works don't simply mock or criticize. As in his Klan paintings, Guston identifies with the villain. Nixon is shown as victim and

perpetrator, child and monster. And he is rendered in ways that are clearly related to the artists' self portraiture. This show was a challenge to me — or anyone else—who would imagine themselves independent from the worst of their culture."

Ridley Howard

Yanique Norman, "Wasting Your Beautiful Mind: Coolidge Antiquitas (2nd Presidential Edition)," at Atlanta Contemporary

"The Atlanta Contemporary has been on a roll, hosting a number of great headliner shows this year. One surprise standout was Norman's surreal vision of First Lady Grace Coolidge and her art collection. Installed in a closet-size auxiliary project space, electric green walls were lined with amorphous collages of Xerox, watercolor, gouache, and ink. Single photos of Coolidge posing in the Rose Garden or White House were hung low to the ground, and sprouted long strands of overlapping African-American faces, glued together with dizzying repetition. Hydra-Phoenix-goddess beings, they burst upward through the space with a majestic, kudzu-like energy. While referencing African busts and masks, the work felt personal, like an impossibly complicated dream about America's past and future. It also made me think a lot about the subtext of American decorum, and the experiences of Michelle Obama."

Lavar Munroe

"The Absent Museum" at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre in Brussels

"This exhibition in Brussels featured Luc Tuymans, Martin Kippenberger, Marlene Dumas, and Ellen Gallagher, to name a few," says Munroe, whose own work was a stand-out at the Prospect.4 triennial this year. "There were several memorable moments, one being a sculptural installation of 'Workers' by Oscar Murillo. I was particularly drawn to this work because of its close correlation and association with the folk tradition of making Guy Fawkes statues in the Bahamas. There, the figures are strategically placed on street corners, and burnt on the night of Guy Fawkes Day, November 5. It was refreshing and thought-provoking to see similar figures within a museum space."

Matthew Thurber

Katherine Bauer's Cinematic Death Moon Return: The Forest Phase, Passage for the Datura Dreamer, at Fahrenheit 451 House in Catskill, New York



(Left) Katherine Bauer, *Cinematic Death Moon Return: The Forest Phase, Passage for the Datura Dreamer*, 2017.

(Right) Katherine Bauer, *Cinematic Death Moon Return: The Forest Phase, Passage for the Datura Dreamer*, 2017.

Courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery.

"The viewer peers into an amphitheater-like space, open to the elements, to see psychedelic datura plants reaching up to grab tendrils of 16mm film," says Thurber (who earlier in the year clued Artsy readers into cartoonists the art world needs to know). "A huge projector reel hangs in a lunar close-up. As time passes in stop-motion frames, snow has piled up on a salvaged theater curtain, and dancers have wandered through this garden of cinematic resurrection. The sculpture is startling— as much for its web of symbols, which link film to environmental plunder and agricultural cycles, as for its mysterious embodiment." The installation and event—incorporating plants favored by witches, colored lighting, performance elements, and both found and original film footage—is part of a larger cycle of work that Bauer is continuing to develop.

Nikki Maloof

Florine Stettheimer, "Painting Poetry," at the Jewish Museum in New York

"I went to see this show along with a few lady painters not totally expecting to be knocked out, but it was one of those moments that catch you by surprise. Most of my encounters with Stettheimer's work until this point were in reproduction. What struck me was her paint handling. It felt so alive and so timeless. My eyes caressed every detail of the surface—the way she sculpted the paint in areas with a knife and then etched into other areas, squiggling a thin line of a plant, or lovingly rendered her name. It was like a beautifully woven tapestry of paint. When I see a person's paint-handling and I totally relate to

it to this degree, I immediately remember why I've chosen this crazy path (or why it chose me). I feel the cosmic power that making bestows on us to connect with both the past and the future. It's pure magic."

December 18, 2017

How Social Practice Artists Are Using Creative Problem-Solving to Help Revive Detroit

By Brian Boucher

How Social Practice Artists Are Using Creative Problem-Solving to Help Revive Detroit
From urban chickens to park rehabilitation, artists are coming up with interesting ways to solve problems in Motor City.

Detroit's Eliza Howell Park, one of the city's largest, rambles across some 250 acres. The park thrived decades ago, but as the city descended into economic depression, prostitutes and drug dealers became sights as common as the roaming muskrats, minks, and coyotes.

A nearby artist coalition, Sidewalk Detroit, is pairing artists with residents to create artwork and infrastructure in the park with the hopes that the city will partner in those efforts.



The huge wildlife preserve and nascent art venue serves as a microcosm of the possibilities and challenges that social practice art in Detroit offers. With just 700,000 people spread out over some 140 square miles, and with strong support from philanthropic organizations like the Knight and Kresge Foundations, Detroit provides fertile soil for a growing art scene.

Strawberry planting at one of the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm's plots. Courtesy of Twitter.



Juliana Fulton designed a sign educating visitors about the history of Eliza Howell Park. Courtesy of Sidewalk Project.

There's abundant and still relatively affordable space. There's an avid and receptive audience. And there are daunting, urgent social and infrastructure needs that local communities and artists can help meet.

In the case of Eliza Howell, there's a catch-22: the city hasn't installed basic infrastructure like lighting and bathrooms in the park because locals don't use it; the locals say that that's because there aren't those basic amenities. So artists, with the support of philanthropists and foundations, stepped into the breach.

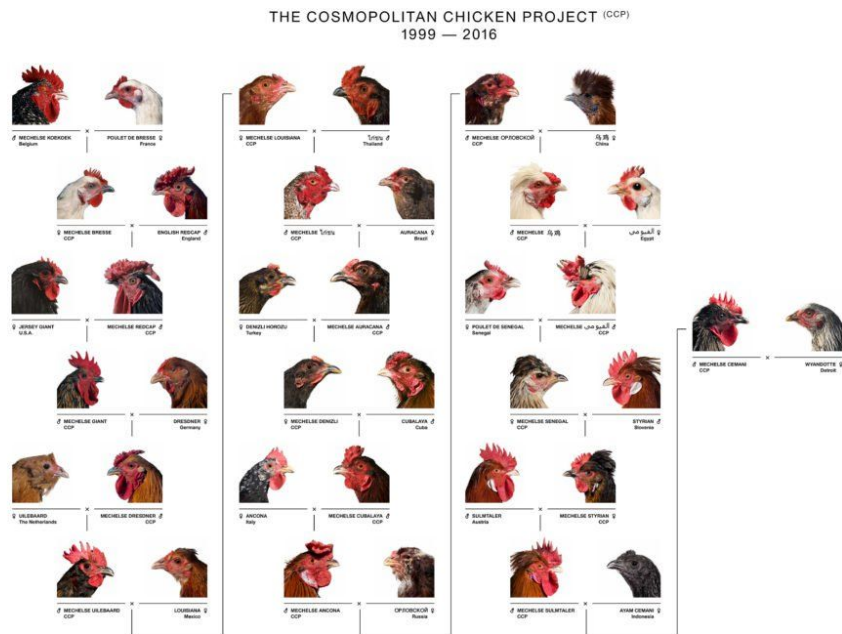


Oakland Avenue Urban Farm. Via Twitter.

Chickens For Diversity

Similarly addressing urgent human needs is the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, in Detroit's North End. Founded by Billy and Jerry Hebron, who previously worked in real estate, the project brings together several local organizations: the architecture firm Akoaki, art and music venue One Mile Project, and the nonprofit Center for Community-Based Enterprise. The organization is developing a five-acre complex that will integrate housing, urban farms, a hostel for visiting artists, and an art venue.

Seeking to establish a strong and lasting foothold, the organizations have worked together to buy up plots of real estate and turn them over to a community trust. The existing gardens provide produce that Oakland Avenue sells to workers at the local Daimler-Chrysler plant, where healthy food is scarce, and to the city's open-air Eastern Market. The organization received a \$500,000 "creative placemaking" grant from ArtPlace America in 2016.



Koen Vanmechelen's Cosmopolitan Chicken pedigree. Courtesy of the Wasserman Projects.

Food and art are even more closely intertwined in another commodity offered at the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm: eggs from chickens bred by Belgian artist Koen Vanmechelen as part of his practice. Vanmechelen's Cosmopolitan Chicken Project is supported by local art dealer Gary Wasserman, of Wasserman Projects, a contemporary art venue in the Eastern Market neighborhood.



Koen Vanmechelen, *Material World* (2016).
 Courtesy of the Wasserman Projects.
 Photo by PD Rearick.

A hybrid developed by the artist to bring together desirable qualities of several varieties of fowl, the Cosmopolitan Chicken serves as a metaphor for the benefits of diversity in the human gene pool. In the future, the birds' meat will also be for sale. "It's the most esoteric art combined with the most basic human need," Wasserman said, acknowledging that the artist's more market-ready products—including taxidermied chickens and animal portraits—remain a tough sell for locals.

Curing Social Isolation

Turning the tables on traditional power structures, the Ghana Think Tank looks to people in places like Sudan, Cuba, and Iran to help solve first world problems. The group was founded in 2006 by Christopher Robbins, John Ewing and Matey Odonkor; Maria Del Carmen Montoya joined in 2009. They surveyed Westerners who they say complained of feeling disconnected from their neighbors. In response, Moroccan consultants offered a solution, pointing out that their own living structures are often centered around a courtyard where one inevitably crosses paths with one's neighbors. Thus was born an architectural project they called the American Riad, a metal structure incised with geometric Islamic designs that provides a covered space between two houses. The project is in collaboration with Oakland Avenue Artist Coalition, Central Detroit Christian CDC, and NEWCO.



Rendering of the Islamic Riad, a shared courtyard that will join repaired homes and businesses. Courtesy of Ghana Think Tank.

“The American RIAD project grew out of widespread social isolation,” said Montoya. “People have a concept of post-apocalyptic Detroit and its loss of infrastructure and social services. Neighborhoods have become increasingly de-populated, so there’s little possibility for community. We’re trying to generate community by creating a place where people can share time and space and ideas, as well as compensate for the loss of collective memory about these neighborhoods.”



Pope.L, *Flint Water* installation view (2017). © Pope.L

For his recent project at the Detroit gallery What Pipeline, artist Pope.L is selling bottles of lead-poisoned tap water from Flint, with all proceeds going to provide clean water for the city, recasting Detroiters into the role of saviors rather than the saved.

The enthusiasm for social practice has also taken root at the city’s Red Bull House of Art (funded by the energy drink company), which is planning a round of residencies for artists working in social practice, director and curator Matt Eaton said during a visit to Red Bull’s studio and gallery building near Eastern Market.

Ingrid LaFleur, an artist and curator who recently ran (unsuccessfully) in Detroit’s recent mayoral election, pointed out that in light of the urgent needs of the populace, there are abundant opportunities for artists to practice creative problem solving. In fact, she pointed out, the term “social practice” seems too constricting for what artists are doing in the Motor City. She quoted Bryce Detroit, who organizes music and cultural programs at One Mile, as saying, “This isn’t social practice—it’s survival.”

Growth, Not Gentrification

Even as Detroit remains, in many neighborhoods, stricken with neglect, the days of \$500 houses are gone, with not just local but international developers swooping in. So how do artists and their allies in community development avoid becoming the tip of the spear of gentrification?

"Everyone's trying to figure that out," says LaFleur. "It's a work in progress." Speaking to a group of visitors at local arts venue One Mile, on a tour of the city organized by the nonprofit Culture Lab Detroit, architect Anya Sirota mentioned that they all heard warning bells when a Craigslist real estate ad used the venue as a selling point, boasting of being "just steps from One Mile." As a result, the artistic community is trying to think long-term, said Sirota, and buy up land to donate to community trusts, so that no one can cash out to the detriment of locals.

Myers-Johnson says developers buying in Brightmoor should invite area representatives into a dialogue to "develop community benefits agreements and solidify contracts that develop the neighborhood in an equitable way."

The city's future and viability for working citizens may depend on such innovative arrangements. Many locals say that for a revival to happen, the city needs to develop industries to replace the careers lost with the collapse of the auto industry.

Wasserman warns against what he calls an oversimplified vision of a future that in some way reproduces the past. "This is not a 'renaissance' story," he says. "This is not going to be the Detroit of the 1950s, so rid yourself of preconceptions. There will have to be some new model of a city."

ELEPHANT

November 9, 2017

Art and Abandonment in Post-Truth Detroit

By Ariela Gittlen

What's the biggest piece of fake news about artists in Detroit? Ariela Gittlen explores the positive impact of local collaboration in the city, far removed from the change brought on by new luxury condos, boutique hotels and high-end retail stores.



Justin Alesna and Joshua Bisset, Sidewalk Detroit 2017 Photo: Trilogy Beats

In early October, Culture Lab Detroit, a nonprofit that organizes art-centric panels and projects, held a series of public dialogues on the timely theme of post-truth and its unwelcome relations, fake news and alternative facts. The panelists—author and critic Hilton Als, architects Christopher and Dominic Leong, and artists Edgar Arceneaux, Martine Syms, Mel Chin and Coco Fusco—discussed the question: how can art help us engage a world of contested reality? But these days the subtext of any conversation about art and politics is, of course, can art help us at all?

Post-truth—an era in which emotions, not facts, shape public opinion—was the Oxford English

Dictionary's word of the year in 2016. It's also old news in Detroit, a place about which various contested and conflicting stories are told. The media's version of the city's decline shows a tabula rasa, an urban landscape returning to a state of nature. Articles about Detroit are often illustrated with photographs of crumbling art deco buildings or flocks of ring-necked pheasants nesting in empty lots. Detroit's population has shrunk by over 60% since its peak in 1950, a dramatic decline, but with over 600,000 people still residing in its 142 square miles, it's hardly a blank slate.

"The narrative of decline as abandonment enables this new story to be told, one that makes gentrification seem like the only possible solution to Detroit's woes."

The stories about the city's resurgence offer a narrow take, showing the luxury condos, boutique hotels and high-end retail stores rapidly overtaking downtown. There's also a new hockey stadium and a recently-completed light-rail line that travels a three-mile boomerang up and down Woodward Avenue—but all this investment only touches a small fraction of the city's residents.

Some benefit from these stories about the city, while others are erased by them. The narrative of decline as abandonment enables this new story to be told, one that makes gentrification seem like the only possible solution to Detroit's woes. After all, a place can't be colonized if it's been abandoned. Abandonment implies a voluntary departure, as if the exigencies of the subprime mortgage crisis, skyrocketing city property taxes and legacy of racist redlining policies aren't to blame for thousands of empty homes. It also ignores the residents who never left. In fact, activists, artists and others have been working quietly to improve their neighborhoods for years, without the benefits of corporate investments or media attention.

It has become de rigueur to blame artists for bringing the first wave of gentrification to poor neighborhoods, but as Peter Moskowitz has pointed out, artists alone can't gentrify a city. State and local governments hold the real power to shape cities, they can "build condos, change zoning laws and

give tax breaks to corporations," he noted in a recent essay. While artists may often be complicit, they are not the root cause—if a coal mine explodes you don't blame the canary. But more importantly, can artists be part of the solution? In Detroit, some artists have teamed up with residents, community leaders and activists in order to create social practice-based art and architecture that serves the community rather than replacing it.



Jennifer Harge, Sidewalk Detroit 2017
Photo: Trilogy Beats

“As much as a museum can serve as a refuge, it is probably a mistake to believe that art is ever more than a few steps from politics.”

Myers-Johnson has been working with local activists, business owners and artists since the festival's inception. During the festival, performers fill the streets, alleys, theatres and courtyards of Old Redford's commercial strip at the northwestern edge of the city. The once derelict block boasts a historic movie theater now restored to its former glory, a coffee shop, vintage clothing store, artists studios and spaces for arts education. When I visited the quiet morning was interrupted by the sounds of construction—apartments above the cafe were being renovated to serve as a bed and breakfast.

Later, in the mural-covered performance space behind the cafe, Myers-Johnson and a fellow Sidewalk Festival veteran, the musician Alex Koi, performed a slow duet, their movements echoing the outstretched arms of the bodies painted on the walls. Koi began to sing, and her high, bright vocals blended with the sounds of construction from above which kept time with the dancers like the beat of a drum.



Justin Alesna and Joshua Bisset, Sidewalk Detroit 2017 Photo: Trilogy Beats

Fifteen miles to the east (Detroit is nothing if not sprawling) is another ambitious, neighbourhood-focussed project. Power House Productions currently comprises five project houses and Ride It Sculpture Park, a combination skate park and art installation. The artist-run nonprofit was founded by Gina Reichert and Mitch Cope, an artist and architect, and aims to create public spaces for art, performance and recreation via experimental renovations. Historically Polish and now home to a large Bangladeshi population, the neighborhood is mostly 1920s bungalows with tidy lawns. Walking down one alley and peeking into backyards, I saw gardens overflowing with an autumn harvest of peas, squash and pumpkins.

When Cope and Reichert first started working with artists in the neighbourhood in the late aughts, they

were aware the noise and activity of construction might not be welcome. They were prepared for a negative response, at least at first. "A neighbour approached us one day and wanted to talk about what was going on," the pair told me via email. "As he got close we realized he had tears in his eyes. He said, 'Before the artists starting working on these houses, things had gotten so bad around here that I was planning on moving my family out of the neighbourhood, but now with all this positive activity I think we will stay.'" Cope and Reichert realized that it wasn't just the final product—the community spaces—but the process of investing time and energy in the neighbourhood that could have a positive impact.



The Power House

Each of the projects' houses is named and tailored to a particular creative or communal purpose. Play House is what it might have looked like if Charles and Ray Eames had been commissioned to design a community theatre. The exterior of the former family home blends in with the neighbourhood, but when I stepped inside the space opened up into a double-storey performance space, airy and bright. The walls are seamlessly panelled with a patchwork of wood veneers, the dynamic pattern interrupted by the occasional geometric window. The space is home to a theatre company and hosts plays, dance performances and concerts, as well as language and music classes.

Another work in progress is Squash House. Located just around the corner, it's a somewhat earthier architectural experiment. The house, which takes its name from both the vegetable and the sport, aims to play host to both. Gutted and rebuilt as a single room, the house has a vaulted ceiling and glass wall. It looks perfectly suited to its dual purpose as greenhouse and racquet sports court. The house is

available to anyone from the neighborhood, and it's intended to serve as a meeting space for garden clubs, seed exchanges and wellness classes as well as recreation.



The Power House

Another approach to innovative architecture is slowly coalescing in the North End, where an arching stainless steel canopy sits between a vacant storefront, a single-family home and several empty lots. The airy structure, which is punctured with an Islamic-style pattern that suggests the sun and stars, is a half-size model representing the grander architecture yet to come: the American Riad, a community nexus where residents and businesses are connected via a shared public space. (A riad is a traditional Moroccan house built around a central courtyard.)

The Riad is a utopian concept with an explicit social justice mission. It's the product of the Ghana Thinktank—an organization founded in 2006 with a simple slogan, “developing the first world”. The Ghana Thinktank flips the script by asking think tanks in the so-called “third world” to develop solutions to problems that plague the “first world”, such as loneliness, isolation and unhappiness. The Detroit project aims to build community the Moroccan way, by creating a shared public space that joins the surrounding homes and businesses. When construction is complete the Riad will provide a space for art, performances, workshops and gatherings.



American Riad, render

On the first night of Culture Lab’s panel discussions, a member of the audience commented during the Q&A that she was grateful for the distraction and succor art provides in such a divisive cultural climate. “After the election it was a relief to go to the Detroit Institute of Arts,” she said. “It was a welcome escape from politics.” And yet, the DIA is full of political art. Most visibly Diego Rivera’s Detroit Industry Murals, an overwhelming tableau that fills a large room, floor to ceiling. Now considered by many to be his most successful work, in 1933 the murals were condemned by everyone from the Detroit News to the Catholic Church as blasphemous, vulgar and un-American.

As much as a museum can serve as a refuge, it is probably a mistake to believe that art is ever more than a few steps from politics. Many of Detroit’s artists are now embracing this proximity, and rather than assuming that gentrification is inevitable, they’re actively engaging in work that attempts to serve and engage their communities.

frieze

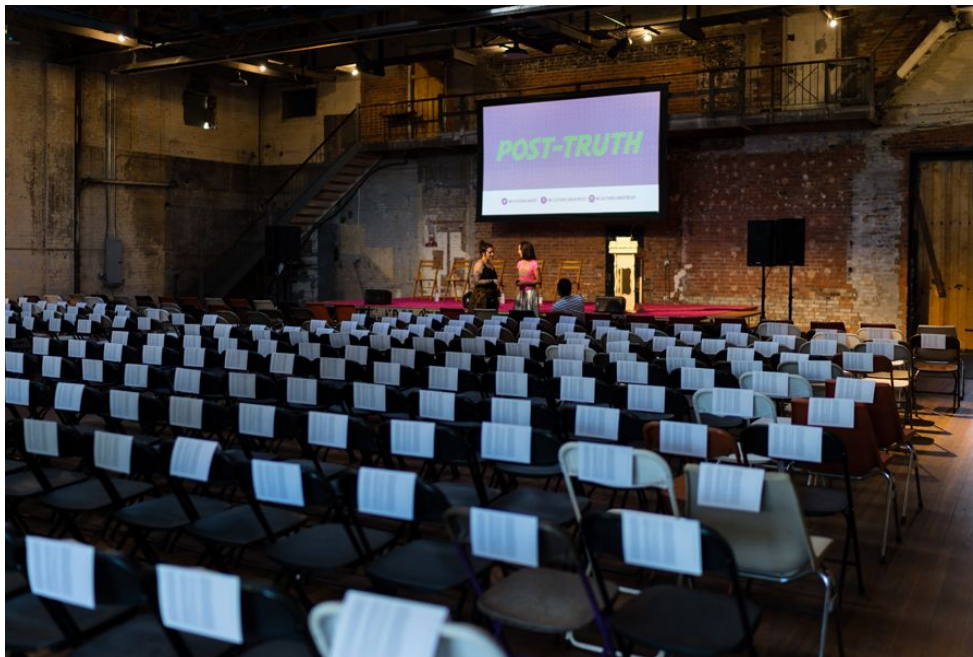
November 8, 2017

Post-Truth Detroit

By Wendy Vogel

Culture Lab Detroit's post-truth conference, the 'Art of Rebellion' show and Pope.L's Flint Water Project

Near the passenger exit of Detroit Metro Airport hangs an unmissable red banner, emblazoned with Detroit's motto, 'America's Great Comeback City'. As he drove me to my hotel, my taxi driver echoed the sentiment of the banner, with one exception: 'The schools aren't coming back yet, because so many people moving here are single.' The statement seemed pitched directly to me – a young white woman travelling alone to artsy Corktown, a once-desolate neighbourhood surrounding the shuttered Tigers Stadium. Today, it serves as a photogenic symbol of Detroit's cultural revitalization, populated by restaurants, record stores and bars with nods to the city's industrial past. Gentrification feels spectral outside the city centre, however, as Detroiters struggle with basic infrastructural issues such as blight and



water shortages. According to 2016 census data, the population of the 139-square-mile city totals just 672,795 residents. And as The Centre for Michigan reports, 27,552 Detroiters experienced water shutoffs due to unpaid bills in 2016 – almost one in six residential accounts – and up to 18,000 residents may be subjected to shutoffs this year.

'Post-Truth' conference, organized by Culture Lab Detroit, day 1 held at the Jam Handy, 5 October 2017. Courtesy: Culture Lab Detroit

I came to the Motor City under the auspices of Culture Lab Detroit, a non-profit organization that seeks to engage local art and design communities with international artists, architects and visionaries around pressing social concerns. Founded in 2012 by Jane Schulak, a Detroit-born designer whose professional expertise includes stints at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, Culture Lab Detroit hosts free annual dialogues with internationally recognized participants.



'Alternative Facts' featuring speakers Edgar Arceneaux, Martine Syms, Christopher and Dominic Leong, moderated by Juanita Moore as part of the 'Post-Truth' conference, organized by Culture Lab Detroit, day 1 held at the Jam Handy, 5 October 2017. Courtesy: Culture Lab Detroit

This year's sessions were organised around the buzzy theme of 'Post-Truth'. Schulak explained that she chose the subject without the aim of political agitation, and yet politics inevitably dominated the discussions. The first night's panel, moderated by Juanita Moore (CEO and president of Detroit's Charles H. Wright Museum for African American History), included Los Angeles artists Edgar Arceneaux and Martine Syms, and the New York-based designers Christopher and Dominic Leong (of the firm Leong Leong). Titled 'Alternative Facts', the panel circled around the way rhetorical strategies in contemporary politics intersect with artistic practice. Arceneaux spoke about the choices undergirding *Until, Until, Until...* (2015), his live restaging of Ben Vereen's blackface performance at the 1981 inauguration of President Ronald Reagan. Arceneaux's touring play includes a second-act critique of blackface that was purposefully omitted from television broadcasts in 1981. Syms professed her desire to continue to work in alternative spaces and contexts, as major art institutions often promote her work as a black female artist in the name of diversity, while failing to fundamentally restructure their programs towards true inclusivity. The Leong brothers, too, expressed a disconnect between the progressive ideals behind many contemporary architecture practices and the common exclusivity and political apathy of the profession.



Matthew Angelo Harrison, *III with Synthetic Foramina*, 2016, installation view, Woods Cathedral, Detroit. Courtesy: the artist, Culture Lab Detroit, and Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco

The second night's panel, 'The Lie That Tells The Truth', took its title from a Pablo Picasso quote about the function of art. That evening's conversation was decidedly more poetic in its framing, from its title to its location: the soaring 50,000-square-foot Woods Cathedral purchased by New York design-dealer Paul Johnson in 2014 for just \$USD 6,700. At present, the church exemplifies Detroit's aesthetic of romantic decay. Johnson has presided over a roof repair and structural upgrades to accommodate a crowd, but the edifice still features crumbling plaster and original fixtures, and no running water. For Culture Lab, Detroit-based artist Matthew Angelo Harrison installed a series of pew-like benches in the nave, comprised of clear acrylic bars (nodding to designs by Herman Miller, a Michigan-based company) spearing bones of African animals. Harrison's reference to Detroit-area

industrial design also uses bars to connect incarceration with environmental violence. Harrison also produced glitched (twinned, squashed or otherwise corrupted) African masks and objects live in the space, using a homemade 3D printer.



'The Lie That Tells the Truth', speakers Hilton Als, Mel Chin, and Coco Fusco, moderated by Deana Haggag, part of the 'Post-Truth' conference organized by Culture Lab Detroit, day two held at Woods Cathedral, 6 October 2017. Courtesy: Culture Lab Detroit

In a talk that headlined the conference and chaired by President & CEO of United States Artists, Deana Haggag, writer Hilton Als and artists Mel Chin and Coco Fusco agreed that fictions, in the form of collective storytelling, nationalism and religion, were necessary in the production of art and politics. The evening concluded with a spirited Q&A, in which one audience member asked why art and protest had to adopt the strategies of mass culture. Fusco replied that protest culture had turned toward spectacle since the 1999 World Trade Organization demonstrations in Seattle. ‘What you’re asking for is a return to citizenship that disappeared when we became consumers,’ she said.



Pope.L, Flint Water, 2017, installation view, What Pipeline, Detroit. Courtesy: the artist and What Pipeline, Detroit © Pope.L

Detroit and its surrounding areas present a case study in urban decline – one that has spurred many artists to work directly with local communities. In Flint, Michigan, for example – a once-thriving industrial city and now a symbol of post-industrial neglect and government corruption – an ongoing crisis over contaminated water has prompted several artist responses. When the local government turned to the Flint River as a water source in 2014, taps became disastrously polluted, causing infertility, birth defects, disease and even death. As of January 2017, the water in Flint has been declared safe in terms of its lead and copper levels, though residents still have been warned to wait at least a year before drinking it, due to pipe corrosion. For his Flint Fit (2017) project, Mel Chin has collected water bottles from Flint residents, which will be recycled into fabric, printed with designs for rainwear and swimwear by New York designer Tracy Reese, and stitched by workers in Flint. Chicago-based artist Pope.L has approached the water crisis more conceptually; his Flint Water Project (2017), on view at the artist-run space What Pipeline in south-west Detroit, sells cases of water collected from Flint at prices ranging from \$20 for an unsigned bottle to as much as \$5,000 for a case of 24 signed bottles. In the small garage-like space, bedecked with Flint Water wallpaper and artwork by What Pipeline’s collaborators and friends, workers wearing goggles, gloves and aprons pack up cases at a bottling station. All the proceeds directly benefit Flint residents, through the organizations United Way of Genessee County and Hydrate Detroit.



Anthony Barboza, Pat Evans, 1971, silver gelatin print, included in 'Art of Rebellion: Black Art of the Civil Rights Movement', Detroit Institute of Art, 2017. Courtesy: Detroit Institute of Art

Given the city's predominantly black population, the failure of Flint's infrastructure has been framed by many as an example of racial injustice. Two current museum exhibitions in Detroit give this some historical context, by commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Detroit uprising, which was ignited by mounting frustration over police brutality and racial discrimination. At the Detroit Institute of Arts, the exhibition 'Art of Rebellion: Black Art of the Civil Rights Movement' includes a didactic video about the Detroit Rebellion. The show spans works by collectives from the 1960s – such as New York's Spiral and Weusi groups and the Chicago-based AfriCOBRA – to contemporary artists like Adam Pendleton, whose sweeping installation Black Lives Matter

#3 (2015) fills an entire gallery. At the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, a more-is-more sensibility plays out in 'Sonic Rebellion: Music as Resistance'. At once paying homage to Detroit's radical past and contemporary artists' focus on music culture, the show includes nearly 40 artists and several dozen contributors from music and broadcast media. The exhibition highlights many productions that wouldn't typically be considered art, from public access shows devoted to R&B and soul, to 1980s house music ephemera, to 1960s countercultural graphic design. The art offerings are exciting yet diffuse. Many artworks respond directly to the musical premise, such as a video by Mickalene Thomas with black female entertainers (*Do I Look Like a Lady? (Comedians and Singers)*, 2016) and an installation by Jamal Cyrus about a fictional LA record store that turned its sales from Black Power music to punk rock. Other works, however, feel tangentially related, such as a photograph by Hank Willis Thomas appropriating the form of a MasterCard ad (*Priceless*, 2004), or Pedro Reyes's video *Disarm* (2012), in which musicians turn guns into instruments.

'Sonic Rebellion' is well-intentioned, though its overly broad curatorial strategy risks romanticizing Detroit's past. In a city with its eye focused eagerly on the future, unchecked nostalgia can be a trap. Now more than ever, it's important to tell these stories; but if we've learned anything from this 'post-truth' era, it's that the way we tell them makes all the difference.

November 7, 2017

Can an Art-Fashion Collaboration Really Help the People of Flint, Michigan? Artist Mel Chin Is Betting on It

By Brian Boucher

The artist has enlisted fashion designer Tracy Reese for a multifaceted project designed to help city residents.



Mel Chin. Courtesy of Amanda Meers.

If you thought art-fashion collaborations were only meant for the catwalk, you probably haven't met Mel Chin. For his latest enterprise, the social practice artist has enlisted the help of rising fashion designer Tracy Reese for a public project that combines art, clothing, and millions of plastic bottles to help the people of Flint, Michigan.

More than three years after lead was discovered seeping into the water pipes in Flint, residents are still struggling with the fallout from the contamination—even as the issue has been edged out of headlines. To address the ongoing crisis, Chin invited Reese to collaborate with him on Flint Fit. The multi-pronged project utilizes Reese's fashion chops to design a line of clothing using only fabric created from the discarded water bottles that once brought fresh water to Flint. A job component then employs disadvantaged residents to assemble the recycled garments.

"I was in Flint for another project," Chin said in a recent interview at the Culture Lab Detroit conference, where he spoke about Flint Fit. In a flash of Columbo-worthy "just one more thing" inspiration, he realized that maybe the bottles by which clean water comes to the city could actually be used to serve Flint in a different way.

"I said, 'Hey, what are you doing with those plastic bottles? Could you give them to me?'" he explained in an interview backstage at the conference, calling it a "by the way" moment.

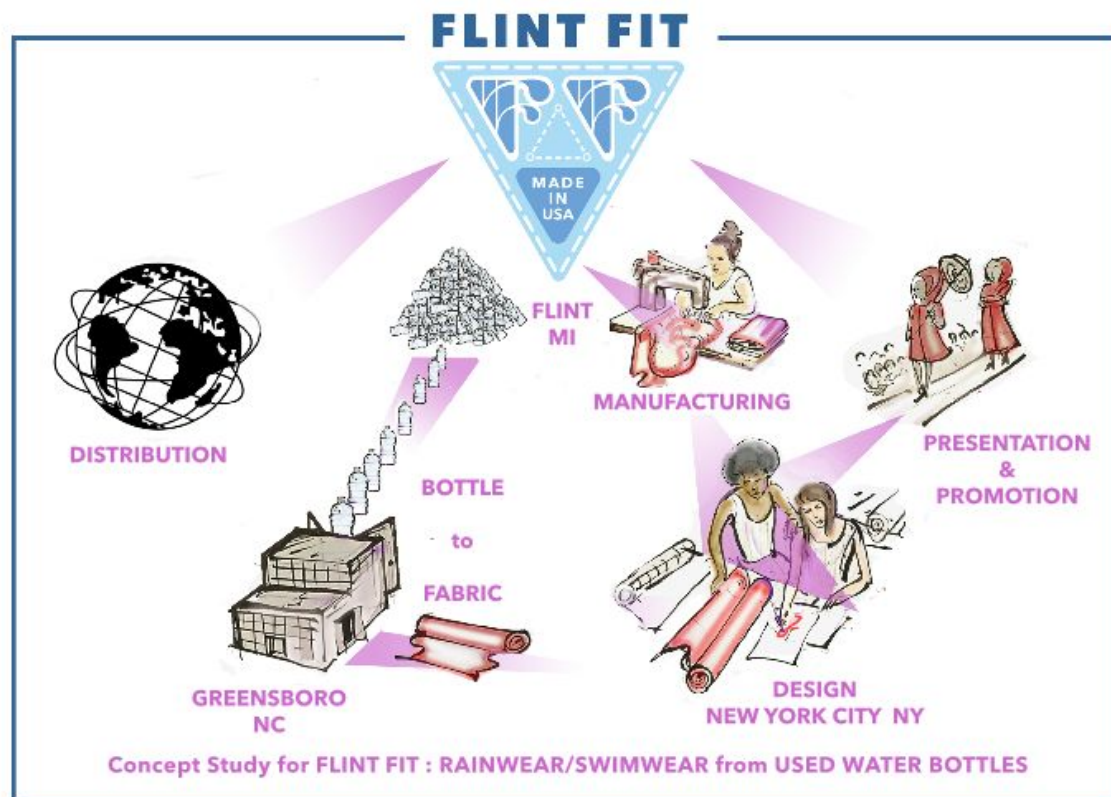


Tracy Reese. Courtesy of No Longer Empty.

In a feat of logistics, Chin corralled companies and nonprofits throughout the eastern part of the US to make the Flint Fit happen. Flint residents are paid to collect the bottles, which will then go to Unifi, a company in Greensboro, North Carolina, which turns them into polyester fabric. From there, the material goes back to Flint, to the St. Luke New Life Center, where, according to its website, "survivors of abuse and poverty" get education and workplace training. They also get a minimum-wage job turning the

material into clothing designs created by Reese, who is perhaps best known for designing the dress First Lady Michelle Obama wore at the 2012 Democratic National Convention.

"When Mel came to us and I got to look through his vast portfolio of work—wow!" Reese told artnet News. "I saw how he's committed himself to raising issues that need to be talked about and corrected, ecologically and in terms of human rights. I couldn't help but be drawn in and get on board."



Chin's diagram of the Flint Fit project. Courtesy No Longer Empty.

"He's also a beautiful and prolific artist, someone I can learn from," she added. Loads of her own research will, she hopes, lead to "something that speaks to the point and that is exciting to look at and fun to wear."

Reese has taken a stand on political issues by advocating for women's health organization Planned Parenthood and has worked to improve her own field by featuring more diverse models in terms of age, ethnicity, and body type.

Chin's work in various mediums defies easy categorization. In one of his most offbeat projects, he and a number of collaborators intervened in the hit television series *Melrose Place*, altering scripts and creating artworks (later auctioned off for charity) that served as props, in a piece called *In the Name of the Place* (1995–1997). The artist's award-winning hand-drawn animated video *9/11-9/11* (2007) drew parallels between the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC, and the US-sponsored military overthrow of Chilean president Salvador Allende on the same day 28 years earlier.

But the project that most closely aligns with Flint Fit is Chin's Operation Paydirt/Fundred Dollar Bill Project (ongoing since 2006), which aims to fight lead pollution, partly by using hand-drawn hundred-dollar bills by children as an awareness-raising hook.



A garment being sewn at the St. Luke N.E.W. (North End Women's) Life Center in Flint, (2017). Courtesy of Ben Premeaux.

Flint Fit will be part of a multi-venue exhibition, "All Over the Place," opening at various locations in New York in spring 2018 and headquartered at the Queens Museum. "Mel Chin's work takes complex ideas and breaks them down into moving and direct artworks that invariably

deliver something thought-provoking, and even action-provoking," said Queens Museum director Laura Raicovich in an email to artnet News.

Co-organizing the show is No Longer Empty, a nonprofit that typically organizes site-specific exhibitions in temporarily disused spaces. Flint Fit is a new kind of undertaking for the organization, said co-founder and chief curator Manon Slome in an interview. "Our mission is to give artists opportunities outside the institutional framework," she said, "but if I have to break my own rules to do a show with Mel, so be it."

"This isn't just a project that brings attention to the Flint water crisis," Slome added. "What we're doing is the prototype... Hopefully, [Flint Fit] will be handed over to the people of Flint."

For Flint Fit to work, Chin says local buy-in is essential. The artist made a point of working with local organizations like Water You Fighting For. "I even told the mayor, 'If you say no, it doesn't fly,'" he said.

Seeing possibility where others might see only ruin, Chin believes that humanitarian crises in places like New Orleans, Flint, and Detroit offer invaluable opportunities to come together creatively and lift people up. "These are the places to let our humanity reemerge," he says.

OBSERVER

October 16, 2017

Matthew Angelo Harrison's 3-D Printed Sculptures Unmask Cultural Constructs

By Sara Christoph



Matthew Angelo Harrison working on his installation at Atlanta Contemporary. Jessica Silverman Gallery

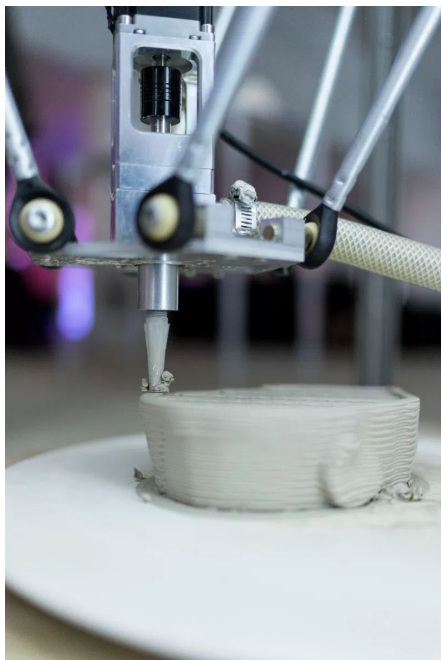
Earlier this month, at Woods Cathedral—a magnificently restored, deconsecrated church built in north west Detroit nearly a century ago—Matthew Angelo Harrison was hunched over his laptop among a heap of extension cords and whirring generators while a crowd looked on. This was the performative part of Harrison's two-day installation for Culture Lab Detroit, *The Consequence of Platforms* (2017), which consisted primarily of a hand-crafted 3-D printer that towered above the artist. Whirring into action, the printer's fine-tipped point shuttered into place while thin strips of clay successively pooled into the form of a human head, the way one might ice the perimeter of a cake.

The Detroit-based artist's long and diagnostic practice begins with sourcing African antiquities—here, masks from a tribe in Mozambique—and ends with printed, three-dimensional sculptures that elude classification. "My sculptures represent objects from an exhausted cultural economy," Harrison told the group, weaving through rows of newly printed clay heads. "A lot of African artifacts are used as interior design, and I like to play with that, making a satirical comment on how those things are valued."

If his schedule is any indication, the artist's inquiries have struck a chord. When Observer spoke to the artist in Detroit, he had just returned from his solo exhibition at Atlanta Contemporary, *Dark Povera Part 1*, on view through December 17. Only a few weeks before, he was in New York for the opening of *Fictions*, a survey of emerging artists at the Studio Museum in Harlem, which runs through January.

At Culture Lab Detroit, a vibrant two-day series of public conversations with luminaries such as Hilton Als, Coco Fusco, Martine Syms, and Edgar Arceneaux, Harrison's installation was illuminated by hundreds of tapered candles, the light flickering against the lazuline blue of the surrounding frescoes. The candles were a necessity: as in many neighborhoods throughout Detroit, electricity at Woods Cathedral is spotty. Yet for Harrison, working in his native city has emboldened his DIY practice.

"I'm lucky to be in a situation where I have the space and access to fabrication that I need. In New York, even if you have money, you still run into problems with execution, but here I can rent a machine and do it myself," Harrison said. "People send things to Michigan to get made. I am spoiled by living at the heart of that environment."



Installation view of 'Matthew Angelo Harrison' at Culture Lab Detroit, Woods Cathedral, October 6, 2017.

Crucially, Harrison's masks are not replicas, but singular objects generated from a "script" of multiples. For example, he might scan ten individual masks from a specific tribe, then craft a "generalized" final form for printing with the aid of face-modeling software. Harrison wants the printed sculptures to "serve as an allusion to something particular, while creating a distance from the cultural relics." The result is an uncanny object, a face reminiscent of ones often seen behind the glass of museum vitrines, yet utterly new.

Harrison lives in Hamtramck, a city within the boundaries of greater Detroit that continues to undergo cultural transformation. Once a Polish enclave, the city is now predominantly Muslim, home to large Yemeni, Bengali, and Pakistani populations. Though his current work explores the diaspora of African culture, Harrison is deeply interested in how collective identities are shaped and transformed over time, and so his immersion in such a city is fitting. "I think about identity on a macro-scale. What is the process of forming an identity? What

are the consequences of having an identity, and why do identities have the boundaries they do?" he said.



Installation view of 'Matthew Angelo Harrison' at Atlanta Contemporary. Jessica Silverman Gallery

Harrison's masks, which scramble the binaries "African" and "African-American," are rife with contradictions. "Black identity is very confusing to be a part of, and I want to understand that." His

sculptures are often displayed atop pedestals constructed of aluminum and bulletproof glass, nodding to the shuttered liquor stores that mark numerous Detroit blocks. For the artist, this is an act of bridging common materials with the unknown. "To Westerners, African masks are exotic, and in fusing them with a material that is common to liquor stores, I'm forcing the materials to work together." In reality, the materials cannot mix, and both are ultimately deprived of their function. Harrison's masks are not designed to be seen through, and the bulletproof glass on which they rest—engineered to protect—cannot shield the objects it elevates.



Installation view of 'Dark Povera Part 1' at Atlanta Contemporary. Jessica Silverman Gallery.

At Atlanta Contemporary's Dark Povera Part 1 (literally translated as "dark poor") Harrison provokes tension between the original objects and his own. The African antiquities he scanned, borrowed from private collections around Atlanta, are included in the exhibition, and covered by dark, sepia-toned vitrines on the floor. Meanwhile, their contemporary counterparts are elevated on pedestals and left open to the air.

The originals seem silenced—held captive—emphasizing the vulnerability of the new versions, so much more accessible to touch or harm.

With its racially charged implications, the title also references *arte povera*—an Italian movement born out of the country’s political upheaval during the 1960s that emphasized the use of “common” materials. Harrison sees a strong connection between the economic landscape of his hometown and post-war Italy. “The artists working in those conditions used accessible materials to upset value systems within the art world, romanticizing a pre-industrial time,” he said. By contrast, Harrison’s work uses industrial tactics to romanticize what he terms “post-industry,” a time in which artists can use technology to refashion the cultural iconography that defines us.

MICHIGAN CHRONICLE

October 3, 2017

Acclaimed artist Mark Bradford to speak at Detroit Institute of Arts Oct. 19



Mark Bradford.

The Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) presents a talk by critically acclaimed artist Mark Bradford on Thursday, Oct. 19 at 7 p.m. The free event is hosted by the DIA's Friends of Modern and Contemporary Art and is made possible with the generous support of CULTURE LAB DETROIT.

Bradford is a Los Angeles-based artist whose work was featured in the DIA's recent "30 Americans" exhibition. He will share an overview of his artistic and social practice, as well as the journey leading to his presentation at the U.S. Pavilion at this year's Venice Biennale. In Venice, in addition to the United States pavilion exhibition, Bradford collaborated on a social project initiative with Rio Tera dei Pensieri, which provides education and reintegration services to local incarcerated populations. He will discuss the

processes that led to this collaboration and the effects it has had on the community.

“Mark Bradford’s art and community collaborations demonstrate the power of art to call attention to important social issues,” said Salvador Salort-Pons, DIA director. “His talk is especially topical, as great change is taking place in Detroit with arts and community development at the forefront.”

Bradford, who was born in South Los Angeles in 1961, creates abstract art charged with social and political activism that addresses issues of race, orientation and class. A large part of Bradford’s youth was spent in his mother’s beauty salon, where he developed a strong sense of community and a fascination with everyday objects, which he incorporates into his art to signify important cultural messages.

Among Bradford’s numerous honors are the Bucksbaum Award from The Whitney Museum of American Art (2006), a MacArthur Fellowship (2009) and the David. C. Driskell Prize (2016). In 2013, he was elected as a National Academician by the National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts in New York and in 2015 was presented with the U.S. State Department Medal of Arts.

Selected public collections include The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

In November 2017, Bradford will present “Pickett’s Charge,” a monumental commissioned cyclorama of paintings at the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. At 397 linear feet of wall space, the work will be Bradford’s largest site-specific work to date.

Bradford co-founded the nonprofit art, activism and community space Art + Practice in the Leimert Park Village area of South Los Angeles. Its vision statement reads: “Art + Practice encourages education and culture by providing support services to foster youth predominantly living in South Los Angeles as well as offering access to free, museum-quality art exhibitions and moderated art lectures to the community of Leimert Park.”

Forbes

November 7, 2017

Is Art The Lie That Tells The Truth? Culture Lab In Detroit Poses The Question

By Brienne Walsh



An image from a past Culture Lab Detroit panel discussion.

Every year, in Detroit, a non-profit organization called Culture Lab holds a series of panel discussions with notable international artists, architects and designers that is free and open to the public. This year's discussions, which will be held on Thursday, October 5, and Friday, October 6, center around the theme of "post-truth." Although the term "post-truth" conjures up images of Donald Trump, Sean Spicer, Kellyanne Conway, Russian hackers and the Twitter icon, Culture Lab's founder, Jane Schulak, insists that the platform is apolitical.

"Post-truth is the 2016 word of the year, so it's very timely," Schulak told me over the phone. "But it's also a term that allows us to ask artists why they create. It gets to the root of everything they do. How do you take one world and make another? How can art show us what's true? Post-truth allows for those kinds of questions.



Jane Schulak.

Schulak, who was born and raised in Detroit, founded Culture Lab five years ago. It was 2012, and the city was on the verge of bankruptcy. In the media, Detroit was depicted as a wasteland where huge loft-like spaces could be bought for the price of \$1. It was a place where artists could live and create without worrying about selling work. The arts scene, I've been told, thrives there — unfortunately, I've never been.

"After researching for about a year, I realized there was no public forum and no place to share practices," Schulak said of her motivation to host the first Culture Lab panel discussion. She chose the theme of "Living With Design" so that locals could respond to the influx of art and design in the city.

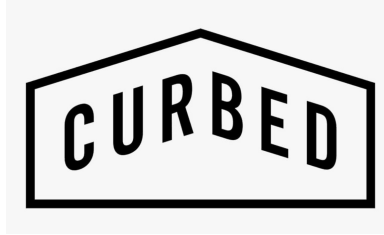
"There is no other city where so many artist practices are about social justice, social whatever, that are really life affirming, and about sustaining the environment," she told me. "Detroit's created its own new culture and voice, and its

own economy. The city has done this with very little. In its own way, it's very sophisticated."

This year's panel discussions will take place between New Yorker writer and critic Hilton Als, artist and filmmaker Edgar Arceneaux, conceptual artist Mel Chin, interdisciplinary artist and writer Coco Fusco, architects and designers Christopher and Dominic Leong of Leong Leong, and conceptual entrepreneur Martine Syms.

Moderators Juanita Moore, President and CEO of The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, and Deana Haggag, President and CEO of United States Artists, will pose questions such as, "How has the language of today's political landscape made it into your art?" And, "Does the artist have a moral imperative to be politically engaged?" Apolitical only in the sense that all are welcome, and no one is asked to choose a side — although it's easy to imagine what side the participants will identify with.

Schulak states that the oft-cited quote by Pablo Picasso — "art is the lie that tells the truth" — was one of many inspirations for the theme. "If art is the lie that tells the truth, and we are living in post-truth, do we need art differently, in the same way that we need journalism differently?" she asked at the end of our conversation. Or do we need art at all? I wish I could attend to ask that very question.



October 3, 2017

Culture Lab Detroit returns with discussion, exhibition on Post-Truth

By Robin Runyan



Friday's dialogue and exhibition will be held at Woods Cathedral Photo by Michelle & Chris Gerard

In its fifth year, Culture Lab Detroit will bring artists, architects, and theorists together for discussions of Post-Truth. Events are free to the public and will take place at the Jam Handy and Woods Cathedral.

"Post-Truth" was the Oxford English Dictionary's 2016 word of the year, marking a time when

"...objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." The events for Culture Lab Detroit will explore how the subjective and objective interact today, and how art can help us navigate a world of contested reality.

On October 5, the Jam Handy will host a discussion on Alternative Facts, exploring how we navigate America today, different versions of history, and our future. Panelists include artist and filmmaker Edgar Arceneaux, founders of architecture and design studio Leong Leong Christopher and Dominic Leong, and conceptual entrepreneur Martine Syms. The discussion will be moderated by Juanita Moore, President and CEO of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

On October 6, Woods Cathedral will host both a discussion and exhibition. The Lie that Tells the Truth will explore the lines between reality and art. Participants include writer and critic Hilton Als, conceptual visual artist Mel Chin, and interdisciplinary artist and writer Coco Fusco. The discussion will be moderated by Deana Haggag, President and CEO of United States Artists.

Also at Woods Cathedral, artist Matthew Angelo Harrison will create a site-specific installation to reflect the history of desolate spaces in and around Detroit, the need for places of solace in times of political turmoil, and the division between hand-made and machine-made. Harrison works with relics and symbols of African culture and reproduces them with his homemade low-resolution 3D printers. The exhibition will be on display October 6 and 7.

Information on all Culture Lab Detroit events can be found [here](#).



September 2017

Culture Lab

By Cassandra Spratling

Jane Schulak is known internationally as an outstanding designer. But in Detroit, her growing reputation is not merely for fostering exceptional art — although she certainly does that. Even more so, it's for fostering collaborative efforts to bring both local and international artists and innovators together.

You might call her movement of ideas and inspiration a cultural crusade. And her vehicle for it is Culture Lab Detroit — a non-profit organization powered by her own steam, with help from friends in the city, suburbs, and around the world.



She founded Culture Lab five years ago, in collaboration with the College for Creative Studies and the Detroit Creative Corridor Center. At its best, she says, it's invisible — quietly, but stridently encouraging and supporting the work of others.

"We are a platform of intense cooperation," Schulak says from her office space at WeWork, a co-working space in downtown Detroit. "Culture Lab is not so much about what I am doing. It's about what everybody else is doing. We hope that whatever conversation is happening or whatever experiments are taking place or whatever artwork we're making with somebody, it becomes its own thing."

But it is her passion, her hands-on involvement and admiration for creativity that helps attract people from all over the world to Detroit. She personally takes invited visitors — artists, designers, social activists — on city tours, introduces them to Detroiters, and gets them as excited about Detroit and its future as she is.

"I'm completely committed to the work I do and somehow that translates," Schulak says. "Or, I'm just really tenacious."

The centerpiece of Culture Lab is a multi-day annual program that stirs conversation around a single theme or topic. It includes panel discussions, performances, art projects and more.

This fall's program is "Post-Truth," an exploration of how objective facts are taking a backseat to emotions and beliefs in shaping public opinion. Organizers say they'll also look at how art helps people navigate what's real or not.

Schulak points out, however, that neither she nor Culture Lab is politically motivated. She simply seeks timely topics that will spur conversation, collaboration, and creativity.

"I'm looking for some really interesting collaborations to come out of this," Schulak says of this year's panel discussion and programming, scheduled for October 5-6.

Past topics have included walls, green spaces, and art intervention.

Various creations have been birthed through Culture Lab:

+ A two-week pop-up store, Culture Lab Design, with products that came from pairing local and international artists. Proceeds benefited local projects and artists.



+ Hanging planters made of twisted discarded tires using macramé knotting techniques. The products were made in collaboration with the Cass Community Social Services.

+A three-month run of an art installation created by noted artist Gary Simmons. He wallpapered a Bedrock-owned building with colorful flypostings that denoted musical styles. It was presented in partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD), with support from Bedrock.

+A panel on urban farming that featured national leaders in the field, Will Allen and Patrick Blanc, along with — via Skype — chef and food activist, Alice Waters, founder of the Edible Schoolyard Project.

Among others Schulak has brought to Detroit are David Adjaye, the lead designer of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., performance artist Migguel Anggelo, and furniture and interior designers, Fernando and Humberto Campana.

Detroit Institute of Arts President Salvador Salort-Pons describes Jane Schulak as an extremely passionate city and arts activist.

"She has great intuition about what's important and relevant for this community," Salort-Pons says. "She's passionate about what she does, about bringing in artists and sharing ideas with this community."

Restaurateur and developer Phil Cooley praises Schulak for not only bringing world-class talent to Detroit, but making sure they become engaged and involved with the local community. "She's kind of like a cultural ambassador," Cooley says. "And she's kind of like a mom because she has such a big heart. I love how she's really fulfilled by making these connections and encouraging great art."

College for Creative Studies professor Michael Stone-Richards says Schulak gets the importance of taking Detroit's creativity to a world stage and bringing that world stage to Detroit. "Detroit is a source of creativity," Stone-Richards says. "That creativity is enhanced with relationships with national and international-caliber artists. She sincerely wants to have an impact on the betterment of Detroit."

Her longtime friend and arts advocate, Marsha Miro agrees.

"It's not just altruistic," Miro says. "She is deeply, emotionally involved in the city and wants to be a part of helping it regenerate. And she doesn't brag about what she does, she just does it."

Schulak was born in Detroit, lives in Birmingham, and travels regularly for artistic work she does in Paris. She says she became increasingly interested in Detroit about six years ago when close friends began to encourage her to spend time in the city, getting to know its neighborhoods and people. She became increasingly drawn to it and committed to doing whatever she could to work with Detroiters.

"There's just this positive attitude that's all over this city," Schulak says. "It's like living art work. I just want to be a part of it and bring something to it, not just watch, but actually be a part of the process."

That positive, determined energy she feels in Detroit radiates from Schulak herself.

Schulak's not sure where that spark comes from. She thinks back over her life and recalls a skiing accident at age 16. She was hospitalized for weeks and unable to walk for two years. She became a voracious reader — still is — because reading was all she could do.

Certainty that she would recover carried her through.

"I knew at some point I'd be fine," Schulak recalls. "I just felt it deep down inside. I felt I could do it. Maybe I take some of that same energy to Detroit. You have to be able to absorb some pretty serious bumps along the way. But I've never stopped. I'll never stop until Culture Lab fulfills its mission."

That mission, she says, is to have collaborations on the ground that add to and enhance what's already going on in Detroit.

"The platform hopefully gives people the tools to open conversation, to create an atmosphere for collaboration and can, hopefully, further all the good that's happening," Schulak says. "But then

continue to take it up. To respectfully raise the bar higher and higher and higher.”

Schulak keeps up other interests in the arts as well. She’s an active board member of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Museum of Decorative Arts) in Paris. A gracious and beloved hostess, she designed a luncheon for 40 guests from around the world. Decorations were made entirely of paper, a tribute to the museum’s ancient and vast collection. Years later, people still hail the luncheon as the height of elegance.

She’s also writing a book with David Stark — another acclaimed designer she has brought to Detroit — that she hopes will be out next year.

When Schulak’s not working on Culture Lab or creating her own art, the proud grandma of three enjoys working in her spacious organic garden, exercising — she’s a runner — and traveling around the world.

“I’ve been very loved in my life,” Schulak says. “I live well in my skin. Maybe it’s just the luck of the draw.”

After each annual Culture Lab event, Schulak devotes time to self-care, recharging for the challenges ahead.

“I go hiking. I eat super healthy and I just get quiet,” Schulak says. “The best thing I come away with is myself, which is great.”

Programming information:

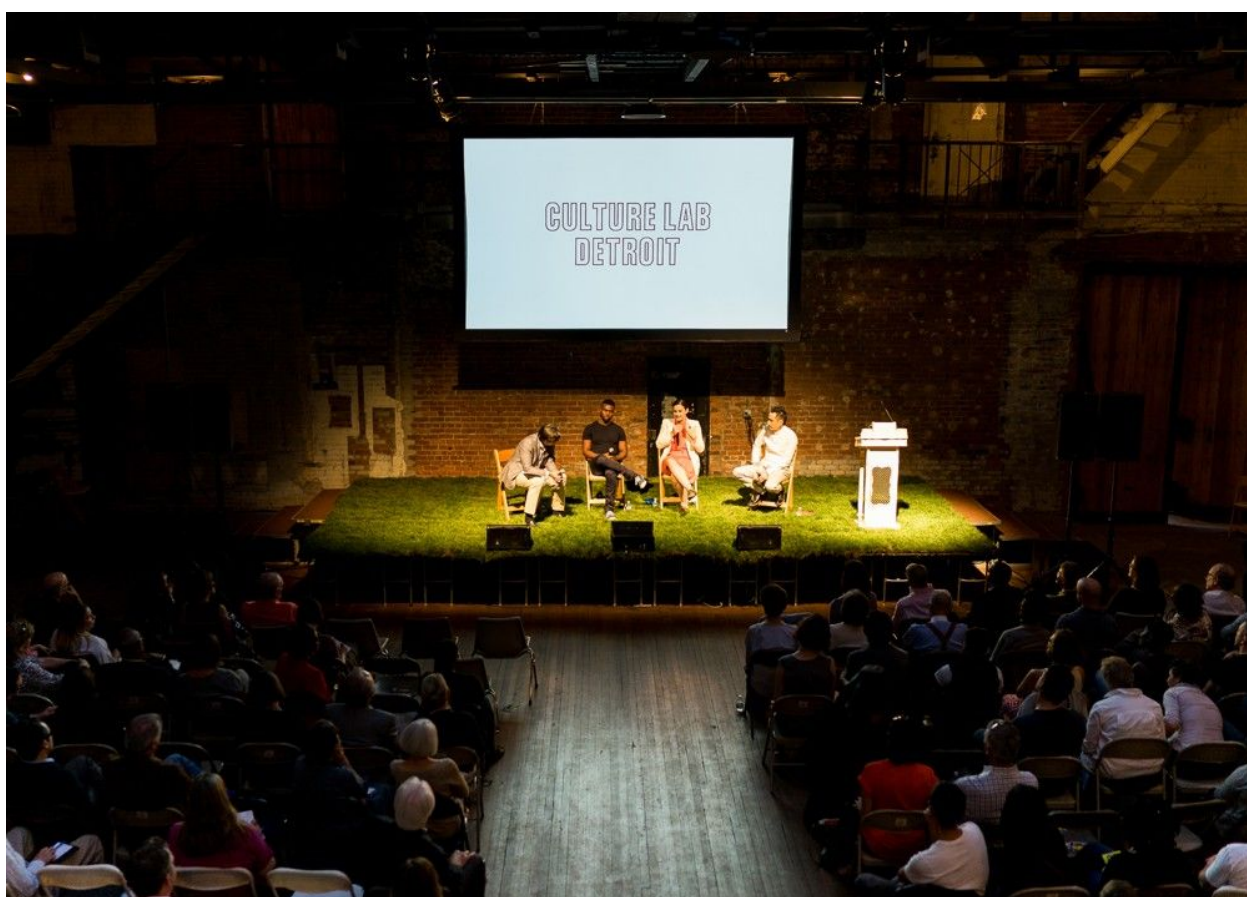
The discussion “Alternative Facts” will take place Thursday, October 5, at the Jam Handy (2900 E Grand Blvd, Detroit). There will be a reception at 6:30pm, and the dialogue will start at 7pm. The discussion “The Lie That Tells the Truth” will take place Friday, October 6 at Woods Cathedral (1945 Webb Street).

Photos by Corine Vermeulen.

July 12, 2017

Culture Lab Detroit announces 2017 theme: 'post-truth'

By Lee DeVito



Culture Lab Detroit dialogue 2016 at the Jam Handy in 2016.

If it wasn't apparent already, we have officially entered a post-truth era. From the "alternative facts" brazenly spun from the White House daily to the public's eroding trust in the media, the concept of a fractured reality had a moment in 2016 — so much so that the Oxford English Dictionary even chose "post-truth" (an adjective "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief") as its word of the year, noting a 2,000 percent uptick in its usage in 2015.

What does the concept of post-truth mean closer to home? With the increasing traction of the narrative of "Two Detroits" — a booming downtown touted in the media as a Motor City comeback, while the rest of the city experiences a very different reality — it's a question worth asking, which Culture Lab Detroit will explore later this year with the announcement of the "post-truth" theme for its 2017 discussion series, to be held Oct. 5 and 6.

"Every year we pick a theme that we think resonates culturally within the fabric and framework of what's going on in Detroit," says Culture Lab Detroit founder Jane Schulak. "Not only is this theme obviously and clearly politically relevant, but I think that the theme is appropriate in terms of the arts as well. Finding the truth is the responsibility of artists, to help the community find the truth."

Now in its fifth year, Culture Lab Detroit brings in national artists, designers, and thinkers to the city to take part in panel discussions that have, in years past, addressed topics like green spaces, immigration, and more. This year's guests include artist and filmmaker Edgar Arceneaux, architects Christopher Leong and Dominic Leong of design studio Leong Leong, concept artist Martine Syms, writer Hilton Als, visual artist Mel Chin, and artist and writer Coco Fusco.

Schulak says the guests were chosen for the ways in which they have tackled the concept of "post-truth" in their work — such as Arceneaux, who has created installations based on U.S. government Civil Rights-era disinformation campaigns. But they were also chosen for the ways in which they are known to engage and collaborate with different communities — as is the case with Leong Leong, who earned kudos for recent designs for facilities for a mixed-use Asian-American community building in New York and an LGBT center in Los Angeles. "They're very much guests, but we're very careful that the kinds of guests that we bring are highly collaborative and share the same spirit that we do," says Schulak.

Schulak says the idea of collaboration is important for Culture Lab Detroit, which also is the driving force behind deciding where to hold the panel discussions — she says the goal is to hold them in outside-of-the box venues around the city. "Every step of this way is a collaboration — whether it's figuring out where we take the participants on a tour, who helps us create the event, how we get our ideas, and where we present," she says. "We think that's a really important piece, that we are about the people, and the artists, and the grassroots organizations, and the communities, and neighborhoods, and the social practices that are happening in Detroit. We're just a platform that wouldn't exist without all of that." This year, participating venues include the Jam Handy in the North End and Woods Cathedral on the west side.

It's also about access. Schulak says what was initially conceived six years ago as an event inspired by the famous TED Talks speaker series with a focus on design has changed somewhat, but the core of it remains the same — the panel discussions are free and open to the public. "It still is about design, but our topics were not as deep as they are now," she says.

Schulak says the events open dialogues to communities that otherwise wouldn't have access to them, and the open nature of the events create a forum for lively debate.

The first year, Schulak says a power outage caused the lights to go out at the College for Creative Studies' A. Alfred Taubman Center — but that didn't stop the community forum from finishing a heated discussion about the then-new Detroit Future City plan, which provided a 50-year blueprint for Detroit.

"It leveled the playing field. There weren't lights, and people suddenly didn't feel as self-conscious. You could have heard a pin drop," she says. "And the most unsuspecting people stood up and talked about what it was like to be from Detroit, and to see things changing and how they felt in negative and positive ways. There were some hard questions being asked of the panelists, depending on what their positions were." The conversation went on for two hours.

"I knew at the end of it I had struck a chord, but I needed to go deeper," Schulak says. "I really wanted a platform that everybody felt welcome to, and that there was no charge. That is the tangible outcome."

That's what Schulak says she hopes to create with Culture Lab Detroit — moments, rather than a material thing. "We try very hard to create a conversation," she says. "If there's something that can affect somebody's social practice or their life ... then that's just as effective as this large collaboration that we're working on. It's about reaching the community in a way that I think is hopefully different than anybody else has done so far."

Learn more about Culture Lab Detroit at facebook.com/culturelabdetroit.

Artspace

July 12, 2017

Hilton Als, Mel Chin, Coco Fusco, and Martine Syms To Tackle "Post-Truth" at Culture Lab Detroit 2017

By Artspace Editors

The artist has enlisted fashion designer Tracy Reese for a multifaceted project designed to help city residents.



Left: Coco Fusco | Right: Mel Chin

Post-Truth is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary—which chose it as its 2016 Word of the Year—as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." When art's purpose is arguably to help "shape"

public (or at least its audience's) opinion, emotion, and personal belief, it's no surprise that Culture Lab Detroit chose "Post-Truth" as the subject for its fifth annual panel discussion series.



Woods Cathedral, Detroit. Courtesy JTG Detroit Project

The two-day event taking place October 5-6 is headlined by an impressive roster of heavy-hitters: 2017 Pulitzer Prize winning critic Hilton Als, artist and founder of the Watts House Project Edgar Arceneaux, conceptual visual artist Mel Chin, artist and writer Coco Fusco, architecture and design firm Leong Leong, and artist and self-proclaimed "conceptual entrepreneur" Martine Syms. The first panel will involve a discussion that explores "different versions of history, ways of existing in American today, and possibilities for the future." The second, which is moderated by Deana Haggag and takes place at the repurposed historic 50,000-square-foot Woods Cathedral, will "clarify and complicate the border between art and reality" during a time of "autofiction, reality television, fake news, and virtual reality."

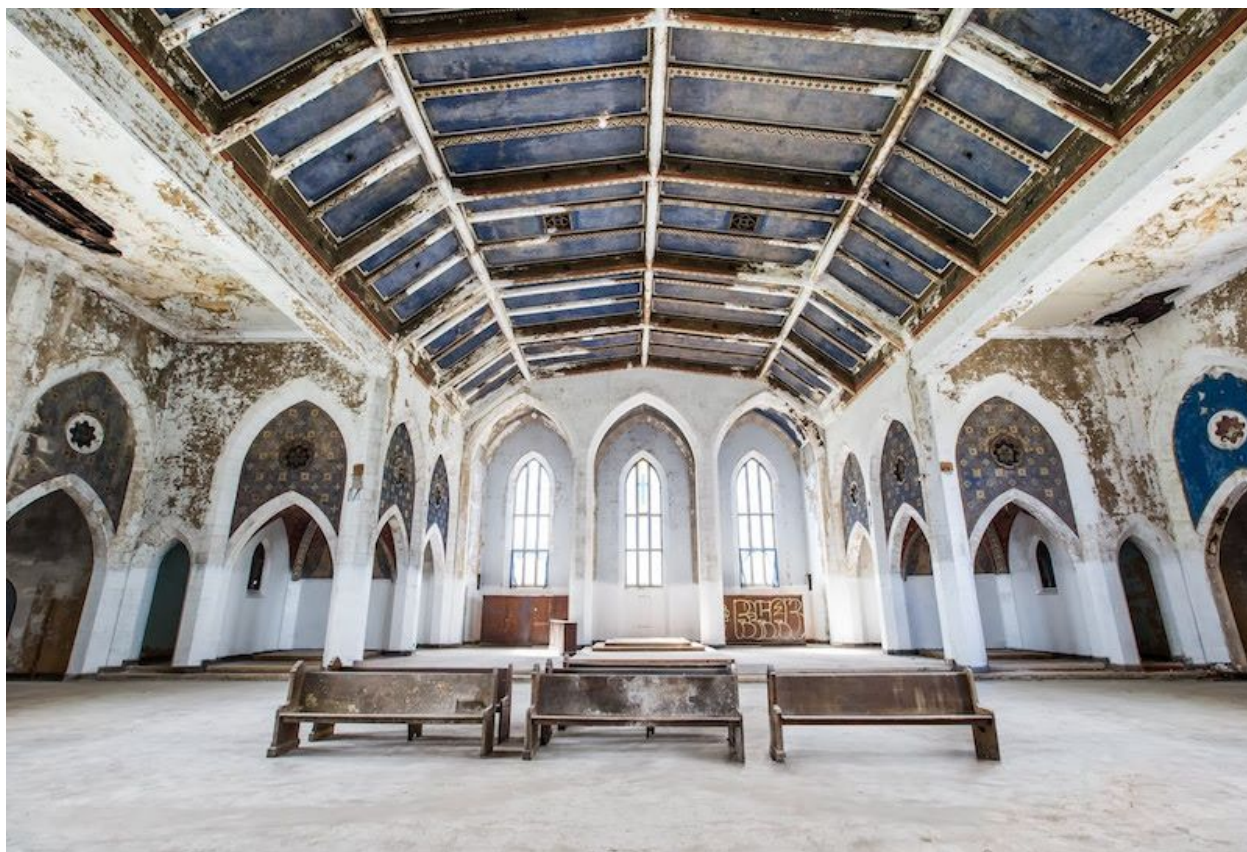
Culture Lab Detroit—a non-profit that hosts dialogues and facilitates public projects by international artists, architects, and designers in the city of Detroit—has organized serial discussions on topics like public green spaces, art interventions, and "living design" in the past. In its fifth year, Post-Truth is its most ambitious discussion series to date.

ARTNEWS

July 12, 2017

Culture Lab Detroit to Present Discussion Series on 'Post-Truth' With Hilton Als, Martine Syms, Mel Chin, and More

By Robin Scher



Woods Cathedral. COURTESY JTG DETROIT PROJECT

Culture Lab Detroit, a nonprofit that facilitates socially-minded dialogue, has announced its fifth annual discussion series for two sites in the Motor City on October 5-6. This year's panelists—including the 2017 Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Hilton Als as well as artists Martine Syms, Mel Chin, Coco Fusco, and more—will engage in two separate discussions addressing the Oxford English Dictionary's word of the

year for 2016: "Post-Truth."

The all-too-familiar term "Alternative Facts" provides the title of the first night's dialogue, at the former film production house known as the Jam Handy. The talk will feature Syms in conversation with fellow artist and filmmaker Edgar Arceneaux as well as the architects Christopher and Dominic Leong, founders of Leong Leong design studio. Juanita Moore, president of the the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, will serve as moderator.

"The Lie That Tells the Truth" is the title of the second night's discussion, at the repurposed 50,000-square-foot Woods Cathedral. For that talk, Als will be joined by Chin and Fusco as they, according to a statement, unpack the "border between art and reality" at a time when "the lines between the real and the unreal are more volatile than ever." Deana Haggag, United States Artists' president and CEO, will moderate.

Culture Lab Detroit founder Jane Schulak said that these participants "represent a diversity of creative practices. They are well-equipped to discuss the complexities of this contemporary moment, and we're thrilled to welcome them here to Detroit for this globally relevant conversation."

Copyright 2018, Art Media ARTNEWS, llc. 110 Greene Street, 2nd Fl., New York, N.Y. 10012. All rights reserved.

BuzzFeed

July 6, 2017

11 Spots In Michigan That Will Give Your Imagination A Workout

Looking for inspiration for your next masterpiece? Michigan is the place to wake up your imagination.

1. Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts



Where: Grand Rapids

What: A cultural hub devoted to the visual arts, film, music, and dance that will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year.

2. Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park



Where: Grand Rapids

What: A 158-acre botanical garden and outdoor sculpture park perfect for snapping pictures.

3. Culture Lab Detroit



Where: Detroit

What: This cultural lab houses free programs open to the public with guest artists, designers, and architects.

4. Museum of Contemporary Art



Where: Detroit

What: This art museum is home to a collection which features installations that stress the importance of contemporary culture.

5. Lansing Symphony Orchestra



Where: Lansing

What: This cultural gem produces beautiful sounds from Michigan's most talented musicians.

6. Detroit Institute Of Arts



Where: Detroit

What: The Detroit Institute of Arts has one of the largest art collections in the United States.

7. Murals in the Market



Where: Detroit

What: For this festival, artists from Detroit and around the world come together yearly and showcase bright, eye-popping murals.

8. National Museum of the Tuskegee Airmen



Where: Detroit

What: This quaint museum tells the important story of the first black American airmen who fought in World War II.

9. Grand Rapids Art Museum



Where: Grand Rapids

What: With a mission to connect people through art, creativity, and design, this art museum offers a large range of collections that span from Renaissance to modern art.

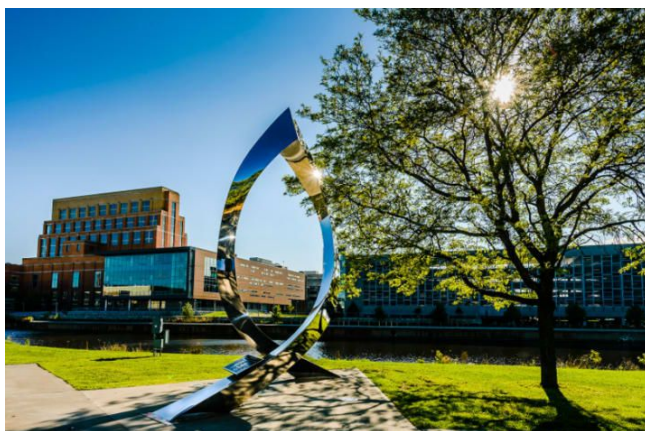
10. Broad Art Museum



Where: Lansing

What: Opened in 2012, the Broad Art Museum features art dedicated to exploring global contemporary culture.

11. Downtown Lansing Sculpture Walk



Where: Lansing

What: This sculpture walk located on the Lansing Community College campus offers a guided walk that enriches lives "through experiences that connect art, nature, and Michigan's history."