

# David Ebony's Top 10 New York Gallery Shows for November

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David Ebony, Friday, November 21, 2014

## 1.) Maurizio Cattelan at Venus Over Manhattan, through January 10, 2015; at Sotheby's S/2 Gallery, through November 26

While Maurizio Cattelan is supposed to be retired, and hasn't shown anything new in a few years, his previously exhibited works never looked as fresh and new as they do recycled here in this smart and engaging two-part show, "Cosa Nostra." Organized by Venus Over Manhattan founder and sometime musician Adam Lindemann, the exhibition features 20 of Cattelan's greatest hits. The title's reference to the Sicilian mafia is a Cattelan-esque tongue-in-cheek allusion to the exclusive family that art-world insiders are often perceived to be, and the cut-throat business of blue chip art dealing that they apparently control. Cattelan's works are, after all, big business, selling for upwards of \$20 million.

For those who missed "All," Cattelan's over-the-top retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum (2011/2012), when the artist hung every work from the atrium ceiling, this show is a must. And even for those who had seen that impressive survey, "Cosa Nostra" offers an entirely unique and similarly unforgettable experience. The works at Venus Over Manhattan, including *Now* (JFK in a casket 2004), *Spermini* (1997), featuring 150 rubber self-portrait masks, and the head-standing cops, *Frank and Jamie* (2002), appear in an eerie and elaborate, dimly lit installation. Surrounded by foreboding, prison-like walls, the works can be viewed only through peepholes. It's a weird and enthralling effect, reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp's macabre and erotic installation *Étant Donnés* (1946-1966) in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and it serves the works well.

In this highly unusual gallery-auction house collaboration, part II of the exhibition, at Sotheby's S/2, highlights works such as *Him* (2001), depicting a kneeling miniature Hitler, *Cheap to Feed* (1997), a taxidermied dog, and a small-scale version of *La Nona Ora* (2003), a cast plaster image of the Pope felled by a meteorite. The mood here is almost the exact opposite of that in Venus Over Manhattan. Brightly lit and set against mirrored walls, the works have a garish intensity. Nevertheless, despite the glare, Cattelan's dark and poignant humor comes through.

## 2.) Martin Puryear at Matthew Marks, through January 10, 2015

Martin Puryear's illustrious career, spanning some four decades, is full of honors, accolades and recognition for his outstanding achievement in sculpture. Yet he still seems hungry—tirelessly reaching for perfection, as evidenced by this energetic show of major new abstract works in wood, bronze, cast iron and stainless steel. Puryear revisits certain forms, including those referencing African art, and the Phrygian cap or "liberty cap," which he uses metaphorically as an emblem for the struggle for freedom. A major example of the form here, *Big Phrygian* (2010-2014), a large, curvilinear object made of red-painted red cedar, is among the best he has ever done. In *Faux Vitrine* (2014), he introduces a new form, almost furniture-like in its allusion to functionality. Made of stained maple and walnut, with polished stainless steel panels, this towering elliptical construction resembles a teetering bookshelf, although it also has an almost architectural feel, like a bowed skyscraper. The works in this show are by a master craftsman and consummate artist at the height of his evocative powers.

## 3.) R.H. Quaytman at Gladstone Gallery, through December 20

"O Tópico, Chapter 27" is an exhibition of recent works by New York artist R.H. Quaytman that will be

permanently installed next year in a new pavilion on the grounds of the vast sculpture park and art center at Inhotim, Brazil. Designed by Quaytman's longtime collaborator architect Solveig Fernlund, the gallery show gives an idea of how the works will look in the innovative new structure at Inhotim, also designed by Fernlund. The display features irregular, canvas walls in an overall scheme modeled on the Fibonacci sequence.

Within this extraordinary, fractured space, which feels at once cozy and disorienting, Quaytman has installed a wide array of paintings and three-dimensional objects, mostly inspired by recent visits to Brazil. Some of the abstract pieces recall the Neo-Concrete experiments of Brazilian artists such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark. One of Quaytman's relief sculptures resembles a melting globe. Wedged into a narrow corridor-like space, which visitors are obliged to squeeze through, the globe hangs directly across from a painting etched with the Portuguese words "Não Toque" or "Do Not Touch." The works and their juxtaposition convey the environmental and socio-political concerns that underlie Quaytman's absorbing and ambitious project.

#### **4.) Bryan Schutmaat at Sasha Wolf, through January 11, 2015**

It's hard to believe that the sumptuous and melancholy photographs by Austin, Texas–based photographer Bryan Schutmaat in "Grays the Mountain Sends" are actually contemporary scenes of the American West. These recent large-format images bathed in an ethereal light, seem to be from a far distant time and place. Though steeped in an atmosphere of nostalgia, they are never sappy or sentimental. Over the course of several years, Schutmaat has explored abandoned mining towns in Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and California. He photographs the awe-inspiring desolate landscapes, the ramshackle villages, and the impoverished residents who cling to a way of life that has long since passed them by. But rather than a journalistic approach, his vision is consistently poetic. There is a sad beauty to "Grays the Mountain Sends," but Schutmaat never tries to manipulate his audience. The emotional impact the works harbor reveals itself suddenly and subtly, when you least expect it.

#### **5.) "Picasso & the Camera" at Gagosian, through January 3, 2015**

In this season, like many others past, Picasso holds court at a number of New York venues. Pace Gallery on 57 Street presents, through January 10, 2105, "Picasso & Jacqueline: The Evolution of Style," a lively homage to Jacqueline Roque, Picasso's late widow, who was his principal muse in the last decades of his career. "Picasso & the Camera" at Gagosian is the latest installment in the spectacular series of exhibitions organized by Picasso's onetime friend and current biographer, John Richardson. Assisted by Gagosian directors Valentina Castellani and Michael Cary, Richardson has put together another extraordinary, museum-quality exhibition centered on an unusual subject: photography and its position within Picasso's art.

The exhibition contains many never before published or exhibited photographs by Picasso himself, as well as by his photographer friends and lovers, including Dora Maar, [Man Ray](#), Cecil Beaton, Brassai, Jean Cocteau, Lee Miller and many others. Also on view are major paintings and works on paper by Picasso, whose compositions either resulted from, or were altered by, photographs that Picasso had taken or collected. The show demonstrates the various ways the artist used photography, not only for documentation, but also as a way to manipulate and control his own image. One comes away from the show with the feeling that without the key role that photography in all of its permutations has played in his work, Picasso's monumental achievement would be a bit less imposing and a lot less well-known.

#### **6.) [Carla van de Puttelaar](#) at Danziger, through December 20**

Carla van de Puttelaar is the kind of photo artist who uses her chosen medium in its purist form. The recent, large-scale images in this show are classic studies of nudes and flowers. Despite the obvious conventions, these arresting images appear fresh and of-the-moment. Born in Holland, in 1967, van de Puttelaar draws upon her heritage to conjure images from the Golden Age of Dutch painting in the crisp

lines and crystalline refinement she favors in the photographs. Set against dark, monochrome backgrounds, her supple female nudes are especially outstanding. The idealization of the figures doesn't undermine their lithesome sensuality. It is important to keep in mind that these eroticized photos of female figures, usually a favorite male subject, were taken from a woman's point of view.

### **7.) Francesco Clemente at Mary Boone, through December 20**

"Two Tents," a wistful and enthralling show by Francesco Clemente at Mary Boone, coincides with a similarly luminous Clemente solo at the Rubin Museum in New York (through February 15). Both exhibitions highlight the Italian-born New York artist's fascination with India, and contain works inspired by the country or produced on his extended visits there. "Two Tents" features exactly what the title indicates, two large Mughal-style canvas tents, each ten feet high and twenty feet wide, that fill the gallery space. Clemente covered all of the walls and ceilings of the billowing cloth structures with colorful paintings. These allegorical compositions touch on universal themes of good and evil: the *Angels' Tent*, being the abode of celestial beings, and the *Devil's Tent*, the domain of evil forces. Rounding out the exhibition is a series of meticulous works on paper, in which Clemente collaborated with Indian craftsmen to mesh his distinctive figurative elements with intricate abstract or vegetal patterns and other ancient Indian motifs.

### **8.) Brian Rutenberg at Forum, through December 6**

South Carolina-born New York painter Brian Rutenberg has long been preoccupied with water, its direct relationship to the fluid properties of paint, and the reflective and translucent quality of a watery surface. For the radiant series of recent large-scale, quasi-abstract works in "Brian Rutenberg: Saltwater," the artist focused on the coastal landscape of his home state. In these dense and intense compositions, he uses thick impasto and vibrant color, typically built up with bold, slathered-on, through carefully orchestrated, patches of unmodulated pigment. At times, his technique and compositional structures recall those of Nicolas de Staël. But technical prowess in Rutenberg's work is always subordinate to the mood of the scene and the feeling he wishes to convey via the land- or seascape's shifting luminosity and color. Works like *Mint Light* (2014), *Clover* (2013–14) and *Pour* (2014), with their intense tonality and ethereal light, constantly allude to the transcendental possibilities of nature.

### **9.) Darren Waterston at DC Moore, through December 20**

"Split the Lark," represents a significant breakthrough for Darren Waterston, a New York-based painter known for his semi-abstract, surrealist-tinged paintings with images that consistently waver between the real and the fantastic. Strange birds appear to take flight in one image. Or are they simply calligraphic flourishes of the brush? A landscape reference may appear, but on closer inspection evaporates into an amorphous haze. Architectural structures may be apparent for a moment, but suddenly recede into abstract planes.

In this show, Waterston incorporates three-dimensional elements into the mix, and the combination works well. Coinciding with his museum show, "Filthy Lucre" at MASS MoCA, on view through February 23, in which Waterston re-creates Whistler's fabled Peacock Room, "Split the Lark," features arcane furniture-like constructions, such as confessional partitions and freestanding frames. Waterston embeds the canvases into these various supports to create a kind of painting-sculpture hybrid. It's a risky strategy, perhaps; but rather than distract from the painted images, the 3-D elements tend to enhance them.

### **10.) Susan Te Kahurangi King at Andrew Edlin, through December 20**

Marking her US solo debut with this exhibition, Susan Te Kahurangi King, a self-taught artist from New Zealand, caused a stir when her works first appeared at last year's Outsider Art Fair in New York. The second of 12 children born in 1951 into a New Zealand family residing in Te Aroha, a small farming community on New Zealand's North Island, King stopped speaking at the age of four, and expressed herself only through drawing. Her parents sought medical help, but little was understood about her condition.

The small-scale drawings she produces are disproportionately astounding. The examples on view here, densely packed compositions, some in color, others black-and-white, feature meticulous renderings and wild distortions of popular cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. The figures' heads and bodies are often violently mutated and compressed into improbable configurations. Often the figures are arranged in rhythmic patterns, emanating from the lower right corner to the upper left. There is a lyrical elegance to the works, as well as a manic energy—obviously a bit of anger, too. Some works recall de Kooning, Jim Nutt, Carroll Dunham or Peter Saul, but in her isolation, King would be unaware of any of these artists. Her work is beguiling and engaging completely on its own terms.

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