

6 Gallery Shows to Catch in Chelsea After Frieze



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Daniel Gordon, 'Jade and Lobsters', 2023
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND KASMIN, NEW YORK

Let's be honest, art fairs can be a nightmare. There's too many people, not enough food, and a glass of champagne costs upward of \$30. The event spaces rarely have windows, which makes the whole experience reminiscent of a long, disorienting trip to a big-box store.

With that being said, once you've endured Frieze New York this week, make sure to head just a few blocks south from the Shed to Chelsea. There you'll find airy, sunlit galleries and mercifully streamlined shows that promise a welcome respite from all that hustle and bustle.

Below, a look at six stand-out offerings around the neighborhood.

Yayoi Kusama at David Zwirner



Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

Calling an art exhibition “crowd-pleasing” can sound like an insult—it implies a lack of risk or discernment—but David Zwirner’s grand show of Yayoi Kusama is a sensory experience guaranteed to astonish most visitors. Zwirner, who has repped the iconic recluse since 2013, has dedicated three connected spaces on West 19th Street to the event, making it the gallery’s biggest show of her work to date. There are pieces easily recognizable as Kusama’s, like her spotted pumpkins, fantastical flowers and, of course, a new “Infinity Room” (titled *Dreaming of Earth’s Sphericity, I Would Offer My Love.*)

But the 94-year-old artist still has the potential to surprise. Her signature hallucinatory bombast has been pared down, nearing a return to her minimalist style of the late 1950s. There’s a technical looseness to her paintings here that contrasts with the focused, near-fastidious edge of her massively popular works.

Zwirner got the timing of the show, titled “I Spend Each Day Embracing Flowers,” right, too. Towering alien flowers are visible from 10th Avenue, unearthly, but very cheery, omens of spring. Kusama even wrote in the press release for the show a ditty for the sunshine:

I’ve Sung the Mind of Kusama Day by Day, a Song from the Heart. O Youth of Today, Let Us Sing Together a Song from the Heart of the Universe!

Pacita Abad at Tina Kim Gallery



Installation view of Pacita Abad, 'Colors of My Dream' at Tina Kim Gallery, New York.

Photo : Courtesy of Tina Kim Gallery. Photo by Charles Rousse

For those unfamiliar with the **prolific practice of the late Pacita Abad** (<https://www.artnews.com/feature/pacita-abad-artist-tate-walker-art-center-exhibitions-1234589919/>), this lush solo show at Tina Kim Gallery provides a fantastic introduction. Abad, who died in 2004, described herself as “a painter who paints from the gut” with “a strong social conscience” that guided her, over 30 years, to illuminate her life’s varied tragedies, from living under authoritarianism to experiencing gendered violence and racism.

Abad was born in the Philippines but lived for a time nomadically, keenly observing the injustices suffered by marginalized communities across Southeast Asia. The disparate artistic traditions she encountered were absorbed into her emergent textile-painting practice and eventually realized in what she called *trapunto*, after an Italian variant of quilting. Unstretched canvases were stuffed with cotton to create a sculptural effect and then adorned with abstract assemblages of objects collected in her travels: blue tile from Iran, peacock feathers from Papua New Guinea, dyed yarn from India. The colors are bold, affording presence to her overlooked subjects, many of whom were immigrants like herself.

The works on view include her early experiments in abstraction in the mid-1980s, when she returned from her travels to Manila. A standout entry from this period is *Sampaloc Walls* (1985), which references the peeling paint common in downtown Manila and the more insidious “constitutional authoritarianism” of Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the Philippines for 20 years. Elsewhere in her “Asian Abstractions” series are references to the complex Korean ink brush painting which she briefly studied in Seoul, as well as Indonesian textiles and other Indigenous art traditions such as Wayang puppetry.

The cumulative effect is a dazzling, empathetic interpretation of the little explosions people make upon contact.

A Benefit Exhibition for Nina Simone's Childhood Home at Pace Gallery



Cecily Brown, 'Runaway', 2021.

Photo : © Cecily Brown. Courtesy: Cecily Brown and Paula Cooper Gallery. Photo: Genevieve Hanson

Ten leading contemporary artists, including Julie Mehretu, Rashid Johnson, and Cecily Brown, have donated works for this benefit auction, with proceeds going to the preservation of Nina Simone's childhood home. The selection—co-curated by artist Adam Pendleton and tennis star and arts patron Venus Williams—will be on view at Pace's 25th West location until Saturday. Each work references, implicitly or tangentially, to the monumental legacy of the musical icon's oeuvre and social activism. Paintings include *Spell* (2023) by Sarah Sze, also the subject show at the Guggenheim; a recent work by Stanley Whitney, titled *Nina in the Sky with Diamonds* (2023); and one of Anicka Yi's "mesh paintings," *Mother Tongue* (2023), which marries machine learning with elements of her past work to create vibrant digital amalgamations.

My favorite piece, however, is *Runaway* (2021) by Brown, whose stellar survey "Cecily Brown: Death and the Maid" is on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It's an abstracted vision of smoke and rubble and, rising from the rubble, a female figure. Suggestions of flora and animals follow in her wake, sheep of a defiant shepherd. That's a nice fit for Simone, whose momentous selfhood survived America's ruinous state.

Bill Traylor at Ricco/Maresca



Bill Traylor, 'Untitled (Man with Red Top and Umbrella)', ca. 1939-42.

Photo : Tessa Solomon/ARTnews

Bill Traylor took up drawing in his 80s, as if the American epochs weighing on his heart had finally demanded release. Traylor was born in Alabama into slavery; he witnessed the Civil War, Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, and the Great Migration. Beginning in 1939, Traylor, then living on the streets of Montgomery, made art with whatever materials were available, like scraps of cardboard, poster paint, charcoal, and pencil. His characters are stick-figure simple, but never flat; people and animals pop with bold graphite, color, and personality. He worked until his death in 1949, leaving behind more than 1,000 works, a stellar few of which are on view at Ricco/Maresca.

The show, titled “Bill Traylor: Plain Sight,” focuses on the “upward trajectory” of Traylor’s art, which, according to the gallery, had a market value around \$1,000 in the early 1980s but now can fetch six figures at auction. In recent years, Traylor deservedly has been the subject of more than 40 solo gallery and museum exhibitions worldwide, including the major 2018 retrospective “Between Worlds: The Art of Bill Traylor,” at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Posthumous acclaim, though, is always bittersweet.

“In New York, Thinking of You” at the FLAG Art Foundation





Julie Curtiss, 'Daises', 2023.
Photo : Tessa Solomon/ARTnews

Some of the best paintings on view in Chelsea are up a few flights of stairs, at the FLAG Art Foundation. The nonprofit is currently staging the final act of “In New York, Thinking of You,” a showcase of never-before-seen or rarely-seen works by more than a dozen contemporary female-identifying artists. The first part featured, among others, Jordan Casteel and Aliza Nisenbaum; the second part includes Julie Curtiss, Yuan Fang, Hana Ward, and Shara Hughes. The show draws its title from the 2022 song “hornylovesickness” by Norwegian singer-songwriter Marie Ulven (aka girl in red). In a range of mediums, the artists gamely delve into the conflicting dimensions of love: lust, longing, control, alienation, tenderness.