

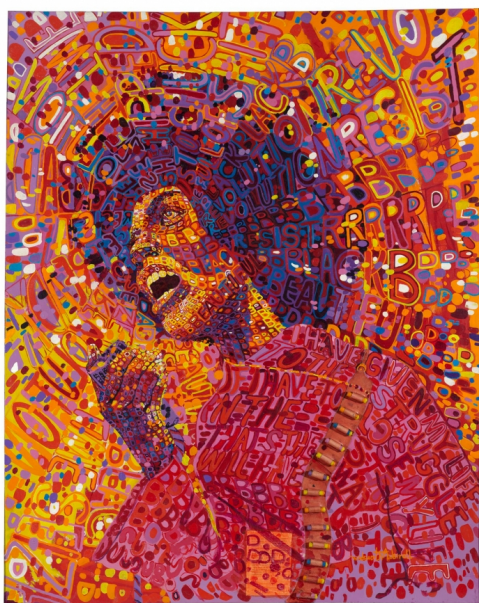
HYPERALLERGIC

ARTICLES

Best of 2018: Our Top 15 Brooklyn Art Shows

Here are our favorite Brooklyn shows of 2018, brought to you by the writers and editors of Hyperallergic.

Hyperallergic December 17, 2018



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)

This year, there were a number of excellent exhibitions throughout Brooklyn, from larger ones at the Brooklyn Museum, to smaller Bushwick shows at galleries like Tiger Strikes Asteroid. And, on a sadder note, some galleries, like SIGNAL in Williamsburg, closed down, but not before parting ways through a closing party that makes it on our list of honorable mentions. Here are our favorite Brooklyn shows of 2018, brought to you by the writers and editors of Hyperallergic.

1. *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* at the Brooklyn Museum

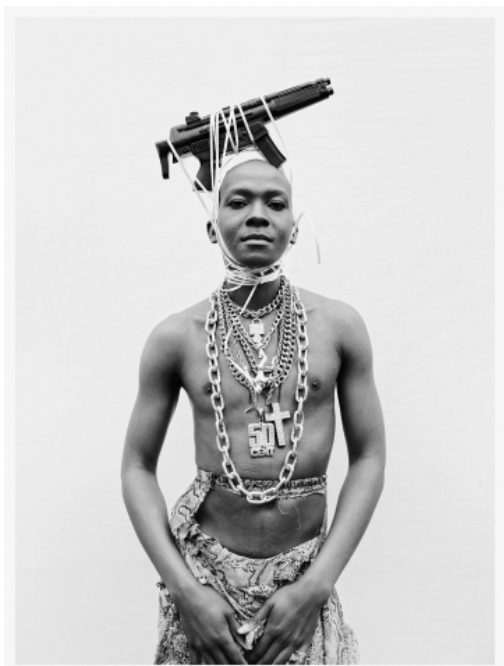


Frank Bowling, "Texas Louise" (1971)
(photo by Seph Rodney)

September 14–February 3, 2019

The *Soul of a Nation* exhibition at Brooklyn Museum, curated by Ashley James, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, weaves together a complicated narrative and displays it in a very legible fashion through a series of captioned galleries that reveal how Black artistic practice from the late '60s through to the mid-'80s was inflected by the Black Power movement. It is an extremely intelligent show that demonstrates a disparate but ultimately connected development through the lenses of particular geographic regions, artistic movements, political philosophies, and aesthetic concerns. Particularly wonderful is how it relates this story subtly through changes in the chromatic scale, moving from black and white in the first galleries through to a joyous explosion of color later on. —*Seph Rodney*

2. *Soft Criminal* at Red Hooks Labs



Kristin Lee Moolman (image courtesy Red Hook Labs)

September 12–23

In *Soft Criminal*, South African photographer Kristin-Lee Moolman maneuvers a bizarre but captivating visual narrative of monarchy, war, and culture through the use of enormous, beautiful portraits accompanied by brief placards offering insight into each character's psychology. The multifaceted project is a collaboration with Sierra-Leonean designer Ibrahim Kamara and British designer Gareth Wrighton. In the center of the gallery, two rows of hand-crafted haute couture ensembles donned by the models themselves are on display, revealing hidden sex scenes beaded into costumes and glimmering weaponry, among other painstakingly intricate oddities. —*Jasmine Weber*

3. *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985* at the Brooklyn Museum



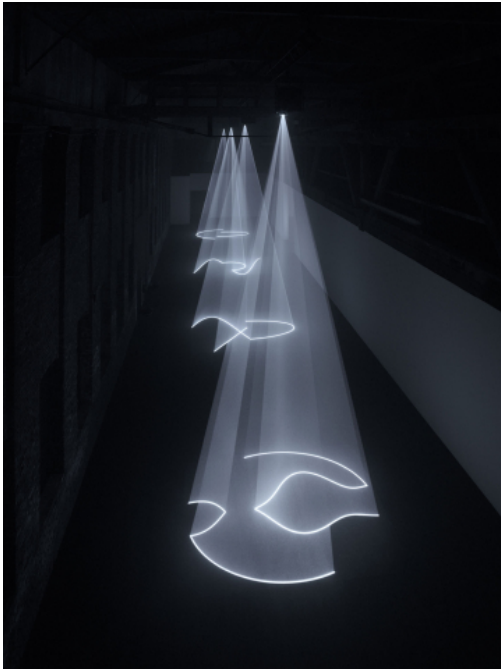
Installation view, *Radićal Wōmēñ>Laṭīñ Amēricāñ Aṭṭ«9418•9430* photo by Jonathan Dorado, image courtesy the Brooklyn Museum)

April 13–July 22

Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985 at the Brooklyn Museum featured 123 artists from 15 countries, highlighting the ways in which those artists used the female body to create art that critiqued the politics and social conditions of contemporary times. Although many of these artists did not directly align themselves with the Western notions of feminism, their art posited a very nuanced and important intervention within the all-encompassing canopy of the Western export of feminism. The exhibit included paintings, sculpture, photography, video, performance, and other mediums. Big names such as Lygia Pape and Marta Minujín, existed in radical resonance alongside lesser known names such as Zilia Sánchez, Feliza Bursztyn, and Victoria Santa Cruz. The exhaustive show was a very deliberate and effective reversing of the trend of all-white, often dead, male artists who take up most museum spaces. In fact, it was quite surprising to see that it took us until 2018 to witness such a show! The original exhibition at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles was guest curated by

Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta with Marcela Guerrero, former curatorial fellow, Hammer Museum. The Brooklyn presentation was organized by Catherine Morris, Sackler Senior Curator, and Carmen Hermo, Assistant Curator, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum —*Bedatri D. Choudhury*

4. Anthony McCall's *Solid Light Works* at Pioneer Works



Installation view, *Solid Light Works*
 Anthony McCall (image courtesy Pioneer
 Works, New York, © Dan Bradica)

January 12–March 11

Not often does a venue complement an exhibition as perfectly as British artist Anthony McCall's *Solid Light Works* at Pioneer Works earlier this year, curated by Gabriel Florenz. Stretching across the mammoth and rough-hewn space, it felt like you were stumbling across the light sculptures in the wild, their starting points unknown. While the large-scale immersion attracted crowds ready for their latest Instagram post, it also put a brighter spotlight on the artist's work outside its previous marginalization. —*Craig Hubert*

5. *Pushing Buttons* at Urban Glass



Installation view, Maya+Rouville, "Caesura" (2018), (image courtesy UrbanGlass and Mert Erdem)

January 24–March 10

Pushing Buttons, curated by Benjamin Wright at Urban Glass, explored our current state in the Anthropocene, taking into account humanity's relationship to technology and nature. The show included eight works, each of which combined glass with automated motors, screens, and electronics. As the title suggests, the works interrogated the ways in which we interact with machines, but also how machines reflect back at us. Jim Campbell's especially poignant works, "Photo of my Mother" (1996) and "Photo of my Father" (1994–95) present a black-and-white photograph of each parent encased in glass that becomes cloudy and fogged up based on a programmed rhythm of the artist's breaths and flashes based on the rhythm of the artist's heartbeat. Other works more directly tackle environmental issues, like Sarah Max Beck and Robert C. Beck's "Possibility Chambers" (2017), which constructs a wetland ecosystem, including a water tank, electronics, and an LCD screen. Each of these works makes visible technology's role as an intermediary in our experience of each other and the natural world. —*Megan N. Liberty*

6. *Unreality Bomb* at Five Myles Gallery



Eric Ashcraft, "The Passion of the Fruit"
(2018), acrylic on canvas, 14 x 18 inches
(image courtesy Five Myles Gallery)

March 17–April 15

Curated by the painter Alex Sewell, *Unreality Bomb*, which opened at Five Myles gallery in March, was a gathering of friends. The stated intent of the exhibition was to showcase works from which parts had been deliberately removed. To my mind, though, the fragmentation that pervaded the show spoke to a sense of disenfranchisement artists feel in relation to art's more classically integrated importance. One painting by Eric Ashcraft especially stood out in this respect. Displaying a pear crucified to a wooden board by a single nail, and a banana with still-burning cigarette butts stabbed onto it, the work poked fun at how artists utilize their time when the political and social merit of making art is increasingly denied. —*Jeffrey Grunthamer*

7. Dialectics of Entanglement: Do We Exist Together? at A.I.R. Gallery

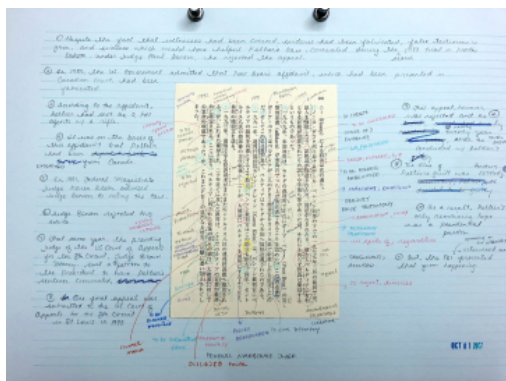


Installation view of *Dialectics of Eñtañğlèmèñt* (all images courtesy A.I.R. Gallery unless otherwise noted)

August 2–September 2

For their 45th anniversary, the nonprofit women’s cooperative A.I.R. Gallery chose to reinterpret important exhibitions from their past, including *Dialectics of Isolation: Third World Women Artists of the United States*, a 1980 show, radical for its time, featuring women of color artists. The restaged version, *Dialectics of Entanglement: Do We Exist Together?*, honored the legacy of the original with a diverse selection of works from the original artists and a fantastic exhibition catalogue that helped frame the show as an important object within a history of intersectional feminist discourse. Some of the most impactful works, like Howardena Pindell’s video “Free, White, and 21,” and Judy Baca’s mural study “When God Was Woman,” retained an unsettling timeliness, challenging us to reflect on the ways in which abuses of power persist in the art world and American culture at large. The exhibition was curated by A.I.R. Executive Director Roxana Fabius and Associate Director Patricia M. Hernandez, with Assistant Curator Carla Zurita. —*Ana Tuazon*

8. Asuka Goto: lost in translation at Tiger Strikes Asteroid



Asuka Goto, *ĩđšť iñ ṭřañśḷaṭiđñ* (detail) at Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Bushwick, Brooklyn (photo by Elisa Wouk Almino/Hyperallergic)

February 16–March 25

In this exhibition, curated by Alex Paik, Asuka Goto covered the gallery walls with the obsessive notes she kept while translating her father’s novel from Japanese to English. As a translator myself, I found the project profoundly satisfying and at

times anxiety-inducing. The installation perfectly captured the performance of translation, and how translators are never fully satisfied with their renditions. — *Elisa Wouk Almino*

9. *American Artist: Black Goopy Universe* at HOUSING



Installation view, *Aṃḗrìcáń Aṙṙìṣṭ>Bláck Gōḍḍèy Uñìwèřšè* (image courtesy HOUSING)

January 26–February 16

While artworks and art experiences are increasingly devised for Instagram appeal, *American Artist* makes work that is refreshingly circumspect with regards to the politics of its own visibility. Artist’s first solo gallery exhibition, *Black Goopy Universe*, curated by KJ Freeman, portrayed shards of digital culture — cracked and mute screens and devices — to meditate on technological and cultural conceptions of blackness. GUIs — Graphic User Interfaces, or “gooseys” — are designed for ease of human use, but Artist imagined a universe in which such interfaces are recalcitrant and inaccessible. An ethic of withdrawal motivates much of what the artist does, including the decision to legally change their name to “American Artist” so that it would be difficult to find in Internet searches and yet make a claim on universality for an African American artist. —*Louis Bury*

10. *Juliette Dumas: Angels* at Silas von Morisse Gallery



Juliette Dumas, "Whale Fluke Study (purple)" (2018), clay and gouache on paper, 9 x 17 1/2 inches (image courtesy Silas von Morisse)

April 5–29

Each of the half-dozen paintings in *Juliette Dumas: Angels*, curated by Silas von Morisse, revealed a singular intonation, despite repeating the same basic image of a whale's flukes. Adjusted in scale and palette only, an aggressive scraping and wetting technique advanced the artist's radically subjective tone to the point in which it not only unsettled one's presumptions concerning a so-called lower species, but simultaneously propelled a viewer's sense of the angelic into Miltonian ambiguities. In combining a profound understanding of her subject with a sensitivity for painting that is near archetypal in candor, the exhibition marked Dumas as an artist with the rare ability to visualize complex ideas in provocatively visceral terms. —*Peter Malone*

11. Free Education! The Free University of New York, Alternate U, and Learning Liberation at Interference Archive



Free University of New York Materials Table (image courtesy Interference Archive)

October 11–January 27, 2019

Imagine flipping through a course catalogue offering “Social Change in Urban America,” “First Aid for Radicals,” and “Revolutionary Tarot.” These aren’t a utopian dream in 2018 Bushwick, but just some of the 1969 courses at the Alternate U, originally Free University of New York: an institution near Union Square where anyone could propose a class and the public, for a small fee, could enroll. Interference Archive, itself a descendent of such projects, presents the syllabi, posters, audio, books, and films produced by FUNY/AU, and connects it to

today's debt strike, unionization, and decolonial student movements. The ephemera are a treat to read through, a reminder that the debt-free, anti-hierarchical, progressive school we need is not only possible, it's already happening. *Free Education!* was curated by Jakob Jakobsen and Interference Archive. —*Ryan Wong*

12. *Observe Yourself Being Watched* at John Doe Gallery



Installation view of Youngho Lee's *Observe Yourself Being Watched* (2018) (image courtesy John Doe Gallery)

November 6–22

In early November, Berlin-based artist Youngho Lee teamed up with indie curator Grace Noh (of Christie's and MiA Collective Art) for a Kubrick-meets-Ai Weiwei multimedia exhibition at the aptly named John Doe Gallery in Brooklyn. [*Observe Yourself Being Watched*](#) investigated — through video, photography, and installation — exactly who or what we want to become: more efficient cogs and consumers; safer but continuously data-farmed and eerily stalked by personalized digital ads in a Godless future, or liberated post-singularity gods ourselves. Works from the show recently traveled to China for the Jimei x Arles International Photo Festival, exhibiting in the Crossover Photography section. —*Kurt McVey*

13. Catalina Ouyang's *Blood in D Minor* at Selena Gallery



Installation view, *Blood in D Minor* (image courtesy the artist)

July 7–28

Catalina Ouyang’s summer show *Blood in D Minor* offered some ways to deal with the pervasive melancholy of 2018. *D Minor* is said to be the most melancholic tone in Western Music. The installation’s centerpiece was a two-channel video piece with a voiceover chorus reciting Buddhist nuns’ poetry and equivocating on the body, as the camera panned over a flaming acupuncture diagram. The counterpoint was a second stream of footage of a running fox with voice-over quotes from the film *Pretty Woman*. It was a potent reminder that consumerism and outfoxing our rivals aren’t answers to grief — it’s actually body work that can help us to re-center. Inspired by Nezha, an androgynous protection deity in Chinese folk religion, Ouyang created a second installation that included several homemade candles in cheap plastic cups, which took many of us there by storm. So many of our dreams have been crushed, trashed, and buried like these flowers that were dried and buried in the wax of plastic cups. The flowers symbolized the ways in which we can take this messy big ball of 2018 wax, and turn it into a spark of illumination. —*Daniel Larkin*

14. **Gregory Kalliche: *Hidden Hiss* at SIGNAL Gallery**



Installation view, *Hidden Hiss* (image courtesy SIGNAL)

January 19–February 18

Gregory Kalliche’s *Hidden Hiss*, curated by Kyle Jacques and Alexander Johns, introduced a weird domesticity into SIGNAL’s industrial interior. Using mainly video, each monitor became a window, showing what can be rendered visible only virtually. According to the press release, “scientific depictions of the unseen world [were] realized.” Yet the science evidenced in *Hidden Hiss* was less the empirical

science of nature than the intelligible science of what is purely conceivable. The gallery space seemed to alter its dimensions, whereby Kalliche's visionary climes could be explored. —*Jeffrey Grunthaler*

15. *What Happens After* at BRIC House



Installation view of Mary Mattingly's *What Haqqèñš Afṭèř* at BRIC House

September 13–November 11

The giant military cargo truck at the center of *What Happens After* survived wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, only to meet its demise at the hands of Mary Mattingly. She and a team of artists broke the truck apart so it could be on display in the center of BRIC's gallery. I'd never been face-to-face with the actual machinery of war, and while far from the experience of actually going through it, the show forced me to consider what that must be like, in a way television and books haven't. I thought before seeing the show that the context of a gallery would blunt the truck's violent past. It didn't, and I'm glad. The exhibition was curated by Jenny Gerow. —*Ilana Novick*

Honorable Mention

The Border Project Space at 56 Bogart

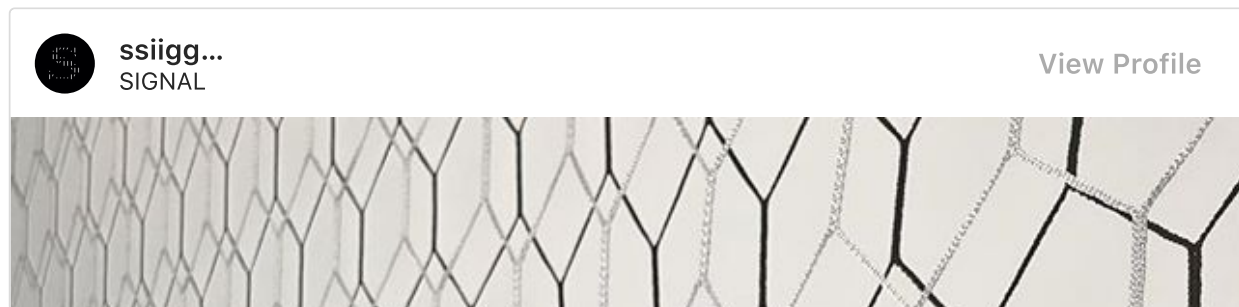


A view of their current Pèrègrīnāṭiōn
exhibition (image courtesy the gallery)

Started by Jamie Martinez, [The Border](#) has transformed each exhibition in a manner that demonstrates that small spaces can have big ambitions (and achieve them). I've seen two of their exhibitions this year and both were fantastic (one even inspired me to buy a small work so that I could support them, since emerging galleries, as we all know, can use all the support they can get). With a mission of “supporting, nurturing and showing talented immigrant artists and their siblings living in the United States along with a few locals,” this is exactly the type of spaces we need nowadays, in order to engage with the world and demonstrate again and again that art is a poignant way to foster a sense of community, belonging, and excellence. Bravo to this gallery, which I hope will continue to do more — and dream even bigger — in the new year. —*Hrag Vartanian*

***No Signal* at SIGNAL Gallery**

November 2



SIGNAL's closing party, [NO SIGNAL](#), marked the end of an era. A way station for some of the most interesting artists in Bushwick and beyond, the wall-to-wall crowd that thronged *NO SIGNAL* was testament to what the gallery accomplished and whom it affected. Through the fogged-up dance floor in the main gallery, you could see flowers wreathed to a chain-link fence — a parting homage to the works SIGNAL provided a platform for, and which will now find a home elsewhere. —
Jeffrey Grunthaner

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