

HYPERALLERGIC

The Best Art Shows of the Decade

Hyperallergic, December 23, 2019



A view of the Hilma af Klint retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, which was a highlight of the decade (photo Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

As we round out the decade and look toward 2020, Hyperallergic's editorial staff took into consideration the decade-defining art shows that have shaped the past 10 years for their scope, impact, and talent. While not an attempt to be a definitive representation of the incredible art that has come out of the 2010s, this list is a reflection of the Hyperallergic team's most treasured exhibitions; the work that inspired us and those around us to continue to push our field forward.

Without question, these past years saw the incremental widening of the art world, as artists of color, queer and trans artists, and other marginalized creatives made waves at unprecedented rates — advocating for themselves and their peers and pushing back against the traditionalist hegemonic powers-that-be in the field. It was a decade marked by vocal activism challenging the museum space — from [boycotts of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi over migrant workers' rights](#), to Nan Goldin's [PAIN Sackler](#), to [Warren Kanders's](#) resignation as vice chair of the Whitney Museum after months of artist and activist-led protests.

After the New Year, we at Hyperallergic will be thinking about the necessary ways to increase our international presence, especially in Africa, Asia, and South America. This October, our publication also celebrated its 10th anniversary. From our humble beginnings to our exciting future in the next decade, we will continue our site as a platform for serious, playful, and radical thinking about art in the world.

1. Okwui Enwezor's [Postwar](#) at the Haus der Kunst and [All the World's Futures](#) at the Venice Biennale



Work by Wangechi Mutu at 'All the World's Futures' (photo by Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

We decided to give the top spot to a figure who has not only influenced a whole generation of curators (his Johannesburg Biennial in 1997-98 and his Documenta in 2002 helped establish his reputation and continue to resonate today), but someone who continued to push the envelope until his tragic death this year at the age of 55.

In the last decade alone his *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965* project (with Katy Siegel and Ulrich Wilmes, among others) and his 2015 Venice Biennale exhibition, *All the World's Futures*, were two standouts that helped shape the global conversation about art. An astute observer, thoughtful curator, and intellectual risk taker, Enwezor's work has helped to expand the field of contemporary art outside the confines of traditional Western art history. In many instances, he was the first African curator, including being the first African-born curator of the Venice Biennale's main exhibition after 120 years — *unbelievable, right?* He also introduced a wide range of artists (particularly from Africa) to international audiences, and in the process he contributed to the richness of the art scene in every corner of the world.

Enwezor is a singular figure who will come to define contemporary art of the last few decades. And in case you think his death will stop his work, then you'd be wrong. In two years people will be able to enjoy his contributions to the 2021 Sharjah Biennial, which he is officially curating (along with Sharjah Art Foundation Director Hoor Al Qasimi and others). Art in the 2010s will be remembered partly for the work of this Nigeria-born talent who not only responded to the changing realities of art today, but took control and helped to define a direction that reflected the global reality we all see in the world around us. —*Hrag Vartanian*

2. Hilma af Klint: *Paintings for the Future* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum



Hilma af Klint: *Paintings for the Future*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, installation view (photo by David Heald, © 2018 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation)

October 12, 2018–April 23, 2019

Curated by Tracey Bashkoff, with David Horowitz

Following her graduation from art school in 1887, Hilma af Klint became an established Swedish painter who was deeply invested in spiritualism and theosophy. Between 1906 and 1915, she produced a series of abstractions, both biomorphic and geometric, to express these beliefs. In keeping with her wishes, this work was not to be shown until 20 years after her death. It was on view for the first time in the United States at the Guggenheim in 2018–2019 where her canvasses were radiantly exhibited in the museum’s renowned spiral in a deeply moving show curated by Tracey Bashkoff, Director of Collections and Senior Curator, and David Horowitz, Curatorial Assistant. *Paintings for the Future* brought unprecedented numbers of visitors to the Guggenheim, breaking all previous attendance records, and making this mystic, woman painter from the early 20th century one of the most popular artists of the decade. —[Laura Raicovich](#)

3. Kerry James Marshall: *Mastry* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, co-organized with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles



Installation view of 'Kerry James Marshall: *Mastry*' featuring "De Style" (1993) at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (photo by Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago)

Co-curated by Dieter Roelstraete, Helen Molesworth, and Ian Alteveer, with the assistance of Karsten Lund and Abigail Winograd

Before seeing *Kerry James Marshall: Mastry*, I had never before spent so much time mulling over single paintings: drinking them in, from up close and afar, feeling ravenous to unravel and understand them in all of their detailed glory. The exhibition taught me how to truly *look* at art. *Mastry* is foregrounded by Marshall's dismay as a young art student at the overwhelmingly white canon of art history. "When you talk about the absence of black figure representation in the history of art, you can talk about it as an exclusion, in which case there's a kind of indictment of history for failing to be responsible for something it should have been," Marshall told the [New York Times](#) in an interview following the first of three legs of the retrospective. He concluded, "I don't have that kind of mission. I don't have that indictment. My interest in being a part of it is being an expansion of it, not a critique of it." Determined to accomplish this expansion, he studied in languages of art history — its expectations and constructions — and he mastered them and made them his own. (The influence of one of his teachers, Charles White, is equally present.)

Marshall calls blackness "non-negotiable" and "unequivocal" in his works. His portraits layer shades of black, one on top of the other, to create an incredible depth in the faces and limbs of his subjects. There are subtle differences between the carbon, mars, and ivory blacks he utilizes, sometimes mixing them with other hues to create a small palette from which Marshall has learned to make infinite depths.

Marshall's scenes of mural-like proportions are packed with Easter eggs: the longer you stare, the more you find. I found myself most enthralled by "De Style" (1993) — a massive scene of a Black barbershop — and its feminine 2013 counterpart, "School of Beauty, School of Culture." In the latter, which is painted in the colors of the Pan-African flag: green, red, and black, you see a poster for Chris Ofili's 2010 exhibition at Tate hanging on the same wall as a Dark and Lovely relaxer poster. In the mirror, you see someone taking a flash photo (calling to mind Diego Velasquez's insertion of the self in the busy scene of "[Las Meninas](#)"). There is narrative within narrative; from art historical allusions to references to pop culture and Blackness. Marshall's influence since the retrospective has been massive in the public imagination. —*Jasmine Weber*

4. Pacific Standard Time: LA / LA



Installation view of *Home — So Different, So Appealing* at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) with Leyla Cárdenas, "Excision" (Extracción) (2012) at center (photo Elisa Wouk Almino/Hyperallergic)

September 2017–January 28, 2018

This was [the third iteration of the Getty-funded Pacific Standard Time initiative](#), which supports exhibitions and events across Southern California around a particular theme. In 2017, this theme was Latin American and Latinx art — [a sprawling category](#), but one that makes a lot of sense; in the 2010 census, nearly half the population of Los Angeles alone identified as Latino or Latin American. There were more than 75 exhibitions at PST: LA / LA, from solo shows to group exhibitions. Some of our favorites included [Home — So Different, So Appealing](#) at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) (curated by Chon Noriega, Mari Carmen Ramírez, and Pilar Tompkins Rivas), [Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985](#) at the Hammer Museum (curated by [Cecilia Fajardo-Hill](#) and Andrea Giunta), [La Raza](#) at the Autry Museum of the American West (curated by Scott and Luis C. Garza), and [Anna Maria Maiolino](#) at the Museum of Contemporary Art (curated by Helen

Molesworth). The striking, often revelatory projects that emerged from PST: LA/LA also highlighted an unfortunate truth: they were rare displays in a region where there aren't enough institutions supporting and researching Latin American and Latinx art. —[Elisa Wouk Almino](#)

5. [Sharjah Biennial](#), Sharjah, UAE



Joe Namy's "Libretto-o-o: A Curtain Design in the Bright Sunshine Heavy with Love" (2017) at the 2017 Sharjah Biennial (photo Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

Various years

Various curators

The influence of the Sharjah Biennials is hard to downplay. For over a decade the art exhibition has been welcoming an international cadre of talent and helping to

commission important art works of all types — for instance, did you know they helped fund some recent videos by John Akomfrah?

Kudos to Hoor Al Qasimi for shepherding the independence of the biennial in an autocratic environment that isn't normally open to some of the most controversial contemporary art, but she did it. The miracle of the Sharjah Biennial has been its ability to work against the odds and support new scholarship on art in the region, the influence of which will be felt for generations to come. They've been able to attract some of the best curators in the world, and they've helped to form the conversations that influence contemporary art today. The last decade is when the biennial has really come into its own as a powerhouse. Curators include Suzanne Cotter and Rasha Salti (2011), Yuko Hasegawa (2013), Eungie Joo (2015), Christine Tohme (2017), and then Zoe Butt, Omar Kholeif, and Claire Tancons this year. Rumors are the political tide may be changing in the UAE and throughout the Gulf, so hopefully the Sharjah Art Foundation will be able to ensure that its flagship biennial will continue to excel without outside interference. —*HV*

6. [Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty](#) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art



Gallery view, "Romantic Gothic" section of Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty (image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum)

May 4–August 7, 2011

Organized by Andrew Bolton and the Costume Institute

Presented just over a year after the mercurial designer's death, *Savage Beauty* did the dual work of showcasing bold, breathtaking designs that helped reshaped the haute couture landscape and paying tribute to a prolific artist whose keen understanding of texture, shape, identity, politics, and history positioned him as a visionary who was light-years ahead of his time. Known as a bit of a bad boy about the London scene, McQueen rose from humble beginnings; his father was a taxi driver, and he first entered the garment world as a tailoring apprentice before going on to earn his master's at the esteemed Central Saint Martins. In 1997, at just 27 years old, he was appointed Chief Designer of legacy fashion house Givenchy, right around the same time that the perennially controversial (and now disgraced for his racist remarks) John Galliano took over Dior; in their parallel roles, the two British designers were [credited with reinvigorating](#) what was then perceived to be a staid period among French fashion houses. Much like many Costume Institute exhibitions, the presentation of McQueen's oeuvre in the galleries was impeccably researched and breathtaking in scope, including roughly 100 ensembles and accessories drawn from the McQueen Archive, private collections, and even the Givenchy Archive to chart [a comprehensive view of his career](#). The drama and spectacle of McQueen's legendary, and occasionally brash designs — from his styling of models in such a way that commented on the physical and mental abuse of women in the industry, to his infamous “bumsters” and “highland rape” collection — was displayed in optimal fashion. Darkened, dramatically spotlit, and replete with affective staging, *Savage Beauty* did the praise-worthy work of recreating the resplendent vision of a beloved designer who left us too soon. —[Dessane Lopez Cassell](#)

7. [Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power 1963-1983](#) at Tate Modern, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Broad, the de Young Museum



Wadsworth A. Jarrell, “Revolutionary (Angela Davis)” (1971), acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 64 x 51 inches (© Wadsworth A. Jarrell, image courtesy the Brooklyn Museum)

Curated by Mark Godfrey and Zoe Whitley at Tate Modern. The Crystal Bridges presentation is curated by Lauren Haynes; the Brooklyn Museum presentation is curated by Ashley James; the Broad presentation is curated by Sarah Loyer; the de Young presentation is curated by Timothy Anglin Burgard and Lauren Palmor.

[*Soul of a Nation*](#) introduced a vital history of Black artists and their contributions to a public audience at an unprecedented scale — its breadth and size is awe-inducing. The two decades that define this “soul of a nation” — between 1963 and 1983 — are situated in a distinct era: a shift out of Jim Crow into the Civil Rights Movement. It’s 1983 cutoff can be understood through a new shift in the mechanisms of American racism: mass incarceration and the crack epidemic. The era also marked a shift in the art world toward multiculturalism and post-blackness, while hip-hop began to take the reigns in popular culture.

The galleries of *Soul of a Nation* are separated by cities and collectives, including New York’s Spiral and Kamoinge, and Chicago’s Africobra. At the Los Angeles iteration of the exhibition, Californian artists like John Outterbridge and Noah Purifoy get a far more prominent feature, while Betye Saar’s mystical works get their own, darkened room. Overall, *Soul of a Nation* brought together a striking and diverse collection of artworks — from Barkley Hendricks and Faith Ringgold, to the abstract works of Sam Gilliam, Frank Bowling, and Alma Thomas, among others.

Soul of a Nation projected a generation of artists approaching their 70s, 80s, and 90s into the international spotlight. The exhibition sparked a necessary conversation about the art world and its exclusion of this wealth of talent from permanent collections and exhibitions.
—JW

8. [*Hide/Seek*](#) at the Smithsonian, Washington, DC



An installation shot of *Hide/Seek* at the National Portrait Gallery (image from npg.si.edu)

October 30, 2010–February 13, 2011

Curated by Jonathan Katz and David C. Ward

It's hard to believe that the [Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture controversy](#) was only 10 years ago, and little did we know it would be a harbinger of things to come as a new phase of the US culture wars was ignited during the Obama presidency (partly driven, it appears, by the fact that some people just couldn't handle the fact that the president was Black). The exhibition was an important look at the role LGBTQ artists have placed in the history of portraiture, and the work that ignited the controversy was [David Wojnarowicz's "A Fire In My Belly" video](#), which includes a brief clip of ants crawling over a Jesus figure on a cross. After Reps. John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Eric Cantor (R-Va.) raised alarms over the work, the National Portrait Gallery removed the Wojnarowicz piece. The [exhibition](#) influenced many exhibitions that followed in the decade, and cemented co-curators Jonathan Katz and David C. Ward as important voices in the field. —HV

9. [We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85](#) at the Brooklyn Museum



Installation view of We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85 at the Brooklyn Museum (© Jonathan Dorado)

April 21–September 17, 2017

Curated by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley

This stunning and significant [exhibition](#) looked at the vibrant network of Black women artists in the United States during second-wave feminism, which was largely dominated by the politics of white women in mainstream conversations. Moving chronologically from the 1960s through the 1980s, the exhibition was a gorgeous intergenerational display of artworks by Faith Ringgold, Lorraine O'Grady, Howardena Pindell, Lorna Simpson, Betye Saar, and many others. But just as crucially, the 242 objects on display also included ephemera and archival material that revealed the tightly-knit communities among these women artists. They tirelessly helped to promote one another's work, establishing artist collectives, curating shows, publishing essays, and staging protests. Together they [made their own art world](#), one that persisted in the face of racism and lack of recognition. The Brooklyn Museum show was one step in giving these networks of artists the institutional recognition they deserve. Expertly curated, the rooms of the exhibition encircled Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party" (1974–1979). As Jessica Bell Brown put it in her excellent [review](#) for Hyperallergic, "Quite poetically, one can't get to Chicago's 'The Dinner Party,' a permanent fixture of these galleries, without seeing some part of *We Wanted a Revolution*." —EWA

10. [Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists](#) at the Minneapolis Institute of Art



Edmonia Lewis, Mississauga and African American, "The Old Arrow Maker" (modeled 1866, carved c. 1872), marble, 20 x 14 x 14 inches, (courtesy Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art Bentonville, Arkansas; photo: Sotheby's)

June 2–August 18, 2019

Organized by Jill Ahlberg Yohe and Teri Greeves, with the Native Exhibition Advisory Board, a panel of 21 Native artists and Native and non-Native scholars from across North America, fully credited [here](#). Now on view at the Frist Museum in Nashville

In 2013, Jill Ahlberg Yohe and independent curator and beadmaker, Teri Greeves of the Kiowa Nation, had a conversation: why hadn't there been an exhibition dedicated to Native women artists? [Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists](#) sought to answer this question. To make it happen, Ahlberg Yohe, Greeves, and research assistant Dakota Hoska collaborated with an advisory board comprised of 21 Native women artists, as well as scholars, curators, and historians on Native North America. As the board convened, one central and more specific question was posed, "Why do Native women artists create?" After three years of extensive meetings, phone calls, and emails with the advisory board, Greeves and Ahlberg Yohe narrowed down the exhibition into three themes, including several sub-themes: Legacy, or the continuum of resilience as it relates to children and ancestors; Relationship, or further, the Indigenous concept of interconnectivity and relationships called Kincentricity as well as Collaboration; and Power, which encompasses Honor/Diplomacy (certainly as it relates to land sovereignty) along with Dignity, Grace, and Balance. These themes uphold the confluence of spirituality and practice within Indigenous organizing structures, producing an exhibition that includes 115 diverse works spanning 1,000 years, with an impressive 70% of the ancestral art identified by name. This model — which continues to circulate around the country as part of a national tour — offered a crucial guide for dismantling more general ideas around diversity and inclusion in traditional curatorial practice, [centering Indigenous values](#), rather than the translation of them into palatable white supremacist standards. —[Erica Cardwell](#)

11. [Histórias Afro-Atlânticas](#) ("Afro-Atlantic Histories") at the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP), and the Tomie Ohtake Institute, São Paulo, Brazil



Carybé, "Bainas (Women from Bahia)" (1957, oil on wood, 200 x 230 cm (photo Seph Rodney./Hyperallergic)

June 28–October 21, 2018

Curated by Adriano Pedrosa, Ayrson Heráclito, Hélio Menezes, Lilia Schwarcz, and Tomás Toledo

[This exhibition](#) sets out with a staggering ambition: to tell the story of the westward flow of the African diaspora in a place which is home to the world's largest black population outside of Nigeria. In this context both the need and the risk were great. The curatorial team rendered this story with insight and exhaustive scholarship, dividing the show of 450 works by more than 200 artists into eight thematic sections spread across two museums. The pieces ranged historically from several centuries ago to the contemporary moment, and ranged from Afro-Brazilian art to other parts of South America, the Caribbean, North America, Europe, and Africa too. The exhibition was convened to coincide with the official abolishing of slavery in Brazil in 1888, commemorating the 130th anniversary of that occasion, and it demonstrated definitively that the continent is a great creative taproot from which wonderful hybrids continue to spring. —[Seph Rodney](#)

12. [Women of Abstract Expressionism](#) at the Denver Art Museum



A view of *Women of Abstract Expressionism* at the Denver Art Museum. (photo Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

June 12–September 25, 2016

Curated by Gwen Chanzit

Until recently, less than a dozen white men were included in the framework of Abstract Expressionism. Curator Gwen Chanzit, now retired, considered the movement's "outliers" after seeing *Action/Abstraction* at the Jewish Museum in 2008. The inclusion of paintings by Mary Abbott, Judith Godwin, Perle Fine and Ethel Schwabacher in the [Women of Abstract Expressionism](#) not only tested the previous criteria of this category but revealed the dynamics around the same system that acknowledged Frankenthaler and Krasner. The women romantically partnered with prominent artists were granted greater access to collectors, other artists and thus opportunities, according to [Hyperallergic's interview with Godwin](#). The stakes of the show were both radical and simple; women artists challenged and enriched the concept of this American-made movement despite the brotherhood of gatekeepers. —[Kealey Boyd](#)

13. [Kara Walker's "A Subtlety" \(aka the Marvelous Sugar Baby\)](#) at the Domino Sugar Factory, Brooklyn, NY



Kara Walker's "A Subtlety" (photo Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

May 10–July 6, 2014

Curated by Nato Thompson

Few installations ignited the reaction of Kara Walker's installation at the Domino Sugar Factory, with its large sphinx-like figure and smaller children made of molasses surrounding it. It was a tour de force that ignited the public imagination and demonstrated that art can still bring in massive crowds eager for historically engaged narratives that come to life in ways that enlighten and entertain (let's face it, the spectacle was a key element of the piece).

But Walker's work isn't on this list only for the positive aspects, as the work also represented one of the most successful artwashing events in the history of New York real estate. The Domino site, which has long been the focus of anti-gentrification activists — some of whom wanted to preserve the site or turn it into a museum-like space — was artwashed by Walker's sphinx. The installation created awareness about a new real estate site and ignored the local neighborhood voices interested in preserving them. You can't blame anti-gentrification activists for being leery of these kind of art projects, and nowadays many are rejecting the emergence of art spaces in "up-and-coming" areas because they know what will follow. The current site of the former Walker installation is now a multi-use development with luxury housing and a park that is obviously informed by another gentrification scheme that worked, the High Line — did I mention the chairman of the Creative Time board owned the site too? Artists undoubtedly will do a lot of soul-searching regarding their roles in gentrification schemes in the coming decade, so it's worth highlighting this project since we'll be seeing a lot like it in the coming years. Doesn't mean it wasn't a powerful art work, just that it has a more complicated and problematic history than many would like to accept. —HV

14. [Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947–2016](#), Hauser & Wirth Gallery, Los Angeles, CA



Jackie Winsor "30 to 1 Bound Trees" (1971 – 1972 / 2016) © Jackie Winsor. Courtesy Paul Cooper Gallery, New York and Hauser & Wirth installation view, *Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947 – 2016*, (Image courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth; photo by Brian Forrest)

March 13, 2016–September 4, 2016

Co-curated by Paul Schimmel and Jenni Sorkin

[*Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947 – 2016*](#) is one of the decade's exhibitions that has helped to subtly shift the canonized discussions of modern and contemporary sculpture in crucial ways. One way it did was by emphasizing and valorizing the intimate, hands-on, nature of the work of many women sculptors, (as opposed to venerating the fabrication of work outside the studio). The pieces assembled for the show also revealed that while these artists dealt with the typical formal concerns of weight, mass, texture, and scale, they also confronted social politics. And indeed, the infusion of these politics gave the art greater heft. More, the entire show demonstrated definitively that while underlying abstract concepts, formal inquiries, and concerns about agency drove the making of this work, one understood — by, for example, looking at Francoise Grossen's heavily knotted, hanging yarns — that craft, that is skilled handiwork, is often an *essential* aspect of work we regard as successful. —*Seph Rodney*

15. [*Picasso in Palestine*](#) at the International Academy of Art Palestine, Ramallah, Occupied Territories

June 24–July 20, 2011

Curated by Remco de Blaaij, Charles Esche, Khaled Hourani, Fatima Abdulkarim, and Galit Eilat

I didn't witness this exhibition, but it reverberated across the world. While it might have been lovely to see Picasso's "Buste de Femme" (1943) from Eindhoven's Van Abbemuseum in Ramallah, the concept was really the powerhouse here. Artist Khaled Hourani found a way to mine the complicated political realities of the region, while highlighting how cultural production is inevitably entangled in the fallout. The legal, insurance, and other hoops they had to jump through to realize this project illustrated the terrible reality facing those living under Israeli occupation. Photos of two security guards flanking the painting on display brings up a lot of questions, and makes you wonder who decides what is and is not permitted in such situations. There were also guidelines for visitors, as visitors were restricted to a maximum of three at any one time. All is all, the exhibition was genius, causing a media sensation in the process. Artist Michael Baers also created a [graphic novel](#) based on the event. —*HV*

Honorable Mentions:

Emma Sulkowicz, "[Mattress Performance \(Carry That Weight\)](#)" (2014)



Emma Sulkowicz performing "Mattress Performance" or "Carry That Weight" (screenshot via YouTube)

Following a 2013 sexual assault at Columbia University while they were a student at the school, artist Emma Sulkowicz created a durational performance work in which they carried a standard-issue, single, dorm-style mattress around wherever they went. The work spoke to their personal experience in being greeted by skepticism when reporting the rape to both Columbia and the NYPD, as well as the constant weight the victims of sexual assault must carry in the aftermath of such trauma. "Mattress Performance" not only became a repository of consequences of the assault for Sulkowicz, but also prefigured the explosion of the subsequent #MeToo movement in the United States. —*Laura Raicovich*

[Chris Ofili](#) at Tate Britain, London, UK

January 27–May 16, 2010

By the time of the [Chris Ofili](#) exhibition at Tate Britain, Ofili had already won the Turner Prize and had represented Great Britain at the 50th Venice Biennale, but there hadn't yet been a show that presented the astonishing breadth and depth of his skill with color, with line, and with ornamentation. The show included paintings, pencil drawings, and watercolors and what came through all of it was sense of scintillating figuration, that could sweep up

anything in its path — elephant dung, glitter, pins, magazine cut-outs, resin — and make it ravishing. He became a leading proponent of a style of representation that is baroquely expressive, defiantly salacious, and brazenly, culturally Black. There was visual invention in every work, and there was pride in his identity as well. —*Seph Rodney*