

Check out summer's top group exhibitions in NYC

We highlight the best group shows to see in the coming months, showcasing up-and-coming artists and established names alike

Written by [Howard Halle](#) Monday July 20 2015



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It's [summer](#) in the art world, which means the annual ritual of group [exhibitions](#) taking over [galleries](#) is well underway. Like art itself, such shows come in all different flavors from the simple round-up of a gallery's stable of artists to thematic affairs organized by outside curators. Very often, group exhibits are used as an opportunity to try out emerging talent and [new artists](#) (sort of like minor-league baseball), but just as often they include established names and art-historical heavyweights. Whatever the case, there's always lots to see, and to help you navigate the myriad choices out there, here's a chronological list of our top picks.



Courtesy Invisible-Exports

“Soft Core”

Art

Yes, much of the work here is erotic in nature, but the show also delves into softness as an aesthetic quality, whether that means the use of contoured lines or forms in painting and drawing, or pliable materials in sculpture. The list includes Josh Blackwell, *Time Out New York* contributor Anne Doran and Dave Hardy.

Suzannah Sinclair, *When You're Alone*, 2010

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Courtesy The Hole NYC

“Not A Painting”

Art

More than 50 years ago, the painter Frank Stella banished all vestiges of spatial illusion in his work, by insisting that his paintings function as physical objects and nothing more. “What you see is what you see,” he famously said, and variations of the formula by other artists have come down to us over the years. The works here represent the latest in this vein, filtering Stella’s idea through differing shades of a pop-punkish sensibility as seen in works by Bob Eikelboom, Evie Falci, Adam Parker Smith and others.

Adam Parker Smith, *Charlatan*, 2015

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Jason Wyche

“By the Book”

Art

Books, libraries and literature are the themes in this collection of bibliophilic artworks, some of which incorporate actually tomes. Quotations and allusions to the contemplative delights of reading are all part of the mix in a show that speaks volumes about the role of text in contemporary art. Marcel Duchamp, Anselm Kiefer, Kiki Smith and others search the stacks for inspiration.

Javier Tellez, *F For Fable*, 2011

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Courtesy Marc Straus/Sam Trioli

“Gray would be the color, If I had a heart”

Art

The use of grisaille (a palette restricted to grays) is a longstanding tradition and has played an essential role in the work of many major figures in art history. “Gray allows for the possibility of distant optimism,” according to the handout for this show, which takes a look at contemporary approaches to the genre. The works here by an international selection of artists (among them, William Anastasi, VALIE EXPORT and Ralph Eugene Meatyard) explore the ambiguity of gray both literally and metaphorically.

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Sara Maria Salamone

“Inside The Episode”

Art

A familiar staple of the summer group show is to ask a famous artist to curate a show of lesser-known talents that he or she likes. The choices often reflect the artist's own aesthetic and range from fresh faces (who are sometimes the curator's studio assistants) to artists who've been around round the block more than once. Since the artist in question here is Jack Pierson, the works here

sometimes evince a certain confessional tone and tendency toward personal narratives. Pierson's selections include works by James Brown, Elisabeth Kley and Stephen Tashjian.

Installation view

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Courtesy David N. Regen / Gladstone Gallery

“Hello Walls”

Art

This show presents postmodern takes on the venerable practice of painting on a wall, an art form dating back thousands of years. The twist uniting the works here, however, is the idea of creating murals meant to be temporary, site-specific projects painted over at the end of the show. So go see these works (by a multigenerational cast that includes Bochner, Daniel Buren, Wangechi Mutu and Kara Walker, among others) while you still can.

Raymond Pettibon, *No Title (Arts and letters...)*, 2015

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Courtesy of the artist and OHWOW Gallery

“Weird Science”

Art

Boesky’s UES townhouse space is the counterintuitively elegant setting for this show spotlighting works with a certain aggressively discomfiting style that runs the gamut from creepy to outlandish while spanning techniques from classical to digital. Adam Cvijanovic, David Opdyke and Letha Wilson are among the artists getting weird.

Jacolby Satterwhite, *Cells*, still from *Reifying Desire 3*, 2012

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Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery

"What Nerve! Alternative Figures in American Art, 1960 to the Present"

Art

In this revamp of recent American art history, idiosyncratic visions of the human form take center stage in a round-up of artists culled from four regional groups sharing an exuberantly perverse mash-up of Surrealism and Pop grotesque: Chicago's Hairy Who; the "Funk" artists of the Bay Area; the members of the influential art-punk band Destroy All Monsters from Ann Arbor, Michigan (which included Mike Kelley and Jim Shaw); and the Providence, RI based performance collective, Forcefield. The range of participants (in addition to Kelley, Shaw and Forcefield, there's Robert Arneson, Jim Nutt, Peter Saul and Karl Wirsum) is as eclectic as the work itself.

Peter Saul, *Black Beauty White Shame*, 1966

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Courtesy Bitforms Gallery

"Memory Burn"

Art

Does our ability to endlessly record our every move and moment offer a gateway to a form of digital immortality? That's the intriguing question posed by curator Chris Romero in this group show, which include artists such as Daniel Canogar, Sara Ludy and Andrea Wolf. The exhibit itself is inspired by a 1940 dystopian novel by the Argentinian author Adolfo Bioy Casares, whose story is set in an early version of virtual reality: The characters in the book aren't corporeal but actually projections—recorded images that transcend the finite limits of human existence. The works here pick up, in many cases, where Casares left off.

Angela Washko, *Womanhouse (Or: How To Be A Virtuous Woman)*, 2014

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Cary Whittier

“I Dropped the Lemon Tart”

Art

This lively group exhibit takes its name from the story about Italian chef Massimo Bottura and how he came up with one of his signature dishes, a sort of deconstructed lemon tart. After his sous chef dropped a whole tart on the floor, Bottura was inspired by its splattered remains to invent a new, wild dessert that would become a runaway success. But even while this kitchen lore is a tale of victory wrested from the jaws of defeat, the organizers of “I Dropped the Lemon Tart” take a dimmer view of failure as a feature of the human condition, describing it “as something that permeates all aspects of being.” Still, the show doesn’t fail to please, thanks to contributions by Todd Bourret, Gelitin and Emily Mae Smith among others.

Emily Mae Smith, *The Studio (Science Fiction)*, 2015

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Courtesy Salon 94

“Tiger Tiger”

Art

With the heat and humidity building, New York is beginning to feel more and more like the Amazon, making this jungle-themed show seem timely. Paintings, sculptures and ceramics by the likes of Katherine Bernhardt, Jules de Balincourt and Yutaka Sone, among others, dive headlong into the bush to collectively depict a mostly Edenic realm of exotic flora and fauna radiating a mythical, storybook presence.

Katherine Bernhardt, *Jungle with Sloth*, 2015

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Courtesy Richard Tattinger Gallery

“Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?”

Art

While the art world has become global in reach during the past several decades, contemporary artists from Africa are still vastly underrepresented at art fairs, galleries and museum in the West, despite the creative energy and innovation of artists who either make their home on the continent, or who work as part of the worldwide African diaspora. This exhibition, curated by art historian Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi aims to remedy that relative lack of exposure with his lineup of 12

~~names working in all mediums, who aren't well known outside of their respective communities. Look~~
out for Beatrice Wanjiku's Expressionistic figurative paintings, Chika Modum's sculptural installations made of hair and Hanida Boughriet's photographic portraits, to name just a few.

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Exhibition: Solomon Tesfayoh, *Untitled* (from the "Forbidden Fruit" series), 2015

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