ART

MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

GUOGUENMUSEUM
"Zero Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s-60s." Through Jan. 7.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
"Judith Scott: Bound and Unbound." Through March 29.

COOPER HEWITT
SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM
"Beautiful Users." Opens Dec. 12.

GALLERIES SHORT LIST

CHELSEA
Sean Landers

Ann Lislegaard

DOWNTOWN
Kiki Kogelnik

Laura Poitras
"Artist’s Space" 38 Greene St. 212-226-3970. Opens Dec. 15.

BROOKLYN
Ragnar Kjartansson

More Than This

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Eugene Alget
"Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities"
How to manage concurrent crises of wealth inequality, population growth, and climate change? With farmers’ markets, apparently. This, the end productions of the yearling huddle by six teams of architects, starts from an important premise: more than half the world’s population will soon live in cities, and most of these people will be poor. Yet the groups offer only a series of T-DAY-style, feel-good taskways that are divorced from hard political truths. The Istanbul team proposes that Turks share Wi-Fi accounts and cook meals for one another; the Oslo architects want to retrofit favelas with heat-reflecting tiles. As for New York, where ultra-luxury towers now glut MOMA’s own block, the proposal is an air-rights bureaucracy to lower housing costs. The museum’s architecture department is quite right to turn its attention to the slums and the gated communities of the world’s megacities. But his arrogant show is hardly the answer. Through May 10.

Sculpture Center
"Puddle, Pothole, Portal"
Here’s a trick: Draw a circle. Now you have a puddle, a pothole, and a portal—also a rabbit hole and a looking glass. This exceedingly clever group show, from the fertile minds of the curators Ruba Kariib and the artist Camille Henrot, gathers diverse works by twenty-two international artists to animate ideas about the threshold between two and three dimensions, functioning as a bridge to time-honored ideas about sculpture as drawing in space. The dominant tone is cartoon-comedic, with the best punch line delivered by Win McCarthy, whose freeze-frame glass sculptures of gushing water appear, often unexpectedly, throughout. The maestro Saul Steinberg has pride of place, in a room of his own, save for the walls, whose sky blue is the conceptual contribution of Maria Loboda. The show inaugurates the nonprofit’s beautiful new renovation—one of the city’s most exciting contemporary venues, but has yet to jump its game. (Anthology Film Archives hosts a related series of screenings, from a 1923 Walt Disney short, "Alice in Wonderland" to the feature-length "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" Dec. 12-14 at 7:30.) Through Jan. 5.

Test

Martin Puryear
A quietly virtuoso show from one of the country’s most thoughtful and meticulous sculptors. Puryear’s new works, made of cast iron or hardwood, all start from a single shape: a soft cone whose apex curves into itself. The leitmotif derives from the Phrygian cap worn by revolutionaries in France and Haiti, subtly inflecting the abstract forms of Puryear’s art with themes of Enlightenment virtue and black liberation. The largest sculpture here, made of red-painted cedar, elegantly tapers from its oval base to its drooping nose, an icon of craftsmanship and inspiring dignity. Through Jan. 10. (Marks, 502 and 552 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)

Michelle Stuart
These elliptical visual essays were constructed from rephotographed photographs, some of them found and some of them taken by Stuart herself. Arranged in grids of as many as seventy individually framed elements, the images are often as indistinct as fading memories. Stuart is more interested in improvising than in designing specifics; even when a piece has an apparent theme (Paris, the South Seas, the cosmos), it tends to dissolve into dreamy free association. Even the smallest pieces are poetic, the larger ones are cinematic (the show as a whole is called “Silent Movies”). One great, sprawling montage teeters between creation and destruction—from a nebula to a volcanic eruption to the mushroom cloud of an A-bomb. Through Dec. 20. (Tonkosky, 515 and 522 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450.)

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
The young British realist fills two galleries with confident paintings, all featuring loose, incomplete brushwork and dark backgrounds that contrast by mere degrees with the skin of her subjects. Yiadom-Boakye is not precisely a portraitist; her figures are figures of her imagination, although the fact can be hard to grasp in the vivid presence of smiling men in green and red tank tops, or the woman in a floral dress lounging in an armchair. Yiadom-Boakye has captured a rich vein of iconography, which simultaneously critiques and revels in the conventions of European painting. But she seems disinclined to make full use of her own gift, and one wonders what heights she could reach if she’d just slow down. Through Jan. 10. (Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701; 524 W. 24th St. 212-337-3372.)

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