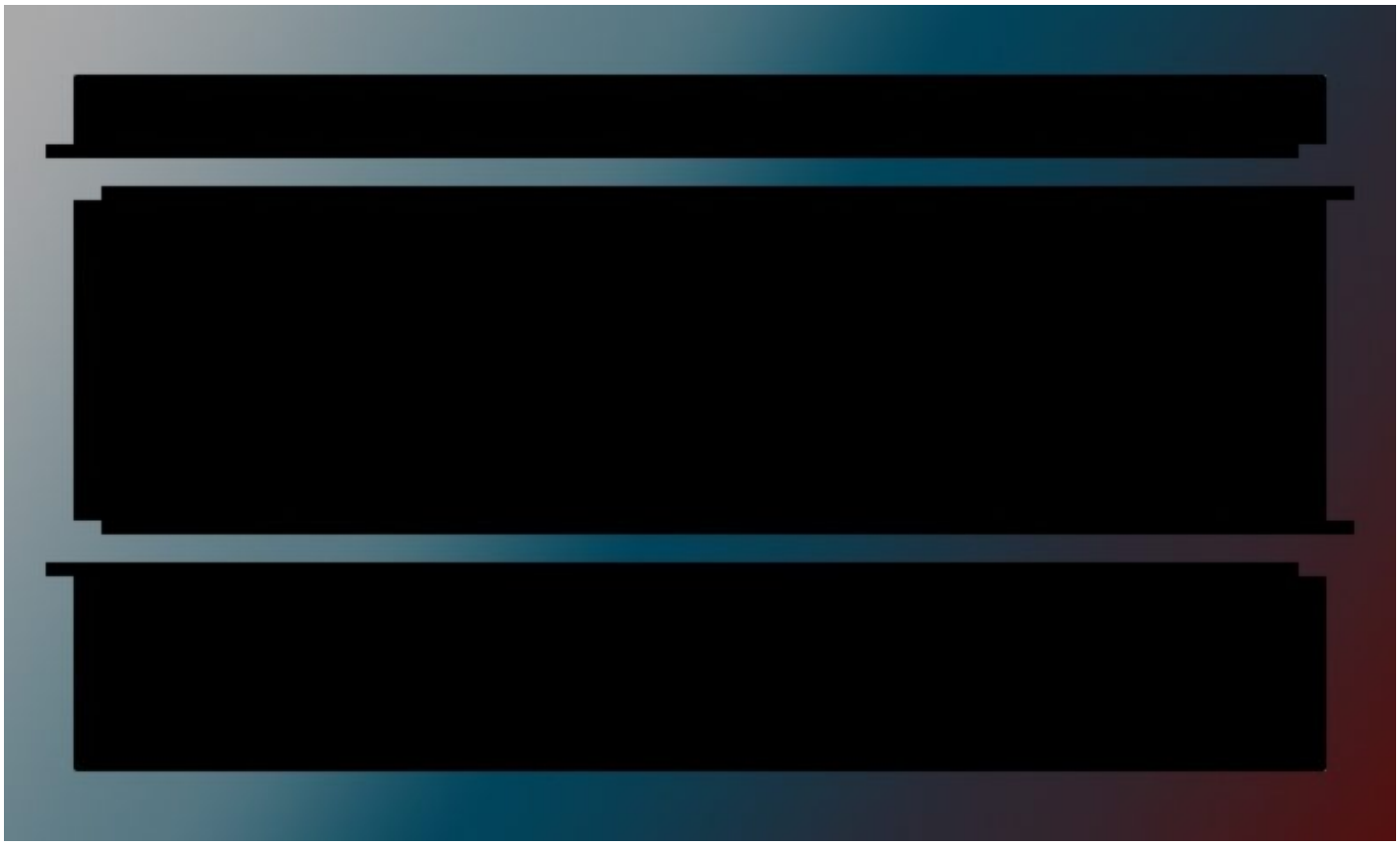
BOMB

Looking Back on 2017: Art

Featuring selections by Corina Copp, Max Galyon, Patricia Spears Jones, S.D. Chrostowska, Karl Holmqvist, Phillip Lopate, Mary Simpson, and more.

Part of the Looking Back series.



Jen Bervin
Artist

A single strand of hair stuck to a greasy train window? Christine Sun Kim and Thomas Mader's *Tables and Windows* [1] (2016) "draws on sign language teacher Andreas Costrau's observations that non-deaf students often struggle to describe rooms and objects within them in detail." [2] In a pair of silent videos the Berlin-based artists, Kim, a native American Sign Language speaker, and Mader, an ASL learner, conglomerate

bodies in a game of “helping hands.” The artists take turns playing the role of hands or speaker, using hand signs coordinated with a wide range of face markers to the convey richly nuanced, detailed concrete descriptions of the tactile and spatial qualities of each instance set forth in its opening title.

Christine Sun Kim and Thomas Mader, *Tables and Windows*, 2016 (still); two HD videos, no

Mary Simpson
Artist

2017 continued the unfortunate economic and social impact of gallery spaces closing, including the universally beloved Murray Guy in Chelsea and On Stellar Rays—downsizing to Stellar Projects—on the Lower East Side (as one artist said to me, upon hearing news of both closures, “Can’t thirty other galleries shut down so that we can keep those two open?!”). And while the arts community has felt the loss of these and others, two spaces opened side by side in Chinatown at the end of 2016 and proved to operate within a sustainable (small yet vital) scale: Situations and Fierman. Founded by artist Mariah Robertson and gallerist Jackie Klempay, Situations brought critical attention to the works of Anne Eastman, Corinne Jones, Whitney Hubbs, Alika Cooper, Becca Albee, and others, along with Temporal Situations, an epic, month-long program of live and time-based events, culminating in a two-gallery (with Fierman) survey of twenty-five years of works by Scott Covert.

David Fierman opened his space with a solo presentation of drawings by Kathe Burkhart and continued with many focused shows by artists such as Jimmy Wright, Cristine Brache, and Dapper Bruce Lafitte. The ambitious programming and significant audience reception at both spaces insist on an ethic that has sustained New York for generations: within the given limitations of means and scale, artists need to continue to make their work, and their work needs to be seen.

Corina Copp
Writer

Barbara Hammer's retrospective at the Leslie-Lohman Museum, her photography show *Truant* at Company Gallery, and the screenings of her film-work across the city are extensions of a resolute headspace, a vision for connection that we are lucky to inhabit, best we can, as 2017 burns to a close—art as familiarity. Attending has felt like seeing a friend every couple of weeks. Hammer's work has also caused me to re-situate and rethink feminist experimental video and 1970s and '80s activist video-work by women, which means, yes, I was in the audience for the impressive Carole Roussopoulos retrospective at Anthology Film Archives in November. This under-recognized Swiss documentarian made over one hundred videos in her life, having

picked up her first video camera in 1970 and using it both to assist the women's movement in France in the early '70s, but also as a tool for upheaval and confrontation, as seen in the jumpy *Maso et Miso vont en bateau* (1975), and reenactment—such as her staging of a reading of Valerie Solanas's S.C.U.M. Manifesto, ten years post-publication. Delphine Seyrig, who "stars" in the work, had approached Roussopoulos for a video internship; in 1982, they co-founded, with Ioana Wieder, the Simone de Beauvoir Audiovisual Center in Paris, an organization dedicated to feminist work on video.

Speaking of re-enactment, Yvonne Rainer's *Privilege* (1990) and Moyra Davey's *Hemlock Forest* (2016) at the Film Society of Lincoln Center both project backward and forward. I also feel traces still of the Jim Henson show at the Museum of the Moving Image, Alvin Lucier at Issue Project Room, Patrice Washington at We Buy Gold (and seemingly everywhere), Forrest Bess at Franklin Parrasch Gallery, and Valeria Luiselli, Sophie Collins, and Uljana Wolf talking about translation as a form for discourse around migration, voice, and interpretation, at Artists Space for the launch of *Currently & Emotion* (TEST CENTRE). Just this weekend, Max Guy beautifully sounded out the theatrical mask in his untitled response to Ivorian writer Werewere Liking's *It Shall Be of Jasper and Coral* for the Chicago Poets Theater Festival. Oh, and I woke at dawn once. HOLY sh$tt.

Natasha Soobramanien
Writer

I live in Brussels and am a regular visitor to WIELS. I've been totally fired up by their current show: Rita McBride's rangy, generous, generative, rigorous *Explorer* and the (porously) bordering show/program running alongside it (and in between, and around…) *Something Stronger Than Me**, co-curated by McBride and WIELS, and featuring artists past and present from the gallery's long-running residency program. It's just glorious. I've been three times already and will make another visit before it closes in January.

Lauren LeBlanc
Writer

For New Yorkers, this was an exceptional year for art exhibitions led by women. An attendance-record-breaking, exuberant show by Pipilotti Rist (*Pixel Forest*) at the New Museum and a masterful and serene Agnes Martin retrospective at the Guggenheim carried over from 2016. So did Marilyn Minter's *Pretty/Dirty* and Beverly Buchanan's *Ruins and Rituals* which were part of "A Year of Yes: Reimagining Feminism at the Brooklyn Museum," the 18-month celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. This umbrella of exhibitions also included two 2017 outstanding exhibitions that neighbored one another on the museum's fourth and third floors: *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-85* and *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern*.

While the *Living Modern show* celebrated one woman—arguably the most celebrated 20th-century American woman artist—*We Wanted a Revolution* was a dazzling and ground-breaking look at a broad collection of under-appreciated Black women artists of the 20th century. The O'Keeffe show strove to assert the iconic painter as the independent agent of her own style, long touted as a muse molded by Alfred Stieglitz, her older lover. Through her clothing (much of it handmade by the artist herself), accessories, and portrait photography as well as her sculpture and painting, *Living Modern* positioned O'Keeffe as a savvy tastemaker who cultivated her brand without a man's assistance.

We Wanted a Revolution was a remarkable and crucial contribution to not only 20th-century American art but also to the field of intersectional feminism. Vibrant paintings, prints, and sculpture by artists such as Faith Ringgold, Betye Saar, and Kay Brown, as well as video, film, and photography by Coreen Simpson, Julie Dash, and Carrie Mae Weems stood alongside primary documents dealing with race, gender, sexuality, politics, and art throughout the mid- to late-20th century. As a testament to the need for deeper study, the exhibition's catalogue was textual rather than visual, providing the viewer with critical context.

Installation view of *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women: 1965-85,* 2017. Brooklyn Museum. Photo by Jonathan Dorado.

Viken Berbarian
Writer

George Perec suggested that we forget the next big event. Catastrophe? What catastrophe? Question a spoon instead, he said. Don't get so worked up over Rocket Man. Reorient your gaze. Stop worrying about the civil war in South Sudan, the wildfires in California, the apocryphal stories told by Donald Trump. Faced with a flood of tweets, I tried, but failed to follow the French writer's advice, and then I watched a mesmerizing video by filmmaker Gariné Torossian. In a nod to Perec, Torossian's *An Inventory of Some Strictly Visible Things* is a riveting account of the everyday in a small post-Soviet republic: a country obsessed with the catastrophic. Quakes. War. Genocide. Commissioned by Minerva Projects, it was part of an installation this autumn in Denver, Colorado.

In his *Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, Perec documented the quotidian, or the infra-ordinary, as he called it. Similarly, the protagonists in Torossian's short film are books, wooden alphabet blocks, dresses, drawings, tourists, a chair, rubber containers, toy cars, the color red, hexagons, patterns, signs of family life and children, metro signs and a desk. It is a powerful celebration of the extraordinary in the ordinary; an essential respite from the white noise of the White House, and the tyranny of the headline.

Elina Alter
Writer

In the New Museum's recently expanded ground-floor galleries, there is a flock of birds that aren't birds. It includes long-legged, web-footed, and squat specimens, clustering in the dry branches, preening by a golden pool or mirror, and relaxing in the dirt of a root system that grows out of the ceiling. Filling a room in Petrit Halilaj's ongoing show, *RU*, all 505 of these are actually empty clay vessels on wire legs, referencing 505 important Neolithic artifacts found near Halilaj's hometown of Runik, Kosovo. Since the Kosovo War the artifacts have been split between museums in Kosovo and Serbia, each country exercising its own exclusive claim on the past; the show suggests art's ability to imagine a different history, independent of state claims (but not of museum politics). *RU* also includes fabric sculptures and a video work, but it was the birds in their improvised, indoor wood that stayed with me for weeks: cute and unobtrusive, each one projects a sense of peering at you inquisitively—the way we say real birds do—despite having nothing like a head. Given the fact that many of those real birds will soon become a matter of only historical knowledge, they are a present reminder: we have to answer for what we do.

S.D. Chrostowska
Writer

Taken as I am with literary miniatures like aphorisms and prose poems, I was delighted to discover their analogue in architecture. The mini-dioramas of Ronan-Jim Sévellec were on display earlier this year in several venues around Paris, including a show on filmmakers Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Mare Caro at the Halle St. Pierre—where, last year, I encountered his work for the first time in an exhibition devoted to "L'Art singulier." Twelve pieces completed by the artist in the last two years can be seen until mid-February at the Galerie Antonine Catzéflis.

Sévellec is one of a few miniaturists (another was Charles Matton) whose ingenious reductions transcend even small-scale models executed, like his own, without prefabricated components (tiny bottles, sinks, or armchairs). So what makes his work so special? His layering of time and the traces of imaginary lives inside spaces about the size of a home aquarium. His "boxes," as they are known, are mainly lived-in interiors without inhabitants, from ateliers to butcher shops to bathrooms. But they have also included a fragment of a street and an enchanted junkyard of sorts which he calls a "resting place" (*reposoir*)—a morgue for objects of every description that, in its semi-decomposed state, evokes a modern archaeological site. Sévellec's art lies in his ability to dispose the slightly antiquated remnants of human life in a way that preserves their habitual correspondences, which we are on the verge of forgetting. Being whimsical rather than puristic in his representations, where different aesthetics and epochs blend and overlap, he does not neglect an element of surprise in the incredible detail of his miniatures.

Ronan-Jim Sévellec, *Le Poids de la crigne,* 2016–17. Mixed media. © Joël Laiter.

Jeffrey Grunthaner
Writer, Curator

2017 saw a resurgence in grassroots political organization, starting with the J20 demonstrations. Yet shortly thereafter, protest subsided into ordinary workaday life. The sensation of festivity and the upsurge of community that flies in the face of any society conditioned by machine-like labor was quietly and easily diffused by the morality of "business as usual." The proliferation of partisan Facebook statuses and the innumerable text messages sent to state representatives in the wake of Trump's election only evidenced our loss. A better way to utilize one's off hours can't be imagined, which is precisely the problem.

Writing this on the 6th of December, I can almost accept the rather extravagant claim that art is dead. If to aestheticize means detaching artist and spectator both from any kind of moral responsibility for a work's subject-matter, then what can art really teach us? At the same time, I believe Alex Sewell's *Hookey*, which exhibited at TOTAH in the LES, beautifully captured art's dubious political value. The overt perfectionism of his photorealist skills felt deliberately staggered, belated. In a painting like *Arcade Slug*, for example, which depicts an enlarged quarter graffitied over with the words LET'S FUCK, he painstakingly destabilizes the grandiose importance normally attributed to "realistic" artworks. In these and other paintings, Sewell showed that there's a point where aesthetic detachment becomes mere vulgarity or cynicism. Art can never be a substitute for protest; and it's shameful to think that a painting can effectively contest an intolerable political situation.

Alex Sewell, *Arcade Slug*, 2016. Oil on shaped wood panel, 20 x 20 inches.

Valerie Miles
Writer, Translator

This summer, an astonishing exhibition comprising six decades of Paula Rego's work, *Family Sayings*, was on view in Barcelona's Palau de la Virreina, curated by Valentín Roma. The title is from Natalia Ginzburg's piercing autobiographical novel *Lessico famigliare,* though now that The New York Review of Books has reissued it as *Family Lexicon*, this would have been a more suitable title. Coincidentally, Cynthia Zarin opened her review of the novel with a sentence that could easily describe Rego's show: a "masterpiece hiding in plain sight" in this "summer of our discontent." Rego's exhibition is absolutely ear to the ground. Women are central to her work, contrasting the trope of fragile creatures they are brash and assertive, an anti-narrative obviating their iconographic sidelining.

Paula Rego is a Portuguese visual artist associated with the London Group. Her later work is close to Bacon and Freud, and (according to the catalogue) "heir to the expressionism of Goya and the sarcasm of Hogarth." She explores how women have historically carved out spaces of dissidence and delves impiously into subjects like the burden of Catholic education and the enduring bigotry in children's stories. Her series on abortion is unblinking. Clarice Lispector furnishes the show's consummate epigraph:

“My story is one of tranquil darkness, of roots dormant in their strength, of scent without perfume. And in none of this does the abstract exist. It’s the figurative of the unnameable.”

Buzz Spector
Artist

In March I flew to Johannesburg, South Africa, to take part in a colloquium and a pair of accompanying exhibitions of the book arts in South Africa. Artists’ books in the U.S. are largely a genre exercise, with camps of enthusiasts more oriented around ideological positions of production quality or printing methods than united around ideas of reading (art, or anything else) as forms of social energy. The *Booknesses* exhibits and discussions, however, showed a near unanimity of investment in the powers of the book—whether in material or virtual incarnation—to generate cross-cultural and even global understanding. William Kentridge was an active participant and attendee, as were an international roster of artists, designers, and cultural theorists, and the exhibits included many major figures from the twentieth-

century history of artists' books. The fifteen-hour flight home passed quickly, with so much extraordinary reading material.

Booknesses Colloquium at UJ March 2017

Osman Can Yerebakan
Writer, Curator

New York paid its longstanding due to Barbara Hammer this past fall, primarily with *Evidentiary Bodies*, an expansive survey still on view at the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, and an ongoing series of screenings hosted by various venues dedicated to films the pioneer lesbian filmmaker created throughout her four decade career. The intriguing exhibition triumphs thanks to the curators' decision to present Hammer as a complete renaissance woman, whose considerably less familiar work in painting, drawing, and collage receives equal amount of emphasis alongside her daringly sexual and always groundbreaking films. The Hollywood-born artist's influential work in moving image, including *Dyketatics*, *Pond and Waterfall,* and *Sync Touch*, orchestrate a visually and intellectually engaging conversation with her stunning collages that merge ideas around body politics and female sexuality. Hammer's poetically fluid watercolor drawings complement innovative mixed-media works, such as *8 in 8*, a video installation activated when the audience touches its prosthetic nipples.

Barbara Hammer, *Snow Job: The Media Hysteria of AIDS*, 1986. Analog video transferred to digital video, color, sound, 7:32 min. Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix, New York.

Max Galyon
Artist

No slogans or icons can be found among what at first seems like debris from a vacated strip mall strewn across the gallery. As I walked through I found myself reeling—had I missed something? Was I in a dystopian future or past? Days later I realized I hadn't been transported to some other time, but that it was *now* I was inhabiting; it wasn't a dystopia, it was *here*.

In our frantic uncertain now I found the work at Cathy Wilkes' MoMA PS1 show to be a salve. I was awed by the energy it must have taken her to make this work—to wade through the wearisome everyday with such lightness, such discipline, and to come through with insight about how we live. The work evokes the world, not with sound and fury but a quiet suggestion, a reminder that we are part of it.

Cathy Wilkes, *Untitled*. 2012. Gift of the Speyer Family Foundation and Mrs. Saidie A. May (by exchange). © 2017 Cathy Wilkes.

Gregory Botts
Artist

I was lucky to see Picasso's *Guernica* at the Reina Sofia in Madrid at the end of 2016. Making drawings and thinking about it sustained me somehow through this year's many nonsensical moments.

Here I concoct a pictorial BOMB to hurl at our abysmal Washington, a collaged American bouquet of many life-long, hard-won thoughts and gestures of 2017.

In January, David Reed at Gagosian Gallery uptown with Christopher Wool and friends set a basic tone. Also in January, Carl Ostendarp laid out an edgy landscape for *Ech!* and *Argh!* at Elizabeth Dee Harlem. Blue waves and pink figures danced as flowers in the Marsden Hartley show at The Met Breuer, showing some qualified optimism.

I thought, "In looking to the past there, may be some future," after encountering Alex Katz's amazing, continuous large forms—painted at 90 years of age—at Gavin Brown's Harlem space.

Mary Heilmann seems at her height in her two shows of new and early abstractions, tying together a career setting her exploding beside Elizabeth Murray's flash; back again to add some additional relief.

Gregory Botts, *Paint Bomb*.

Zack Hatfield
Writer

On a scenic mound in Green-Wood Cemetery sits Sophie Calle's recent installation, Here Lie the Secrets of the Visitors of Green-Wood Cemetery. The work is simple: a handsome marble column with a horizontal aperture, through which one is encouraged to feed a secret (in 2042, the buried secrets will be incinerated). Unlike most public artworks, this piece doesn't declare itself or even stand out. I found the sculpture by accident one October morning—I moseyed over after seeing a jogger rest his thermos on a neighboring tombstone. The work's inefficiency charmed me. No paper was provided, and I had to prod my secret, written on a scrap of newspaper, through the chute with a stick to get it to go down. More importantly: In a year overwhelmed with explanatory texts, here there were none save for what you wrote down yourself.

Patricia Spears Jones
Writer

The Lone Wolf Recital Corps exhibition and performance was both powerful and poignant, enlivening the installation of artworks which also served as musical instruments by the late Terry Adkins. I saw the performance featuring Tyehimba Jess, Arthur Flowers, and others in a praise song for him and a rendering of one Adkins' poems—he was a better artist than poet, but it was worth it to see and hear this work. Adkins was astonishingly talented and creative—his trumpets tell a huge tale of scale,

sound, visibility. It was strange to see this work in the clean white space of the MoMA galleries, but it is good to see that his work lives on after his so very sudden demise.

And yes the Kerry James Marshall retrospective was beautiful, daunting, poetic, honorable, loving, and funny. I know that world. I know those people. I am so pleased that he knows how to actually make black shimmer like gold. He also knows the human heart—the couples coming together or breaking apart tells much about desire and loss. It was a joy to see that work especially in this awful political year.

Terry Adkins, Blanche Bruce, and the Lone Wolf Recital Corps perform *The Last Trumpet* as part of the Performa Biennial 2013. Courtesy Salon 94.

Steve Macfarlane
Writer, Curator

The New Museum's *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and as a Weapon* is a remarkable spread across disciplines, too dense for a single visit and almost confrontationally heavy on works by younger artists. As someone who writes about movies, I was especially blown away by Patrick Staff's *Weed Killer*, a looped installation commissioned by MOCA in Los Angeles, adapted from queer theorist Catherine Lord's cancer memoir

The Summer of Her Baldness. It concerns a monologue performed by transgender activist Debra Soshoux, quoting from the text but delivered as if it's one half of an interview; it's a litany of Lord's unsparing and wry observations from her chemotherapy, the kind of stuff nobody tells you ahead of time. Staff doubles it as metaphor for the use of certain chemicals in hormone therapy, while vistas of desolate freeways and toxic waste sites flicker in and out; Soshoux appears as an infrared inversion, a swift comment on technology's mercilessness in transforming human beings into anonymous data points. Then the artist takes center stage, standing alone: Staff performs a heartrending lip-sync of the house classic "To Be In Love" by Masters at Work feat. India to a bar of nonplussed onlookers, cutting away just before the beat drops. The camera returns to Soshoux, painting an audacious (and intuitive) split: between the liberation of turning oneself over anew, and the sorrow of finding a dying body underneath.

Patrick Staff, installation view of *Weed Killer*, 2017. Courtesy of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photo by Zak Kelley.

Richard Kalina
Artist

What lingers in my mind this discouraging year is the beautiful and belated exhibition of Ruth Asawa at David Zwirner. Asawa (1926-2013) was born in California to Japanese immigrants. Her family was detained in internment camps during World War II, and throughout her life she was hindered by being Japanese-American and a woman. Although she attended Black Mountain College during its heyday in the late '40s and studied fruitfully with Josef Albers and Buckminster Fuller, her work never received the credit it was due. Her intricate looped and tied wire sculptures sit comfortably between the biomorphic high modernism of Brancusi, Arp, and Noguchi, and the wider world of engineering, design, and craft. They are, as Albers would have it, true to their materials, but as with all great art, transcend it. Asawa's work is airy, transparent, light, and symmetrical, but just off-kilter enough to give it a sense of the handmade coupled with a tough fragility. She, like the marvelously versatile Sophie Taeuber-Arp, were ahead of their times—especially in their embrace of design and craft—and paid a price for it. I was especially pleased to see that abstract art that builds upon, comments on, and widens the modernist project has the ability to move us so emotionally and intellectually. It is something unexpected and unpredictable, and in these times when we should by all logic be depressed and dispirited, it is comforting to remember that things will often turn out to be happily different than what they, by all rights, ought to be.

Ruth Asawa at David Zwirner. Installation view. Photo: EPW Studio/Maris Hutchinson. Artwork © Estate of Ruth Asawa. Courtesy David Zwirner, New York/London.

Forrest Muelrath
Writer

More than any other author, I returned to Walter Benjamin in 2017. Beginning with a presentation on his notebooks at the Jewish Museum last spring, I was reminded how physically connected Benjamin was to his work. His obsessive copying of quotations—from sociology, psychoanalysis, mysticism, and astrology—in microscopic penmanship is all the more evocative in our communications environment where writing often appears diminished by an abusive use of Twitter. In returning to some of Benjamin's essays I was reminded that "the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' of which we live, is not an exception but the rule," and that the "mode human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence." In approaching *The Arcades Project* (Harvard University Press) for the first time in earnest I explored Benjamin's use of "phantasmagoria," traced it back through letters with Adorno, to Marx, to the 17th-century illusionistic "theatre of phantasmagoria," and developed an essay about illusions created on social media for a journal tasked with addressing the rise of authoritarian populism around the globe. More than anything, Benjamin sets an example for a way of being, as a sort-of Ontological Anarchist out there in the alleys of the writerly conscious, his ego a flash of electricity that traverses over barely perceptible channels between his desires and what is possible from each word.

Passage du Saumon, Paris, April 1899. Photo by J. Barry, courtesy of Musée Carnavalet / Roger-Viollet.

Jennifer Kabat
Writer

I spent time this year staring at the Confederate monument in my hometown of Alexandria, VA (also hometown of Robert E. Lee and the father of our country George Washington), and thinking about the roads there, all the ideals and values paved into them—the meanings hidden and now maybe beginning to be exposed. I stared at the bronze statue, which stares in sadness towards Appomattox, and thought about how civic spaces mark place and us in those places. That monument was put up in 1889, and it's been knocked over by cars and put up again.

I find it hard to find the words for what has helped me through this year. Kara Walker's monumental drawings at Sikkema Jenkins & Co and her focused rage and the way she

has been visualizing the legacy of racism through two decades of work. Or Ellie Ga's two-channel video *Strophe*, looking at loss, turnings, the sea, and legacies of refugees. Rochelle Feinstein's *Who Cares*, this spring, felt shrouded in mourning as the language of our moment floated free (and literally hung on a curtain in the middle of the space). Feinstein painted and repainted color wheels as if the fragmenting of color and language right now is at the heart of her own mourning. In poetry it was reading *Whereas* (Graywolf Press), as Layli Long Soldier excavates language, the equivocal "whereas" of official documents, the word itself a corollary, a law and the myriad values that get secreted into a conjunction. She turns it into a cycle looking at the erasures of American Indian populations.

The statue in my hometown is also protected by a "whereas," a statute, written the year after it was erected. State law prohibits its being removed, and the election in that state this fall ended up being, in part, a referendum on such monuments. The candidate opposing them won. Maybe that is progress, if we can even believe in that word…

Kara Walker, *The Pool Party of Sardanapalus (after Delacroix, Kienholz)*, 2017. Sumi ink and collage on paper, 125.5 x 140 inches. © Kara Walker, courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

Haley Mellin
Artist

The new gallery Parker, opened in 2017 by Sam Parker, had an exceptional show of works from the ’60s and ’70s by Franklin Williams. The sculptures gave me a sense of being home. Not only is the gallery located in a residence in Los Feliz—I had gratitude to be in a place with wooden floors, light switches, and the other trappings of domestic normalcy—the exhibition itself lent a humanness and an interest in the animal world, that I appreciated within the current political and social climate. One sculpture of what looks to be a snail, opened a world where language can point but does not suffice. That said, while I was recovering from a surgery this spring, *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* (Algonquin Books) by the author Elisabeth Tova Bailey, was kindly read to me by my mother, and I thought of this text while looking at this sculpture and the exhibit. We need shows like these.

Franklin Williams, *Untitled*, 1966. Acrylic, gesso and yarn on women’s underwear, broken toilet seat and canvas stuffed with cotton batting, over wooden support, 10 x 12 x 23 inches. Courtesy of Parker Gallery.

Phillip Lopate
Writer

Some of the art exhibits that stayed most with me this year were the astoundingly rich Raghubir Singh photography retrospective at the Met Breuer, the genuinely odd show of Rei Kawakubo at the Metropolitan Museum (less about fashion than about sculpture), and the impressive Robert Longo show of large charcoal compositions at the Brooklyn Museum. As usual, there were many good movies, but allow me to single out Kathryn Bigelow's *Detroit*, Noah Baumbach's *The Meyerowitz Stories*, Hong Sang-soo's *On the Beach at Night Alone,* Lucretia Martel's *Zama*, Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird* and (I insist) Woody Allen's *Wonder Wheel.* I read too many old books to recount, as I am in the process of editing a large essay anthology, but just to mention a few good new ones: Laura Kipnis's timely *Unwanted Advances* (Harper) and Rachel Cusk's *Transit* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

Raghubir Singh, *Monsoon Rains, Monghyr, Bihar*, 1967. Photograph copyright © 2017 Succession Raghubir Singh.

Karl Holmqvist
Artist

There was something slightly depressing about the fact that the #metoo campaign's symbolic art world slogan came from Jenny Holzer's early eighties work that reads ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE… It's an iconic and timeless statement, even though it was made over thirty years ago. As long ago, in fact, as some of the details of sexual abuse that have come to light under #metoo. Does it actually take that long for words to get their meaning? Or did no one else say anything worth quoting in all that time? And is it even entirely true!? I for one have felt quite surprised by how widespread sexual abuse seems to be in absolutely all areas of society. I hope we can heal and do better. Having power over someone's career opportunities obviously doesn't mean you have power over their minds and bodies as well. Or if this is how you find intimacy you're in a sorry, certainly not cool or enviable place.

Jenny Holzer, *Truisms*, 1982.

Cynthia Eardley
Artist

Stefano Boeri's Bosco Verticale is a lovely urban fantasy-turned-reality that gives me a bit of hope for our planet and specifically our cities. The Vertical Forests—skyscrapers covered in trees, shrubs, and flowers, top to bottom—look magical, but also clean the air, reducing CO2 while producing oxygen. The first of these "trees in the sky" was completed in Milan in 2014. Sorry to say I haven't yet seen one in reality, but the thought of them rising in polluted cities across the industrialized world and actually making it easier to breathe—while assisting the local bird populations—does help to sustain me. (Note: This does not mean I support the supertall towers sprouting all over New York City; I don't.)

Boeri is also working on tree-based designs to replace or improve upon the antiterrorist concrete barriers like the ones that are now installed on the Hudson River Bike Path. Surely, in New York City, of all cities, we can manage to conceive of equally effective designs that also enhance the beauty of our surroundings.

On a different note, for everyone seeking a temporary sanctuary from the current onslaught, I recommend the Michelangelo exhibit at the Met. With simple materials—mostly pen or chalk on paper—he offers the viewer a glimpse into his decision-making process as he created these visually astonishing, highly nuanced gems of rhythmic clarity. The show also encourages comparisons between Michelangelo's drawings and sculptures and those of his contemporaries.

Chelsea Seltzer and Theo A. Rosenblum
Artists

When looking back on this pre-apocalyptic 2017, where the country seems to be slipping into a cesspool of lies, industrial poison, and religious insanity, and where the whims of a few greedy despots hold the rest of the earth's population on a knife's edge, we have found our solace (as is often the case) in art.

On a recent trip up to MA we stopped at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, CT. Our first visit to this remarkable museum completely floored us. Within its walls is a microcosm of European and American paintings and decorative arts. This may sound completely pretentious, but being in this beautiful building among these glittering jewels of art seemed like witnessing the triumph of human reason, ingenuity, and progress over boorish, backwards, and superstitious fear mongering. Although some of the antique pieces whispered overtones of an unjust and violent past, the juxtaposition of them with the contemporary wing and the culturally rich exhibit therein was a reminder of the power of art and the progress that has been made.

Avery Court, Wadsworth Athaneum.

Danielle Burgos
Writer, Filmmaker

I haven't processed 2017. I'm not even sure I survived 2017. For a while the only tenuous connection between brain and body (mind, higher levels of thought weren't possible without complete breakdown) was furiously playing Triple Town, a phone game where you attempt to build a town around small, evil bears who thwart your progress. Squish them and they turn into a grave; three graves make a church. It's a strange theology, turning opponents back into buildable land; pure late capitalism app logic. I was too busy plopping down shrubs and making tiny castles to really take the time and analyze its logistics much, though there is surely an interesting thesis somewhere in there. I also recommend the Candy Country skin, which turns the playing field soothing shades of Pepto-Bismol pink and amethyst, scrubbing any trace gesture towards natural reality from the 5x5 grid that became the manageable world. Three shrubs make a house, three houses make a mansion, three mansions make a castle—an easy, addictive logic contrasting unmanageable emotions. Three churches make a cathedral, three cathedrals make a chest of spendable in-game gold while freeing up a space—a small procedural-memory achievement from a shadow cast by burning reality.

Triple Town design by Richard Brunt.

Matt Turner
Writer

> "Blue is the universal love in which man bathes—it is the terrestrial paradise."
> -*Blue* (1993, Derek Jarman).

No color affects me more than blue, and for me, 2017 was a true blue year. Shades of the color appeared from every angle and seeped into every surface, a richness of amorphous blue hues in the artworks I absorbed that served to sprawl and envelop.

Blue appeared as the great blue sea in Hong Sang-soo's *On the Beach at Night Alone*, or in all of the baby-blue skies, city cobalts and water-tank teals of Terrence Malick's *Song to Song*. It could be found in the internet oceans of Cecile B. Evans's *What The Heart Wants*; the virtual bodies of water that the lifeless avatars float around in throughout Chen Zhou's *Life Imitation*; or the rolling navy waves and fuzzy stone-blue monitors in Blake Williams' *Prototype*. It spread its porous self out across the breaking blue sunsets of Standing Rock in Sky Hopinka's *Dislocation Blues*; and over the infinite skies of the Sonoran Desert in J.P. Sniadecki and Joshua Bonnet's *El Mar La Mar*. The color was there in the purply-blue block of dripping paint slapped on the cover of my favorite book of the year, Durga Chew-Bose's essay collection *Too Much and Not The Mood* (FSG Originals), a blue title if there ever was one. Blue healing came gently out of the speakers with Yamaneko's *Spa Commissions* (Local Action Records), water temple music that soaks blue and cleanses through. And a little louder in a live environment as Midori Takada donned her blue-tone tunic and the sapphire tipped mallets for a show at Cafe Oto, sending shimmering rhythms of electric blue reverberating around the enraptured room.

It might sound like I was looking for blue, or seeing it even in places devoid of color, but even when you don't seek it, blue comes to you. Stumbling around the Wolfgang Tillmans show at the Tate Modern, fittingly titled *2017*, I kept getting lost in the cerulean-inked abstracts included from his *Freischwimmer* series. Later, right near the year's end, I wandered into the Tate Britain without purpose, only to find Derek Jarman's blue notebooks arranged tantalizingly behind a glass case that prevents them from being leafed through. As I leaned over the case to look closer, facing away from the screen that was showing his film *Blue* on loop, the dense light of the projection washed over my shoulders, bathing me in blue. "I step into a blue funk" said Jarman's voice at that moment, and over the year I too had stepped in a few. Yet it's blue, too, that got me through.

EL MAR LA MAR (trailer) / 2017 / 94 minutes / Joshua Bonnetta & J.P. Sniadecki

from **J.P. Sniadecki**

02:30

Melissa Marks
Artist

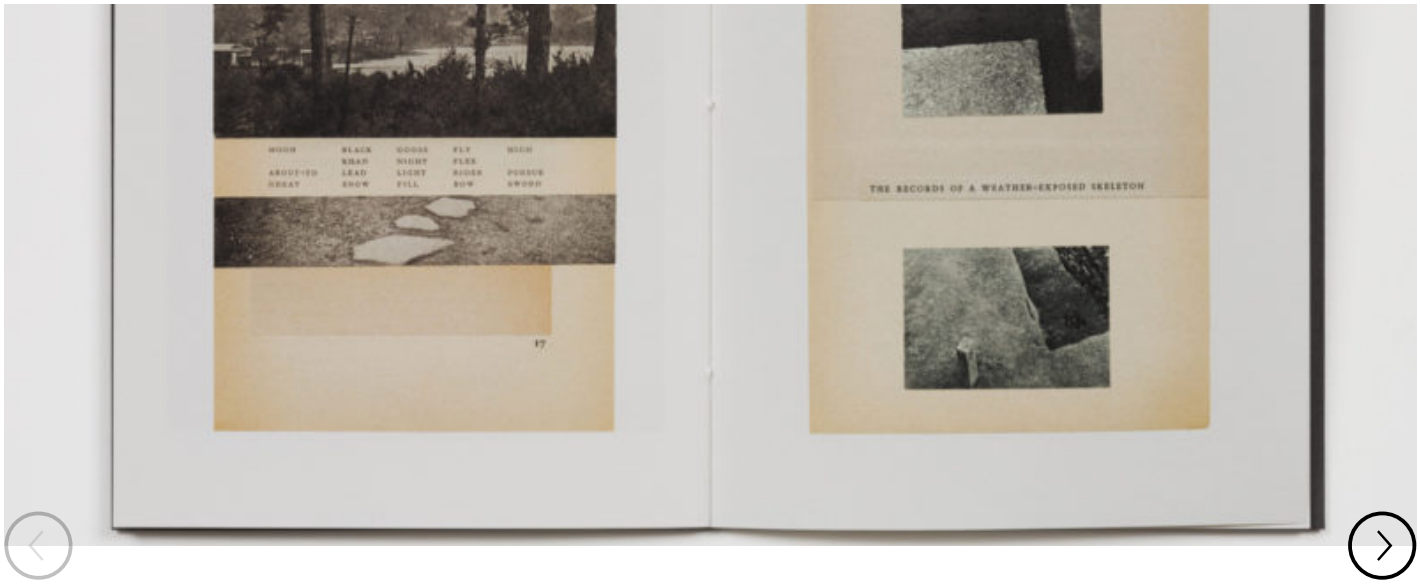
Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction at MoMA was a powerful, uplifting touchstone for me this year. I was moved and inspired by the unapologetic ambition and clarity in a diverse collection of work by more than fifty women. The exhibition not only did its part to introduce and resurrect marginalized voices, it also reminded me of the substantial influence many of these artists had in their moment. Lee Krasner was at the epicenter of the original thinking that made Abstract Expressionism possible. It seems to be a reckless, rolling, odd kind of contemporaneous afterthought that evaporated her legacy from the important story of Abstract Expressionism. Krasner's 1966 painting *Gaea* embodies a wise and ready interior vision that is externalized and made wholly immersive. Other favorites in the show included Eva Hesse, Anni Albers, Alma Woodsey Thomas, Lee Bontecou, Agnes Martin, and Ruth Asawa. The intersection between gender and abstraction is a fruitful, generous, wide-open line of inquiry. The MoMA show had me thinking about the forceful accumulation of increment, the building and unbuilding of a conjured language, material fact in collaboration with wild invention. Increment, in fact, could be concrete or conceptual—although always discernible, always adamant in its provocative stance, always ready to be seen and to be recognized.

Lee Krasner, *Gaea,* 1966. Oil on canvas, 69 x 125 1/2 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Kay Sage Tanguy Fund, 1977 © 2017 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Mónica Savirón

Curator, writer, filmmaker

A Measure of Silence: Works on Paper by Jon Beacham (The Brother in Elysium) is an antidote against loud pronouncements, a wrought-iron anchor tackling ground underwater. Bound and sewn by hand in a limited edition, the book reminds us of the corporeity, luminosity, and balance of what resists and persists despite the test of time. Its eighteen visual landscape poems are collages of aged photographic images, which occasionally include hand-set and -printed letterpress text. Similar to his silent 16mm films, Beacham juxtaposes different gradations of tonalities and textures as if there were no burdens. Almost without words, but instead with page numbers, vertical lines, mountainous perspectives, and steady horizons near sepia rectangles of paper, a new, quiet topography is born. Inner and external madness become deflected by the peaceful asymmetry of a basic formula: understanding by listening to images of love both ethereal and strong, from the past and eternal.



Francesco Urbano Ragazzi
Curators

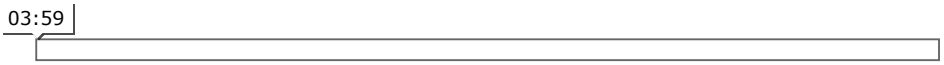
Looking back at 2017, we see two inspiring shows that have been able to look back at Modernity, projecting it forward to the very future of humanity: the first one is *Items: Is Fashion Modern?* curated by Paola Antonelli at MoMA. The second one is *Ambienti/Environments*, an unprecedented exhibition of Lucio Fontana's *Ambienti spaziali* curated by Marina Pugliese, Barbara Ferriani, and Vicente Todolí, at Pirelli Hangar Bicocca in Milan.

If these shows seem to come either from a glorious past or the future, the pavilions of Germany and Wales at this year's Venice Biennale visibly operate in the present times. We are still moved by James Richards's *Music for the Gift* and Anne Imhof's *Faust* for their dark, contagious, suffered, proud, multilayered sense of the sacred.

In an ideal line of continuity, we would like to finish this tour with Bek Hyunjin's installation *UnemploymentBankruptcyDivorceDebtSuicide Rest Stop*, presented at MMCA Seoul on the occasion of the Korea Artist Prize. It is another kind of pavilion, a ritual space where the traumas of capitalism in Eastern society are exorcised through a series of paintings, objects, signs, sadden gestures and broken songs randomly performed by the artist himself in the exhibition space.

Music for the Gift by James Richards

from **Sutton**



Liza St. James

Writer

During a visit to the University of the Arts Helsinki last March, a group of Finnish artists took me to a concert at the Sibelius Academy downtown. The title of the program, "Lullabies for Grown-Ups," had me worried I might crash. Jetlagged, I joked that maybe this would be okay, they were lullabies after all. With titles like "Must See Crisis" and "Ruins," the concert reminded me that even "Rock-a-bye Baby" is scary. Part of Suomi100, the centennial celebration of Finland's independence, the performance relied on both folk traditions and new technologies to summon a calmness from the calamities of our times. Accompanied by video sequences using footage from drones and from the news, the music included improvisation with synth and electronics, various sound objects like sand and shoes, violin, trumpet, and the traditional Finnish kantele. In a year filled with fresh horrors, these experimental lullabies felt like a new kind of reprieve. I left with a recharged sense of alertness, and the thought that a return to lullabies might be just what we need to get through nightmares to come.

Max Benavidez
Writer

2017 was America's *annus horribilus,* a year of disaster and misfortune. Yet, even in this grim period, there were saving graces. Here are mine.

The first one occurred in August, at an exhibition that was part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles/Latin America series: "Home—So Different, So Appealing" [3] at LACMA. It was a truly astonishing show that captured dislocation, exploitation, despair, and division. This show gradually built momentum with searing and striking images about poverty, isolation, discrimination, and death, the very things most people avoid, deny, or ignore. It's intellectually rich and truly emotional, a multimedia exhibition where the hallowed concept and fluid context of home is dissected, split, deconstructed, and even floated in the air.

My second saving grace was Kara Walker's show at Sikkema Jenkins & Co. Whether it was "Slaughter of the Innocents" or "Christ's Entry into Journalism," I was moved to tears. The work felt like an arrow of truth shot straight into my soul. It was searing and healing.

My third experience was *Manifest 1.0*, a new sonic and sensory immersive installation in East Williamsburg at Founders Lab, launched in October [4] . I sunk into the experience and was transported into the consciousness of an artist creating art in real time.

Finally, I found a 1941 book called *Melville: A Novel* (NYRB Classics), by Jean Giono, that was originally written as a preface to the French translation of *Moby Dick*. At one point in this unique novella/*essai,* the imagined character of Herman Melville, while in London, purchases "a splendid old pea coat: roomy, cozy, genuine, worn by rain, wind, and work, the color of night at sea, something worthy of veneration. A true shelter from the storm, a real 'sailor's house.'" That's what I found in these experiences in 2017: something genuine, "something worthy of veneration," "a true shelter from the storm" of lies and corruption swirling around us.

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