

Forbes

January 5, 2017

The Five Most Anticipated New York Art Museum Exhibits of Winter 2017

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Henry Darger, 'At Sunbeam Creek'

In 2017 I'll be witnessing a demagogue take the oval office, agonizing over political headlines, and more than likely losing my health insurance. So what could there possibly be to look forward to? Well, there is always art: making it and taking it in. I'm anticipating new films by Alex Ross Perry, James Gray and Sofia Coppola, not to mention *Trainspotting 2*, new records by the likes of St. Vincent, The XX, Jesus and Mary Chain, and *Spiritualized*, and lots of major art exhibitions. Art becomes more prescient during times of political upheaval and existential uncertainty. It gives us something to talk about. It can allow us to both escape and engage with the world. Here are some of the winter 2017 museum exhibitions that will provide welcome respite from our newly difficult to swallow reality.

Raymond Pettibon: A Pen of all Work

The New Museum

February 8 to April 9, 2017

American artist Raymond Pettibon has had a fascinating rise through the ranks of art world hierarchy. For many of us that grew up on punk rock, Pettibon's graphic work for his big brother Greg Ginn's (guitarist of LA hardcore punk icons Black Flag) record label SST records was our earliest exposure to visual art of any kind. Now represented by David Zwirner, Pettibon is undeniably one of the most important and famous contemporary artists in the world. Pettibon's drawings unravel contemporary history through their unique interplay between image and text. Since the late 1960s, Pettibon has explored the failure of the American counter-culture (and some of the manifestations of that failure: Charles Manson, Ronald Reagan, and Superman) all while playing a pivotal role in some of its key movements: from punk rock to identity politics and everything in-between. Almost shockingly, Pettibon has never been the subject of a major retrospective in New York before. This February, The New Museum will present over 700 drawings from the 1960s to

the present, a number of his self-produced zines and books, and several videos made with fellow musicians and artist friends (check out *Sir Drone* directed by Pettibon and starring the late Mike Kelley and Mike Watt of *The Minutemen*).

Known/Unknown: Private Obsessions and Hidden Desire in Outsider Art

Museum of Sex

January 19 to September 17, 2016

When the subject of human sexuality is explored by visual artists, a certain contradiction always lies beneath the surface of the work. Artists generally create work to eventually show an audience. Because of that, a conceptual conceit will always muddle the portrayal of sex in the work. Either the work will be deliberately provocative as in the work of Robert Mapplethorpe, or it will be examining the gaze or media portrayals of sex itself, as in the work of Marilyn Minter. For this upcoming Museum of Sex show, curator Frank Maresca sought to show art that directly reflected the inner sexual worlds of its creators. To avoid the conceptual dilemma, he chose to select work solely by outsider artists. The artwork in the exhibition is all reflective of its respective creators' inner-most sexual desires and fantasies and was made without the hope that it would be shown to a public. By removing the element of exhibitionism, the show offers a deeply private look into artists' sexualities. The work in the show ranges from what society would deem "normal" sexuality such as Eugene Von Bruenchenheim loving nude portraits of his wife, to the voyeuristic and lurid. Numerous photographs by the Czech artist Miroslav Tichý, for example, are grainy and deconstructed images taken of women by the artist with his own homemade cameras. Like great Hitchcock cinema, Tichý's photographs implicate himself and the viewer in the sexual act of watching. And then, there is the illustrations of Henry Darger. Darger was a custodian in a Chicago hospital in the 20th Century, and when he passed coroners found a 15,000 page book entitled *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion* along with hundreds of illustrations. Some of those illustrations depict acts of sexual violence and depravity against children, often thought to be influenced by the abuse Darger suffered as a child. All of the sex in the exhibition is depicted without judgment, placing the viewer in the position of intuitively understanding their own feelings towards the different manifestations of sexual desire.

Fast Forward: Painting From the 1980s

The Whitney Museum

January 27 to May 14, 2017

The 1980s was a fascinating point in art history that saw the rise of the financial sector and its immense wealth giving birth to what we now consider the "art star," or the artists that were famous on a level beyond that of the art world and into the world of celebrity. While it seems the postmodernist work of Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo and Richard Prince defined the era while also predicting the next, it is hard to deny that the tried and true medium of painting devoured just as large a portion of the art market in the 1980s. The Whitney Museum's *Fast Forward* exhibition looks directly at the painters of the decades, from the neo-Abstract Expressionism of Basquiat, the figurations of Eric Fischl, and the early postmodern painting of David Salle. The exhibition also shines a light on less celebrated but equally talented painters of the era, such as Julia Wachtel whose pop culture mining oil paintings often have more in common with the artists of the "Pictures Generation" (Sherman, Laurie Simmons, Barbara Kruger) than her painter contemporaries, and Joyce Pensato, whose massive and explosive paintings of cartoons and comic book characters have only recently generated international art fair-approved acclaim. The exhibition focuses on painting during

a time when the artistic necessity of painting was up for debate, ultimately serving as an unwitting precursor to The Whitney's highly anticipated David Wojnarowicz retrospective this summer. Wojnarowicz, of course, started in graffiti and went on to create incredibly complex street art-inspired paintings and murals, but when he contracted HIV in the late '80s he began to fear that he'd never be able to create images that fully expressed his rage and fear through painting. Ultimately, he moved onto photography and created some of the most evocative black and white photographs of the decade. The Whitney will be exploring the purpose of painting in a digital photography world throughout the whole year, it seems. I don't know about you, but that's always a debate I'll be excited about. The entire exhibition will be mined from the museum's extensive archive.

Marsden Hartley's Maine

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

March 15 to June 18, 2017

American 20th Century Modernist painter Marsden Hartley's relationships to Germany, Nova Scotia and New Mexico have all be celebrated in previous exhibitions, but it was his native state of Maine that provided the landscape to Hartley's artistic development as well as a well-spring of inspiration. In the exhibition, Hartley's early post-Impressionist landscapes of the state that devoured his early artistic output will be displayed alongside latter day work, including his gritty painting of the state's inland as well as his portraits of Maine's eccentric locals (if you think Barbara Kruger's characters of mid-20th Century New York as odd as it gets, you've most certainly never been to rural Maine). The Met, in its initiative to explore modern art in the context of art history will also explore the work of artists important to Harley's development: French modernist Paul Cézanne, Japanese printmakers Utagawa Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai, and American painters Winslow Homer and Albert Pinkham Ryder.

Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker's Work/Travail/Arbeid

Museum of Modern Art

March 29 to April 2, 2017

Though not an exhibition exactly, Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker's Work/Travail/Arbeid is a three-day performance at MoMA that asks, "can choreography be performed in the context of a museum?" MoMA's schedule currently is continuing an already stunning set of exhibitions by the likes of Nan Goldin, Tony Oursler, and Francis Picabia, so this contained performance piece provides a welcome bridge until the museum debuts a massive Rauschenberg retrospective in the spring. Keersmaecker is a modern dancer that uses form and structure to create emotion on stage. Her 2013 swan song, Vortex Temporum, will be condensed into cycles of nine hours for the MoMA performance. The original performance lasted nine days. The performance will force viewers to consider modern dance as an aesthetic discipline.