

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in May

By **Travis Diehl, Yinka Elujoba and John Vincler**

Published May 2, 2024 Updated May 24, 2024

This week in Newly Reviewed, Travis Diehl covers art from the scrap heap, Liz Magic Laser's homage to art handlers and Tolia Astakhishvili's architectural interventions.

'Art at Work: Sanitation & Social Practice'

Through May 30. All Street Gallery, 119 Hester Street, Manhattan; 917-699-1755, allstnyc.com.



Lily Cox-Richard's "Old Copper Futures: 951 lbs. of #2 scrap copper from Revolution Recovery, New Castle, DE," 2011. Lily Cox-Richard, via All Street Gallery, New York

In one photo, the brilliant mineral hues of a sulfur pool bloom on a concrete spillway; in another, a stripe of amber grass glazes a swath of green while noon haze swaddles Lower Manhattan. These pastoral scenes by Jade Duskow in the group show “Art at Work” document the implausible transformation of the most notorious landfill in New York City, Fresh Kills, on Staten Island, into a verdant public park.

Duskow is the dump’s official photographer in residence. All 10 artists in this exhibition have been in residence at sanitation departments in Philadelphia, San Francisco, New York and Portland, Ore., in the last 25 years. The show features a holy relic of the municipal trash art genre, Mierle Laderman Ukeles’s personalized nylon coat from the New York Department of Sanitation, where she inaugurated the first such residency in the late 1970s.

This show takes the waste management conversation beyond sewage treatment and the war on rats. Brian Hutsebout’s “Rebuilt” bundles a copper ring, air hoses and paper cones into an autumnal spray. With “Quiet,” Mike Suri presents an intricate cross-section of a crushed steel muffler. The inlays studding Hilary Pfeifer’s burnished salvage-wood assemblages are rounds cut from colored pencils.

Presumably, it’s hazardous to have artists wandering through your scrap heaps (as the artist Slinko does in “The Grind,” an absorbing video), asking if they might borrow the crusher. But what society rejects, artists return to us transformed: A bale of copper pipes, a sculpture by Lily Cox-Richard, could be so much recycling, except an artist chose its proportions.

Liz Magic Laser

Through June 29. Luxembourg + Co., 595 Madison Avenue, sixth floor, Manhattan; 212-452-4646, luxembourgco.com.



A view of Liz Magic Laser's "Art Handling: An Installation Play," with Sophie Becker (at back) standing on a stage and Esperanza Mayobre (foreground) handling Claes Oldenburg's "Soft Light Switches 2/2," 1963-69. via Luxembourg + Co., New York

Liz Magic Laser, an artist and curator in New York, conducts open-ended performances with live audiences and porous fourth walls, examining the social conventions of paradigms like TED talks and psychoanalysis. At Luxembourg + Co., described in the program notes as a "high-end secondary market gallery," Laser pays homage to art handlers, the back-of-house pros, with a group show you can see being hung.

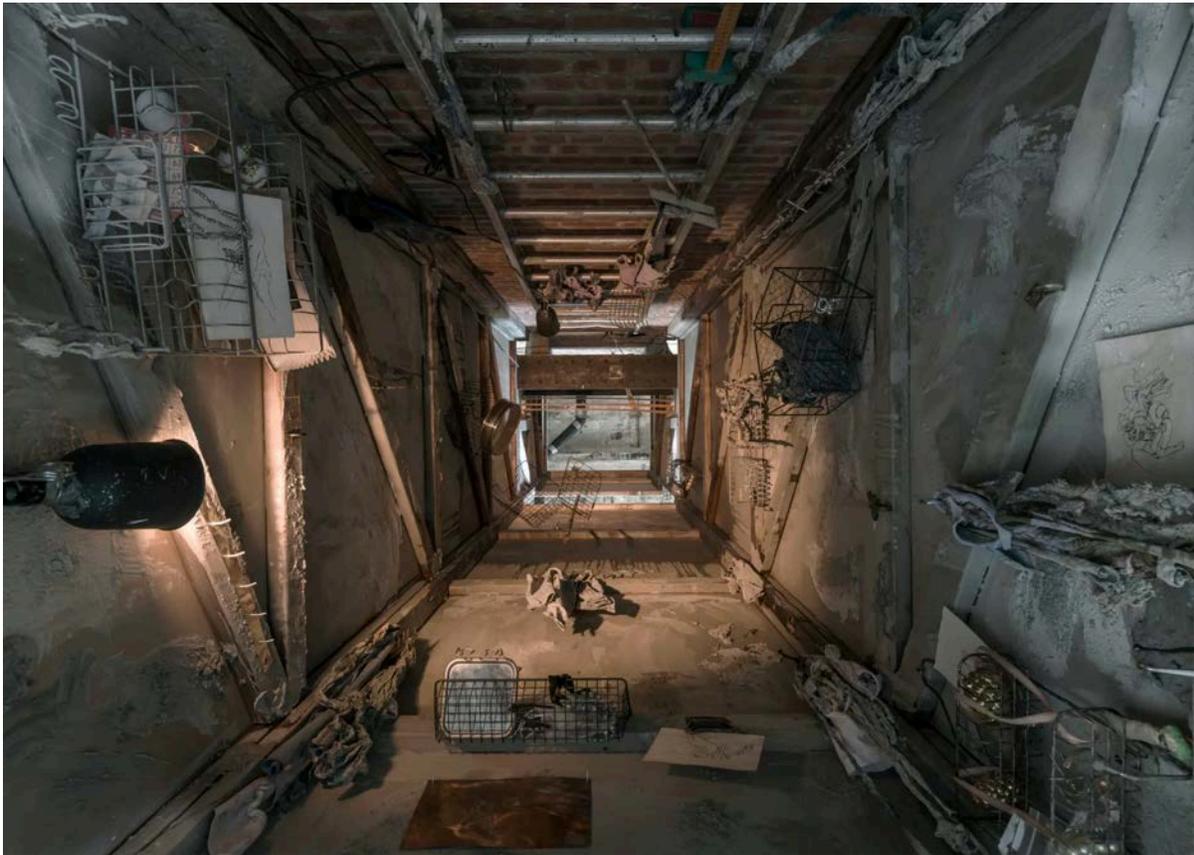
Throughout the show's first day, a cast of nine preparators performed "Art Handling: An Installation Play," unpacking and installing 11 works. They hung a puffy orange "Soft Light Switches" sculpture by Claes Oldenburg; displayed "Cubo Invisible," a 1967 work by Gino De Dominicis, by painting a crisp white square on the floor; and polished and repolished Laser's "The Invisible Cube," a chunk of etched glass. The audience shuffled out of their way.

Laser directed the preparators, calling out cues to a cast that included three of the gallery's own white-collar employees and two professionals from Crozier Fine Arts, a logistics company. Esperanza Mayobre, who has two works about the gold market in the show, also did her day job as lead preparator at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, overseeing the installation of display of Rauschenberg's "Untitled (Venetian)," a brown-black concatenation of screen door, inner tube and rubber hose. Sophie Becker, a polyglot performance artist and gallery director, ventriloquized conversations with a copy of a hinged metal Lygia Clark sculpture as her dummy.

The historical works on view, mostly made of common, tactile materials, share Laser's interest in stretching the social contract of art. The final piece in the show is a video of the play, recorded through the gallery's security cameras and installed after hours.

Tolia Astakhishvili

Through Aug. 12. SculptureCenter, 44-19 Purves Street, Queens; 718-361-1750, sculpture-center.org.



Tolia Astakhishvili's "When the others are within us," 2024, (detail); plasterboard, wood, oil, coffee, pigment, cement, hooks and found objects. via Tolia Astakhishvili, LC Queisser, Tbilisi, and SculptureCenter, New York; Photo by Charles Benton

Installations by the Georgian artist Tolia Astakhishvili evoke half-remembered ruins. With help from SculptureCenter's exhibitions crew and contributions from artist friends, Astakhishvili has filled the yawning main gallery of this former trolley repair shop with towers, boxes, walls and a row of open closets, precisely constructed yet roughly finished in wallboard. Delicate clusters of jewelry, chains, dishes and clipped-out pictures deepen the appealing sense of neglect, while sound works, framed collages and a video, some by Astakhishvili, some by her friends, signal the artist's careful attention.

The first sculpture you encounter — "The endless house" — mimics a section of SculptureCenter's basement, with a distinctive pattern of thick and thin ribs. At one end is "La foudre," a cast-bronze branch by Katinka Bock, suspended inside, while a speaker emits a soundtrack of ambient road noise arranged by Dylan Pierce. The

lonesome honks harmonize with the sound of purring engines in Astakhishvili's installation of car motors across the room, and the white noise of an air-vent sculpture around the corner.

The space feels plausible yet improbable — a pleasant contradiction. In the sculpture “When the others are within us,” an open plasterboard chute climbs 30 feet into the building's clerestory; buttons and hardware litter the floor, while hooks, baskets, drawings and tools encrust the interior to the top. A 3-D-printed resin model stuck to the building's brick wall describes dreamlike rooms, some without windows or doors. Astakhishvili's work brings to mind both expansive structure and claustrophobic delicacy, until you're unsure where the show ends — whether a tidy pile of bricks and doorstops is art, for example, or accidentally enchanting.

Last Chance

Sharif Bey

Through June 1. Albertz Benda, 515 West 26th Street, Manhattan; 212-244-2579, albertzbenda.com.



Installation view of “Sharif Bey: Crowns Encoded” at Albertz Benda. Adam Reich, via Albertz Benda, New York

In his practice as a sculptor, Sharif Bey has always embraced the visual cues of traditional Oceanic and African art, imbuing them with a sense of the modern. In “Crowns Encoded,” his first solo show in New York City, the Syracuse-based artist continues a trajectory of establishing an aura of authority and spiritual presence through an exploration of scale.

Everything is oversized: Heads invoke the Nkisi, spiritual objects used in ancient rituals by the Congo peoples of sub-Saharan Africa; the spoons and glass beads that form the droopy hair of the figures refer to interior decorative objects in the homes of family and friends in Pittsburgh, where he grew up. Through rigid facial features inspired by the monolithic figures carved by the Rapa Nui of Easter Island, Bey conveys a sense of contemplative darkness on the faces. The darkness between the eyes is even more powerful than the chains draped around some of the figures.

Yet the weightiness of Bey's sculptures is not a result of their size alone but also of an agglutination of many smaller materials. This is most obvious in "Guardian Series: Soul Collector" from 2022, where the figure is impaled with nails and heads are stuck onto its torso.

Originally, the Nkisi was an object intended to accrue different materials through its lifetime as part of the owner's spiritual journey. For Bey, who turns 50 in June and is now making the largest works of his career, this accrual invites contemplation: Are the burdens of life — gathered from experiences, emotions, events — forms of beautification rather than chains of bondage? *YINKA ELUJOBA*

Emi Mizukami

Through May 25. King's Leap, 105 Henry Street (Store 5), Manhattan; kingsleapfinearts.com.



Emi Mizukami's "If the Accident Will (The Golden Key)," 2024. via Emi Mizukami and King's Leap, New York; Photo by Sebastian Bach

Emi Mizukami makes objects, not images, through her paintings. They are alive with texture and all but beg to be touched. Recalling an eclectic mix of artists, with direct reference to Philip Guston's caricature figures, bits of the surrealism of Max Ernst and Leonora Carrington, and the watercolor dream world of William Blake. Each surface — from smooth and waxy to gritty with sand and paste — is a palimpsest paused in a moment between creation and scratching away. They feature dragons, snakes or swans' necks, cartoonlike arms and hands, legs and feet, as well as circles and orbs that are sometimes suns and moons.

These are some of the most original paintings I've seen anywhere recently. All the works in the New York debut of this Tokyo artist are paintings on linen, with two exceptions. There are two framed Blakean drawings on overlaid semi-translucent paper, taken from vintage books to create minuscule scenes of depth and elegance. Some works, like "But you have a light" (2023), allow excess linen to protrude from the sides of the paintings like a drapery or skirting. Other works can be removed and turned around, by the gallery attendant, to reveal a companion work on the reverse side. As if — as they hang there — they keep a secret. *JOHN VINCLER*

Richmond Barthé

Through May 31. Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, 100 11th Avenue, Manhattan; 212-247-0082, MichaelRosenfeld.com.



Richmond Barthé's "African Woman," from 1935, in the show "A New Day Is Coming" at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery. Via Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

Richmond Barthé, the great African American sculptor, gets kudos for his realism, but that's faint praise that damns him: In the 1930s, when his career took off, there were hundreds of artists who had as fine a technique; there are still lots in Times Square, sculpting tourists' faces in clay.

Looking at the 16 busts and figures in the Barthé survey at Rosenfeld — it's curated by the British artist Isaac Julien, who has a stunning video in the Whitney Biennial — I realized that it's best to ignore technique and to think of them as three-

dimensional photographs, or as much as you possibly could before the age of 3-D scanners. The sculptures look forward to our technology, not backward at traditional realism.

The best of Barthés's figures make his Black sitters as directly available as possible to our eyes, the way a photo seems to. There's no interfering dose of modernist style, which was imbued with stereotypes about Blackness and "primitive" African art that invoked ideas of the "savage" and the "primeval," or, calling on an opposite set of clichés, of the "Edenic" and "authentic." Those were applied to African Americans in Barthé's era, forcing them into cultural pigeonholes.

He gives his subjects more room to breathe.

"African Woman," from 1935, shows someone whose hairdo may distance her from 1930s America, but she's not exotic or ancestral. She's another person of today who happens to come from far away.

The male head in "The Negro Looks Ahead" enacts its title by just being there and looking out onto the world.

Three portraits of Black boys are just three children waiting to grow up, into a world they still imagine might treat them fairly. *BLAKE GOPNIK*

More to See

Huong Dodinh

Through Aug. 16. Pace Gallery, 540 West 25th Street, Manhattan; 212-421-3292; pacegallery.com.



Huong Dodinh's "Sans Titre," 1990, on view at Pace Gallery. Huong Dodinh, via Pace Gallery

Buoyed by a great sense of calm, and even silence, the paintings in Huong Dodinh's "Transcendence" represent an artist's triumph after decades of pursuing concision by adopting a minimalist vocabulary. It is this Paris-based artist's first-ever solo exhibition in the United States in her close to 60 years of painting.

Beginning with a rare 1966 figurative painting, whose colors seem to recall Pieter Bruegel the Elder's "Hunters in the Snow," the show progresses to the '90s and to the last couple of years. Figuration falls away as the decades pass, the artist's hand becomes less pronounced, and by the 2000s Dodinh's central concerns emerge: light, density, transparency and how these interact with lines, forms and space.

These come together gracefully in works like “Sans Titre,” from 1990, in which three sensual curves depict what could be mountains in a desert, or layers of women’s breasts.

Dodinh’s soft palette — a quiet but delightful range of carton browns, light blues, and off-whites — originated from her first experience with snow in Paris, where her family fled from Vietnam in 1953 during the First Indochina War. She was a child in boarding school when she first witnessed snow and marveled at how it revealed subtle colors underneath when it started to melt. Subtlety, a hallmark of Dodinh’s work, is something she goes to great lengths to attain: She has always worked alone, without assistants, makes her own pigments, ensuring that every inch of her canvas is filled with an energy that is wholly hers. It has been a long solitary journey and after all these years, even while Dodinh masters the art of austerity, her work feels adorned. *YINKA ELUJOBA*

Richard Ayodeji Ikhide

Through June 15. Candice Madey, 1 Freeman Alley, Manhattan; 917-415-8655; candicemadey.com.



Richard Ayodeji Ikhide's "First Born," 2024, watercolor and gouache on paper. via Richard Ayodeji Ikhide and Candice Madey, New York; Photo by Kunning Huang

Among the Edo people of Nigeria's Benin Kingdom, the art of forging mythologies is highly regarded. These myths permeate everything: language, festivals, stories told to children, as well as the famous Benin sculptures that are now scattered across museums around the world. In "Ties That Bind With Time," Richard Ayodeji Ikhide is fashioning his own mythology, complete with Emiomo, the recurring protagonist who functions as an emissary or messenger in his paintings.

The large-scale watercolor, gouache and collage paintings here depict Emiomo's journey through a kind of private universe. The figures are fluid and almost wobbly, as if they were pouring out of the canvas. Spots, dots and circles form repeated patterns, and all the figures are naked except for Emiomo, who

occasionally has a red ribbon around his neck. The many activities in the frames almost make the fantastical creatures (like a goat with two eyes on each side of its face) believable.

Although most people consider the Benin sculptures ancient, they were largely intended to be contemporary, incorporating the events of the day such as the arrival of Portuguese missionaries and traders. Myths were therefore not just history-making but an enactment of the present. Ikhide's era is obviously different from those of the Benin bronzes, yet he follows this tradition of recording the zeitgeist by including references to Japanese manga, virtual reality and video games in his own mythology. There are also more characters making a collective present here, unlike in "Emiomo," the 2021 show at the same gallery where Ikhide had first introduced the character, mostly in solitary settings. Ikhide, born in Nigeria in 1991 and trained in textile design at the University of the Arts London, is navigating a community in his personal life, having just become a father. This is how in "Ties That Bind With Time," the artist's universe is fuller and Emiomo is no longer alone. *YINKA ELUJOBA*

Lucas Arruda

Through June 15. David Zwirner, 537 West 20th Street, Manhattan; (212) 517-8677, davidzwirner.com.



Lucas Arruda's "Untitled (from the Deserto-Modelo series)," 2019/2022, at David Zwirner. via Lucas Arruda and David Zwirner

The Brazilian artist Lucas Arruda's recent paintings at David Zwirner recall an aspect of the collective wonder we experienced with the solar eclipse last month, which, for a moment, seemed to stop time so people could gather merely to look up and perceive how our humble planet fits into the greater celestial order.

Arruda evokes a similarly profound feeling of lightness and dark. This big and impressive show features 42 works from the last five years, all paintings ranging from monochrome abstractions to landscapes of jungles, deserts, clouds and sky. The most elemental works are included in a site-specific installation of three pairs of stacked rectangles: in each pair, one is painted directly on the wall, the other created via the projection of light. (Stare closely to see if you can tell which is which, before approaching and letting your shadow reveal the answer.)

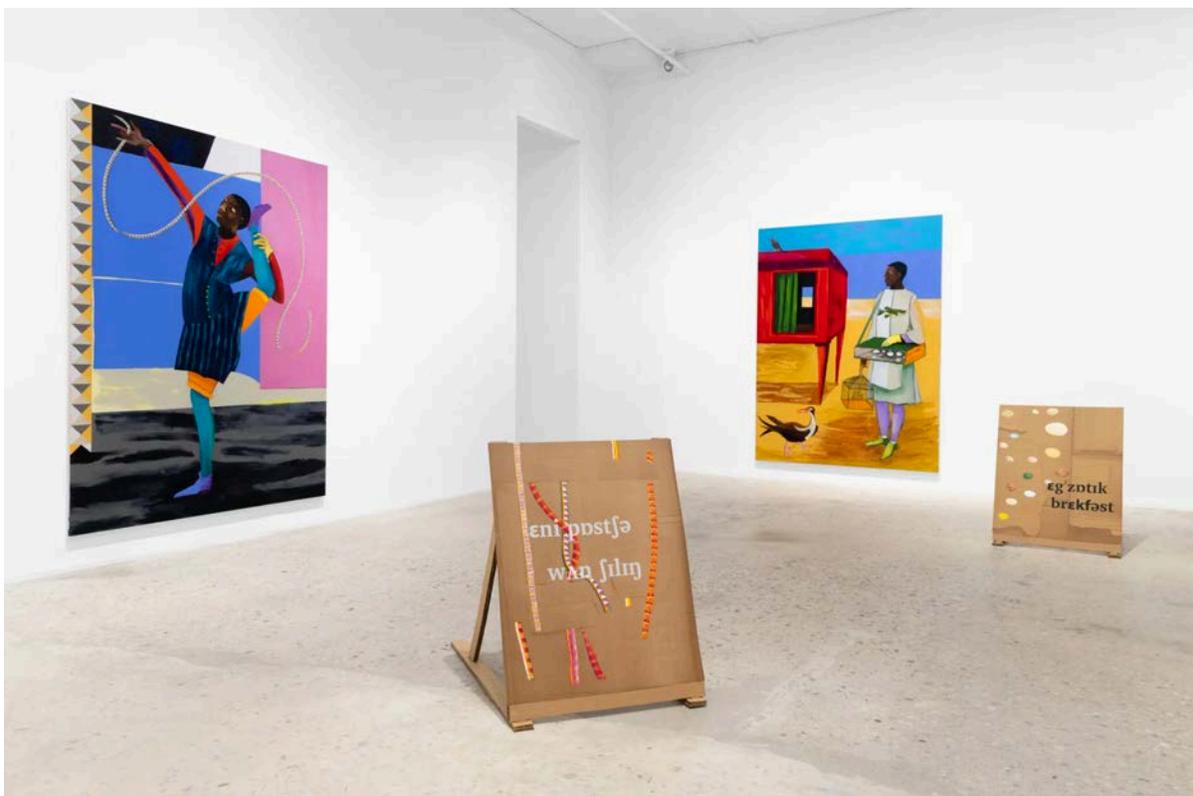
Arruda manages transcendence at a modest scale: Most individual works are as small as a sheet of letter-size paper. His painterly appeal triangulates characteristics of Mark Rothko, the late works by J.M.W. Turner and most notably

Vija Celmins. His scratchy treatment of starry skies are the rare misstep, with this expansive subject (mastered by Celmins) depicted by Arruda as claustrophobic and deadened.

This weak spot only makes more apparent the small miracle Arruda performs in rendering the complex sprawl of jungle on his diminutive canvases. As in “Untitled (from the Deserto-Modelo series)” (2019/2020), where the mist of the horizon invades the scene, overtaking the tangles of foliage in a sublime dance of textures. A narrow band of horizontal strokes delineates the bottom of the composition before the trees begin. This helps organize the picture while suggesting clear cutting and nodding to man-made environmental destruction. Unmissable. *JOHN VINCLER*

Lubaina Himid

Through June 15. Greene Naftali, 508 West 26th Street, Ground Floor, Manhattan; (212) 463-7770, greenenaftaligallery.com.



Installation view of Lubaina Himid's "Street Sellers" at Greene Naftali. via Lubaina Himid and Greene Naftali, New York; Photo by Júlia Standovár

Walking through Chinatown before heading to Chelsea, I passed a man standing on the sidewalk beside a sheet of cardboard on which three large fish were resting, so fresh their gills seemed still gasping for air. A few paces away, another man used a pair of tongs to keep live blue crabs from pinching one another in the plastic tray he presented in his other outstretched hand to passers-by.

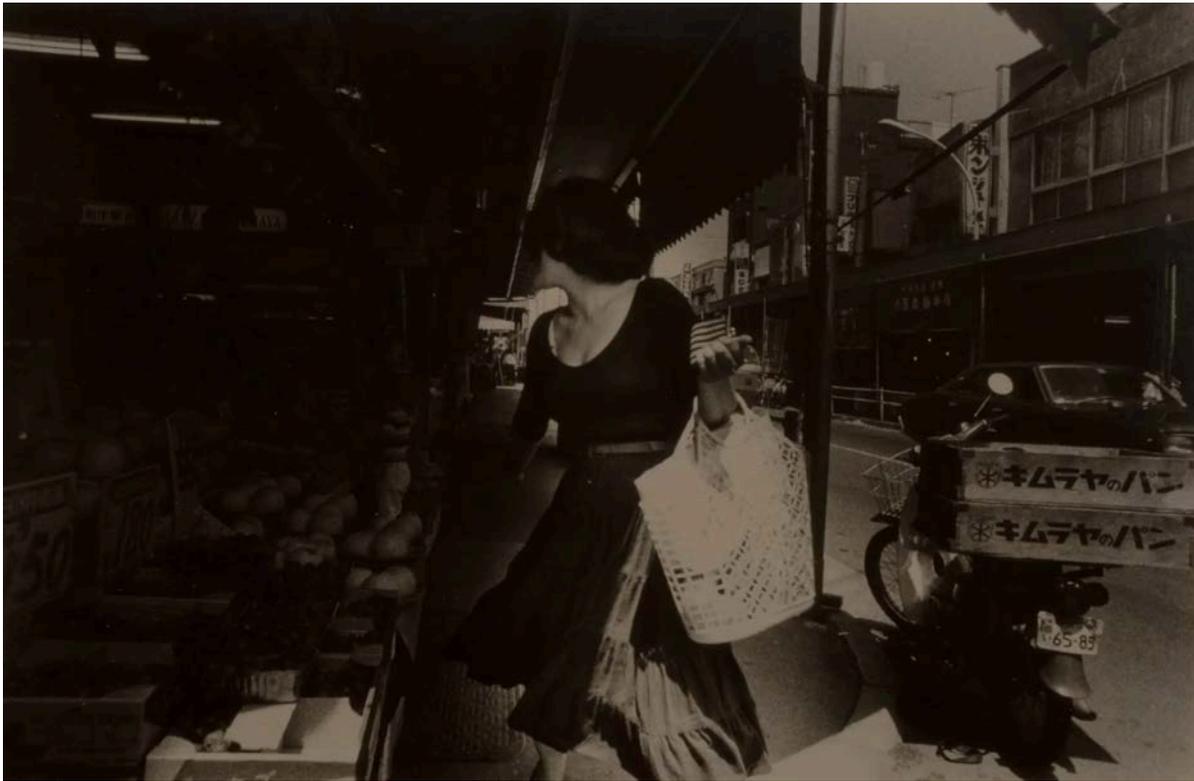
“Street Sellers” like these feature in Lubaina Himid’s oversized portraits and provide the name for the show, which renders the space of the gallery as a surreal street scene. Before each of the 10 portraits that tower at eight feet tall, a cardboard sign presents a phonetic rendering of words that the merchants might shout out to sell their wares. The effect is whimsical without being cloying, and most importantly the paintings are all lively.

The 69-year-old artist is having a well-deserved American moment. Born in Zanzibar, off the east coast of Africa and based in Preston, England, Himid has a solo show concurrently at the Contemporary Austin in Texas through July, having received the 2024 Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize.

The best works here incorporate collections of depicted small objects, making whole universes out of the scenes, with numerous details to focus on. Take for example, the pale prosthetic hand stretching out from the “Talisman Seller” who is holding a ribbon while presenting a box containing various shells. The exhibition also includes two works of ceramics — a plate and serving dish — embellished with paintings of a molar and a tongue (both 2024), as well as two portraits painted in profile within two otherwise empty drawers affixed to the wall. A scavenger hunt of looking. *JOHN VINCLER*

Tamiko Nishimura

Through June 8. Alison Bradley Projects, 526 West 26th Street, Manhattan; 646-476-8409, alisonbradleyprojects.com.



Tamiko Nishimura's "My Journey — Tokyo (#13)," 1979, vintage silver gelatin print.
Tamiko Nishimura, via Alison Bradley Projects

The best photography show in town is also the American debut for the Japanese photographer Tamiko Nishimura, who is in her mid-70s. Her exhibition, "Journeys," organized by Pauline Vermare, a curator at the Brooklyn Museum, serves as an excellent introduction to this artist, who graduated from the Tokyo College of Photography in 1969 and has had a full career in Japan but is less known abroad.

The photographs in "Journeys," mostly from the 1970s, feature sharply oblique angles, grainy surfaces and subjects — largely women and children — turned away from their viewers. Telephone wires cut through urban landscapes, and roads lead to places outside the picture frame. There are echoes of the French master Eugène Atget, with his uncanny shop windows, and the Surrealists who distorted their pictures. However, the photographs fall very much in line with the radical Japanese Provoke movement and artists like Daido Moriyama, who offered a sharper, more critical view of Japan than what was seen in the mainstream media.

Most of the photographs here are vintage prints, and several photography books display a medium in which Japanese artists historically excelled. (Nishimura's first photobook, "Shikishima," was published in 1973 and captured her journeys around Japan.) This show is important for photography experts as well as for anyone who wants a window into the art and craft of Japanese photography in the 20th century, and particularly with a sly, insurgently feminist perspective. *MARTHA SCHWENDENER*

The Word-Shimmering Sea: Diego Velázquez / Enrique Martínez Celaya

Through July 14. The Hispanic Society Museum & Library, 613 West 155th Street, Manhattan; 212-926-2234, hispanicsociety.org.



An installation view of "The Word-Shimmering Sea: Diego Velázquez / Enrique Martínez Celaya" at the Hispanic Society. Alfonso Lozano/The Hispanic Society of America

There are places you can't easily return to, like childhood or, for many migrants and refugees, the country where they were born. This was true for Enrique Martínez Celaya, who was born in Cuba and relocated with his family to Madrid

when he was a young boy. Martínez Celaya, now almost 60, returned to Cuba only in 2019, but he has found a way of retrieving both childhood and homeland in this impressive exhibition at the Hispanic Society.

Large canvases by Martínez Celaya include blown-up snippets from his childhood notebook, surrounded by interpretations of waves and seascapes. In a stroke of kismet, the notebook from which these early drawings were copied was given to him by his mother and featured a reproduction of a painting on its cover: Diego Velázquez's "Portrait of a Little Girl" circa 1638-42, which is in the collection of the Hispanic Society. That painting is displayed at one end of the room.

Objects and their historical hierarchies are irreverently jumbled in the show: Velázquez, the great Spanish painter, sits alongside Martínez Celaya's childish doodles. In another series of paintings by Martínez Celaya, the "Little Girl" holds objects that he coveted as a boy. The exhibition also includes work by other artists, like the 1971 notebook of Emilio Sánchez, an artist born in Cuba in 1921 who never went back to his homeland after 1960. In the end, the subject of the exhibition is really an immaterial poetic thread in which memory is fleeting but art, in its various forms, connects people, places and history. *MARTHA SCHWENDENER*

Life Cycles: The Materials of Contemporary Design

Through July 7. Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, Manhattan; 212-708-9400, moma.org.



Still from Maarten Baas's video "Sweeper's Clock," 2009, at the Museum of Modern Art. Maarten Baas, via The Museum of Modern Art, New York

My favorite clock of all time is a video: A camera looks down onto two skinny mounds of garbage, maybe 20 and 15 feet long, meeting at one end like the hour and minute hands on a watchface; for the 12 hours of the video, we see two men with brooms sweeping these "hands" into ever new positions, at a pace that keeps time.

The piece is by the Dutch designer Maarten Baas, and it's among the 80 works in "Life Cycles: The Materials of Contemporary Design," a group show now in MoMA's street-level gallery, which has free admission.

The "materials" of today's most compelling design turn out to be ideas, even ethics, not the chrome or bent wood that MoMA's title would once have invoked. This show's ethical ideas center on the environment and how we might manage not to

abuse it.

Baas's "Sweeper's Clock," is perfectly functional — could I view it on an Apple Watch? — but it also works as a meditation on the Sisyphean, 24/7 task of dealing with the trash we generate.

All-black dishes by Kosuke Araki look very like the minimalist "black basalt" china designed by Josiah Wedgwood way back in 1768 (it's some of the oldest "modernism" claimed by MoMA) except that Araki's versions are made with carbonized food waste.

Food not at all wasted, but consumed — by cattle — goes into making Adhi Nugraha's lamps and speakers, as explained by the title of the series they're from: "Cow Dung." *BLAKE GOPNIK*

Christopher Wool

Through July 31. 101 Greenwich Street (entrance on Rector Street), Manhattan; seestoprun.com.



A view of Christopher Wool's show "See Stop Run" at 101 Greenwich Street. Christopher Wool

The dilapidated 19th-floor office space hosting Christopher Wool's recent sculptures and paintings could not be more simpatico with them. In its state of abandoned tear-down, the venue offers melodious visual rhymes: electrical cords dangling from the ceiling ape Wool's snarls of found-wire sculpture; crumbling plaster mirrors the attitudinal blotches of his oils and inks. Scrawls of crude graffiti or quickly penciled notes left by workmen emulate the tendril-like lines dragged through Wool's globular masses of spray paint. The space is a horseshoe-shaped echo of Wool's work — raw, agitated — and the restless elegance he wrenches from a feeling of decay.

Wool said he started to think about how environment affects the experience of looking at art when he began splitting his time between New York and Marfa, in West Texas. Photographic series he made there, like “Westtexaspsychosculpture,” depict forlorn whorls of fencing-wire debris that look like uncanny mimics of Wool's own writhing scribbles, and which inspired scaled-up versions cast in bronze. (The Marfa landscape is fertile ground for New York artists. Rauschenberg made his scrap metal assemblages after witnessing the oil-ruined landscape of 1980s Texas, what he called “souvenirs without nostalgia,” a designation that's appropriate here, too.)

Place has always seeped into Wool's work. His photographs of the grime and trash-strewn streets of the Lower East Side in the 1990s — compiled as “East Broadway Breakdown” — aren't included here, but “Incident on 9th Street” (1997), of his own burned-out studio, are. The chaos of those scenes repeat here, the wraparound floor plan and endless windows letting the city permeate the work, just as it did in their making. *MAX LAKIN*

See the April gallery shows [here](#).

A correction was made on May 3, 2024: An earlier version of this article misstated the name of an artist. He is Enrique Martínez Celaya, not Enrique Celaya.

When we learn of a mistake, we acknowledge it with a correction. If you spot an error, please let us know at nytnews@nytimes.com. [Learn more](#)

A version of this article appears in print on , Section C, Page 14 of the New York edition with the headline: Galleries