

What to See in the US Now Frieze Week's Over

From ‘Grief and Grievance’, an exploration into Black suffering at the New Museum to Laura Aguilar’s first retrospective at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, here’s what to see in the US now

BY FRIEZE IN EXHIBITION REVIEWS | 14 MAY 21



Stephanie Syjuco, *To the Person Sitting in Darkness*, 2019, dye-sublimation print on fabric, flag: 1.8 × 3 m / pole: 4.5 m. Courtesy; the artist, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco and RYAN LEE Gallery, New York

Stephanie Syjuco: To the Person Sitting in Darkness Baltimore Museum of Art

‘There must be two Americas,’ wrote Mark Twain in 1901. ‘[O]ne that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive’s new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on; then kills him to get his land.’ The quote is from Twain’s essay, ‘To the Person Sitting in Darkness’, in which the writer condemns Western imperialism in southeast Asia. The artist Stephanie Syjuco borrowed Twain’s title for her 2019 work: a flag for the then-US territory of the Philippines as described by Twain, resembling the American design but with ‘white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and cross-bones’. – *Frances Cathryn*

Ebecho Muslimova: Scence in the Sublevel

The Drawing Center, New York

In *Fatebe Heirloom* (all works 2020), the artist Ebecho Muslimova's cartoon alter-ego – Fatebe – folds herself around a giant beanstalk. Her fingers and toes cling to the trunk as she squeezes her elastic frame into the form of a voluptuous heirloom tomato. But she's a bit overripe: her flesh oozes juice, dripping into a black hole beneath. In the adjacent diptych (*Fatebe Sister Booth A* and *Fatebe Sister Booth B*), Fatebe exudes and ingests two huge red vintage leather couches: her vagina and mouth stretched out, birthing and swallowing respectively. Is she in discomfort? It doesn't look like it. Fatebe grins mischievously as always, delighted with her uncanny ability to consume, contort, expel and become alternative forms. – *Anthony Hawley*



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Heirloom*, 2020, enamel on Dibond aluminium, 2.5 × 2.5 m. Courtesy: the artist, Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich, and Magenta Plains, New York; photograph: Daniel Terna



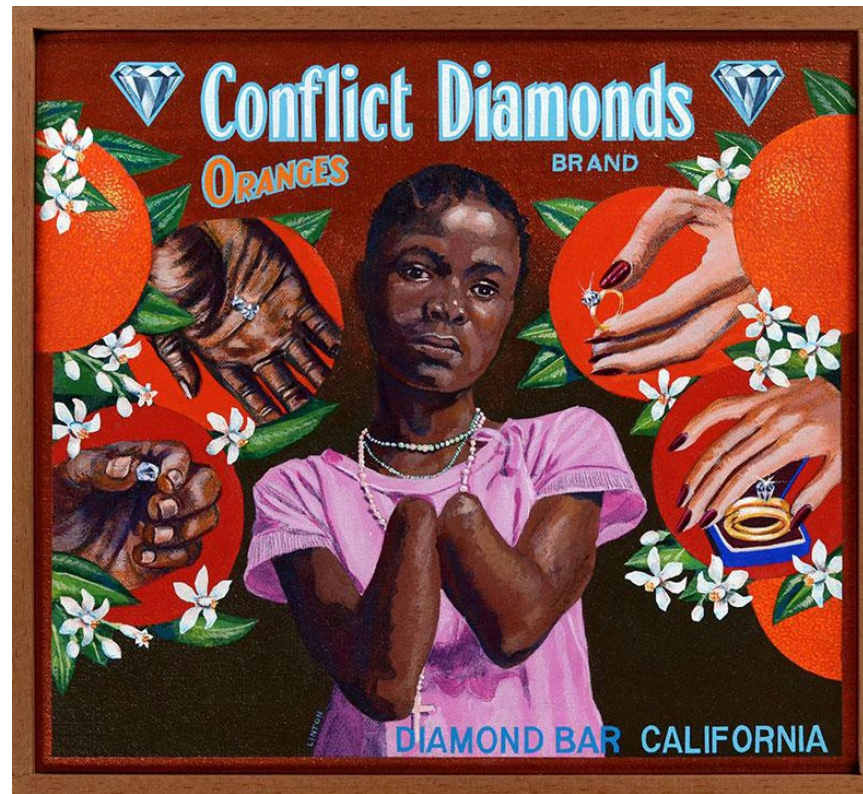
Dawoud Bey, *Fred Stewart II and Tyler Collins*, 2012, from the series 'The Birmingham Project', archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond, 102 × 163 cm. Courtesy: the artist and the New Museum, New York

Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America

New Museum, New York

‘Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America’ is a big, Black, 37-artist exhibition conceived by esteemed curator Okwui Enwezor and completed after his death by a curatorial committee including Naomi Beckwith, Massimiliano Gioni, Glenn Ligon and Mark Nash.

As it stands, however, the exhibition feels rather like a finely wrought time capsule: an A-list crew of artists presenting genuinely moving, profound visions of Black grief, but without the sense of immediacy that the pandemic has instilled in racial politics. And although racial capitalism is obviously of concern to the exhibition’s theme – the nexus of Black grief and white grievance – the ongoing labour struggles within *and* without the very space in which the exhibition is staged ([see the New Museum’s 2019 labour dispute](#)) are not directly referenced by the curators or the artists. – *Simon Wu*

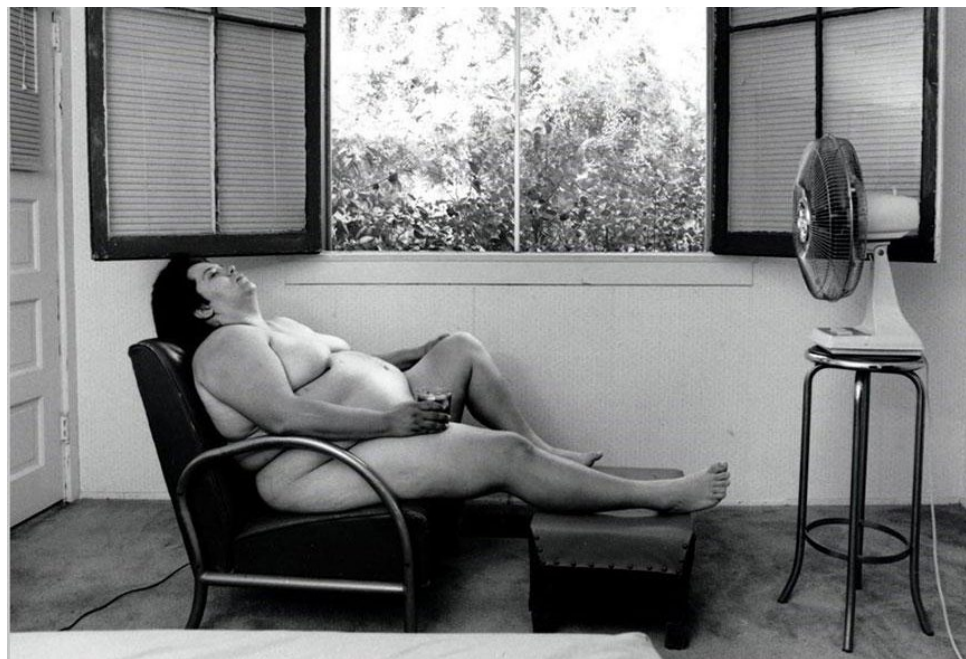


Ben Sakoguchi, *Conflict Diamonds Brand*, 2002, acrylic on canvas, pine frame, 25 × 28 cm.
Courtesy: the artist and Bel Ami, Los Angeles

Ben Sakoguchi: Chinatown

Bel Ami, Los Angeles

Sakoguchi's *Chinatown* (2014) – a complex, multipanel history painting on view at Bel Ami – spares no detail. The central panel, long and horizontal, is divided into 18 compartments – one for each of the victims of the infamous 1871 Chinatown lynching, the worst mass murder of its kind in US history. The painting is grisly and unflinching: the victims are mauled, bruised and hanged by their necks from trees and pullies. Yet, each is also delicately adorned – and partly concealed – by red and gold latticework of the sort that suffuses Chinatown. – *Travis Diehl*



Laura Aguilar, *In Sandy's Room*, 1989, gelatin silver print, 107 × 132 cm; © Laura Aguilar. Courtesy: the Laura Aguilar Trust of 2016, the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Los Angeles and the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York

Laura Aguilar: Show and Tell **Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York**

The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art in New York presents 'Laura Aguilar: Show and Tell', the fifth iteration of the artist's first retrospective, originally organized in 2017 by the Vincent Price Art Museum in Los Angeles. Highlighting Aguilar's contributions to contemporary art, the show gathers more than 70 works made between 1981 and 2007, dividing them thematically into three categories: 'Intersections', 'Belonging' and 'Landscapes'. Her signature black and white portrait photography takes centre stage, with series such as 'How Mexican is Mexican' (1990), 'Clothed/Unclothed' (1991–94) and 'Nature Self-Portrait' (1996) conveying the artist's desire to find affirmation in community, courage in vulnerability and refuge in nature. The contemporaneous, confessional-style videos that accompany them reveal how hard she worked to do so in a society that deemed large, queer bodies to be pathologically *other*. – *Jane Ursula Harris*