

Summer Shows: New Exhibitions Feature African American Artists Beverly Buchanan, Arthur Jafa, Glenn Ligon and Bradford Young

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on Jun 28, 2017 • 5:58 am

A NUMBER OF GEMS OPENED this month. Summer tends to be a relatively quiet season art-wise, but this year major international events—Venice Biennale, Documenta 14, and Art Basel—are coinciding with compelling gallery and museum exhibitions featuring works by black artists. From San Francisco and Detroit, to Greece, London and Cape Town, exhibitions by artists including Beverly Buchanan, Arthur Jafa, Nari Ward, Kara Walker, and Bradford Young, debuted in June.

Two must-see shows are on view in Missouri. The Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City is mounting “Magnetic Fields,” a groundbreaking exhibition focusing on women of color who work in abstraction. In St. Louis, Glenn Ligon is curating “Blue Black” at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation.

Great pairings have been organized, too. Lifelong friends, photographers Frank Stewart and John Simmons are presenting their work in tandem for the first time at Wilmer Jennings Gallery in New York City. Meanwhile, after collaborating for more than 40 years, Washington, D.C., artists Sam Gilliam and Lou Stovall, are exhibiting together at Griots’ Art Gallery in Miami.



Installation view of NNENNA OKORE, “Confluence,” 2017 (burlap, dye and wire). I via Jenkins Johnson

“Nnenna Okore: Osimili” @ Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco. | June 1-July 15, 2017

Defined ife with texture, color and organic forms, Nnenna Okore’s abstract sculptural works are infused with narrative elements that draw on the landscapes and environs of Nigeria, where she was raised, and Chicago, where she lives, works and is a professor of art. For this exhibition, she is presenting new work that showcases her innovative methods and materials.

The gallery notes that “Osimili, the Igbo word for a huge body of water, alludes to the fluidity and volatility of life. By referencing organic elements in nature, such as roots, veins, and flora, the works highlight the complex dynamism of our cosmic existence – the animistic force that breathes life into matter. The inference to water underscores the phenomenon of transience and transformation.



NARI WARD, Installation view of “TILL, LIT,” Lehmann Maupin, New York 2017. I Photo by Elisabeth Bernstein, Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong via Lehmann Maupin

“Nari Ward: TILL LIT” @ Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York, N.Y. | June 2-Aug. 25, 2017

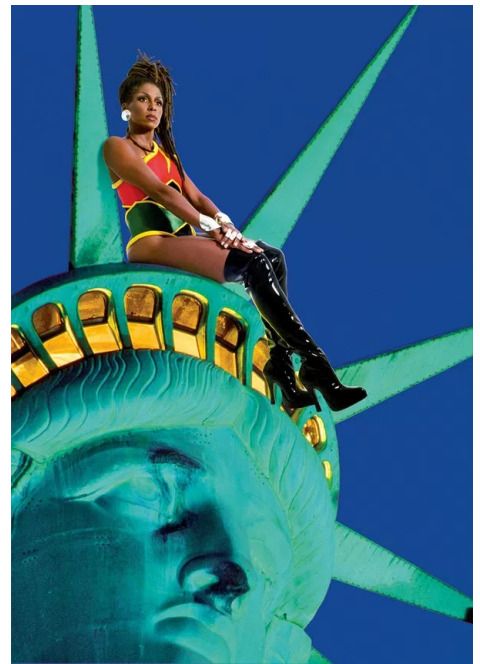
Jamaican-born Nari Ward lives and works in Harlem. For his latest exhibition, Ward questions the fundamental construct of society. He is presenting a new series of mixed media paintings, sculptures, and installations “that examine the ways value is assigned throughout society, with Ward attempting to disrupt existing monetary-based value structures in favor of social enrichment.” A percentage of art sales from the exhibition will benefit Housing Works, the New York City-based nonprofit focused on ending homelessness and AIDS. Ward’s work is also on view at [Socrates Sculpture Park](#).

Featured in "Black Pulp!": RENEE COX, "Chillin' with Liberty," 1998 (Cibachrome print, edition of 3). I Courtesy the Artist. Image © 2017 Renee Cox via USF Contemporary Art Museum

**"Black Pulp!" @ University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum,
Tampa, Fla. | June 2-July 20, 2017**

Artists William Villalongo and Mark Thomas Gibson are presenting two exhibitions at USF. "Black Pulp!" organized by the International Print Center New York and curated by Villalongo and Gibson, "showcases the unique power of pulp and printed matter to contest dominant cultural narratives" and features works spanning 1912 to 2016 by 21 artists. Recent works by Villalongo and Gibson are assembled for "Woke." Referencing political and social awareness in this age of police violence and Black Lives Matter, works by the artists "traverse the psychic and spiritual landscape of Black erasure through narrative-figural styles; often negotiating high and low forms of image making."

From left, FRANK STEWART, "George in the Doorway"; John Simmons, "Nina Simone," 1969. I Courtesy Wilmer Jennings Gallery



**"Time Light and Ritual: Photographs by John Simmons and Frank Stewart"
@ Wilmer Jennings Gallery, New York, N.Y. | June 4-July 29, 2017**



This exhibition brings together more than 60 black-and-white photographs, dating from 1967 to 2016, by longstanding friends and image makers Frank Stewart and John Simmons. Both were introduced to photojournalism by Robert Sengstacke (1943-2017) of The Chicago Defender and never wavered in their commitment to documenting the African American experience. Despite their day jobs—Simmons, is an Emmy Award-winning cinematographer, and Frank Stewart, is an official Jazz at Lincoln Center photographer known for his portfolio of Romare Bearden images—they remain dedicated documentarians, capturing the everyday rituals of communities of color across the world.

"Derrick Adams, Future People" @ Stony Island Arts Bank, Chicago | June 6-Sept. 18, 2017

For this otherworldly exhibition, Derrick Adams created large, two-dimensional works on paper that replicate views from spaceship windows. The works acknowledge "the AfroFuturism movement fusing elements of sci-fi and the African-American narrative with contemporary culture," and set a scene for public programming and social engagement throughout the show's tenure. This multi-dimensional presentation draws on the archives at Stony Island Arts Banks including music, images, and text from collections of vinyl records, art slides, black memorabilia, and books.



DAVID ADJAYE, Moscow School of Management, Skolkovo, Russia. I Photo by Ed Reeve, Courtesy Adjaye Associates via Garage Museum

Installation view of DERRICK ADAMS, "Future People" at Rebuild Foundation. I via @satwoody on Instagram

“David Adjaye: Form, Heft, Material” @ Garage Museum,
Moscow, Russia |

June 7-July 30, 2017

This mid-career survey, the first extensive presentation devoted to the British-based, Ghanaian-born David Adjaye, “offers insight into the global architect’s unique approach, highlighting the ways he weaves local geographies and cultural legacies into his celebrated designs.” Co-organized by Art Institute of Chicago and Haus der Kunst in Munich, it is the first show of a major architect at the Garage Museum. Adjaye’s firm developed the exhibition design specifically for the Russian museum, where more than 20 international projects are showcased.



“Young Guns” @ Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi,
Kenya | June 7-July 7, 2017

This exhibition features new painting, drawing, and photography by 26 emerging Nairobi artists identified through a series of studio visits. According to the gallery, the show’s title references “people, especially young men, who have lots of energy and talent, and are becoming successful.” For the first time the gallery is presenting an all-male group show. The collectives and communal artist spaces the gallery drew from were all started by men and were populated by male artists. This challenging reality became a significant factor in the composition of the presentation and has made the gallery consider the genesis for the surge in male artists and dearth of up-and-coming female artists in Nairobi.



PAUL NJIHIA, “Back Benchers View,” 2017 (mixed media on wood). I via Circle Art Gallery



MILDRED THOMPSON, “Magnetic Fields,” 1991 (oil on canvas). I Courtesy of the Mildred Thompson Estate, Atlanta via Kemper Museum

“Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960s to Today” @
Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Mo. | June 8-Sept. 17,
2017

Described as “the first U.S. presentation dedicated exclusively to the formal and historical dialogue of abstraction by women artists of color,” this exhibition features more than 20 practitioners across three generations, including Chakaia Booker, Lillian Thomas Burwell, Maren Hassinger, Jennie C. Jones, Howardena Pindell, Mavis Pusey, Alma Thomas, Mildred Thompson, and Brenna Youngblood. Spanning painting, drawing, printmaking, and sculpture the show explores “individual approaches to form, color, composition, material exploration and conceptual impetus within hard-edge and gestural abstraction.”



Installation view, ARTHUR Jafa, "A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions," Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London, 2017. | Image © Mike Din via Serpentine Sackler Gallery

"Arthur Jafa: A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions"

@ Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London | June 8-Sept. 10, 2017

Featuring film, photography, and found footage, this exhibition presents three decades of work by Arthur Jafa, the artist and filmmaker who trained as an architect and served as director of photography on Julie Dash's "Daughters of the Dust," and has continued to collaborate with insightful creatives including Spike Lee, John Akomfrah, Kara Walker, Fred Moten, and Solange Knowles. Jafa has transformed the gallery with installations that unpack cultural assumptions about race and identity. Works by Ming Smith, Frida Orupabo and Missylandyus offer further context.



NORMAN LEWIS, "Blue and Boogie," 1974 (oil on canvas). | The Studio Museum in Harlem; gift of Estate of Norman Lewis 1981.1.1 © Estate of Norman Lewis; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY, Photo by Mark Bernier via Pulitzer Arts Foundation

"Blue Black," Curated by Glenn Ligon, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St Louis,

Mo. | June 9-Oct. 7, 2017

Ellsworth Kelly's "Blue Black" (2000), a monumental wall sculpture composed of painted aluminum panels at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, inspired this exhibition curated by artist Glenn Ligon. Described as a "lyrical meditation on the colors blue and black," the presentation includes more than 50 works by a broad spectrum of artists, including Ligon, Kelly, Ross Bleckner, Simone Leigh, Norman Lewis, Bill Traylor, Andy Warhol, and Carrie Mae Weems.



SAM GILLIAM, "For Xavier," 1990 (silkscreen, edition of 99), printed by Lou Stovall. | Courtesy Griots' Gallery.

(This work was commissioned by Tim Francis for his parents Blanche and Norman Francis, the long-serving president of Xavier University (1968-2015), to support the school's fundraising efforts.)

"In the Spirit of Collaboration: Sam Gilliam and Lou Stovall" @ Griots' Art

Gallery, Miami, Fla. | June 10-Sept. 30, 2017

Washington, D.C., artists Sam Gilliam and Lou Stovall have been collaborating for more than four decades. Stovall is also master printer who has created works with more than 100 artists including Jacob Lawrence, Elizabeth Catlett, David Driskell, Lois Mailou Jones, and Gilliam, whose work is featured in the international pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale. For the first time, this exhibition presents a selection of about two dozen vibrant, energetic and boldly colored silkscreen prints made jointly by Stovall and Gilliam.

“Gordon Parks: I Am You. Selected Works 1942-1978”
@ Foam Museum,
Amsterdam, Netherlands. | June 16-Sept. 6, 2017

Through a selection of works spanning three decades, this exhibition surveys the photography and film practice of Gordon Parks (1912-2006). More than 120 works from the collection of the Gordon Parks Foundation explore themes of racism, poverty, and inequality; capture cultural figures and the world of high fashion; and emphasize his uncanny ability to document unfolding narratives of national and historic import. The presentation includes vintage black-and-white and color prints, contact sheets, magazines, and excerpts from the films “The Learning Tree” and “Shaft.”



GORDON PARKS, “Department Store, Mobile, Alabama,” 1956. | © Photograph by Gordon Parks, Courtesy of and copyright The Gordon Parks Foundation

BEVERLY BUCHANAN, “Room Added,” 2011 (wood). | Courtesy David Klein Gallery

“Beverly Buchanan: Low Country” @ David Klein
Gallery, Detroit | June 17-
July 29, 2017

Born in Fuquay, N.C., Beverly Buchanan (1940-2015) grew up in Orangeburg, S.C., and earned a master’s degree in public health before pursuing a career in art. Her unique practice harkened back to her roots, considering collective cultures and histories, identity and place through vernacular architecture of the American South. This exhibition features her small-scale rural shack sculptures and works on paper.



Cinematographer BRADFORD YOUNG discusses his love for still photography, which was an inspiration for his video installation “REkOGNIZE” (2017). | Video by Carnegie Museum of Art

“Bradford Young: REkOGNIZE” @ Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. |
June 17-Dec. 31, 2017

Cinematographer Bradford Young’s credits include “Selma,” “Arrival” and the forthcoming, untitled Han Solo film. He has also collaborated with Common and artist Leslie Hewitt. His latest project is “a meditation on photography, memory and movement.” The three-channel video installation is an homage to Pittsburgh, its renowned bridges, and photographer Teenie Harris (1908-1988), who documented the city’s Hill District from the 1930s to 1970s, when it was a thriving black community. Jazz pianist and composer Jason Moran contributed the work’s musical score.



YUNG JAKE, Installation view of “Caution: Wet Floor” at Steve Turner Gallery, June 2017. | via Steve Turner

Yung Jake, “Caution: Wet Floor” @ Steve Turner Gallery, Los Angeles | June 17-July 22, 2017

In addition to noting he lives and works in Los Angeles, the bio for rapper-turned-visual artist Yung Jake says he was “established on the Internet in 2011.” His videos are a mix of hip hop, technology, and social media and possess the same energy as his works of art. For this show, a big yellow pickup truck is surrounded by a series of “combines,” metal panels featuring random images of graffiti text, consumer products, and pop culture characters.



“The Figa,” or fig sign, has multiple meanings, “While it is generally thought of as very rude sign, it also has magical properties as an emblem of fertility and protection against the evil eye.”

“Kara Walker: Figa” @ Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art, Hydra, Greece. | June 20-Sept. 30, 2017

“A Subtlety” (2015), Kara Walker’s public art and social media sensation commissioned by Creative Time and presented at Domino Sugar Factory in Brooklyn, is experiencing a bit of a revival. The left hand of the monumental sugar sphinx is on view in the Slaughterhouse project space on the island of Hydra. The Figa, which is “configured into a fist with thumb thrust between the index and middle fingers (known as the “fig sign”), ...has multiple meanings across culture and history.” Transporting the work from the “New World” to the birth of Western civilization is intended to carry great symbolism. The foundation describes it a holy relic: “Appealing to the condition of slaves, migrants, refugees, outcasts, and marginalized peoples ‘Figa,’ like ‘A Subtlety’ before her, draws on the pilgrim spirit in all of us that seeks spiritual and material fulfillment at the end of a catastrophic journey.”

Video still featuring sculptural suit by FRANCOIS KNOETZE. | via Gallery MOMO

“Be Kind. Please Rewind” @ Gallery MOMO, Cape Town, South Africa | June 22-July 15, 2017

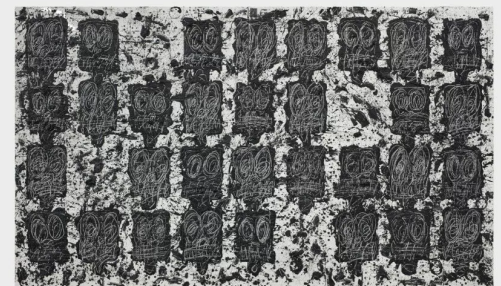
This group exhibition features works that history and memory through film and video. Featuring local and international artists, contributors include Lucia Nhamo (Zimbabwe), Carla Inez Espost (Cape Town), Francois Knoetze (Cape Town), Rehema Chachageand (Tanzania), and a collaboration between South African artist Martin Wilson and Korean-born Kuy Sang Lee.



RASHID JOHNSON, “Untitled Anxious Audience,” 2016. | Yoozoo Foundation, China via Milwaukee Art Museum

“Rashid Johnson: Hail We Now Sing Joy” @ Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisc. | June 23-Sept. 17, 2017

The work of Chicago-born, New York-based Rashid Johnson explores “themes of race, history, yearning, anxiety, and escape and ...the relationship between art, society, and personal identity.” This exhibition presents 14 large-scale works from his latest series, including “Anxious Audience,” “Falling Man,” and “Escape Collage” paintings, along with “Antoine’s Organ,” a monumental sculptural installation.





CARINA D. MAYE, "An Unsteady Approach to an Unsteady System," 2013 (wood, plastic, metal, and latex paint). *I* via Smack Mellon

**"Race and Revolution: Still Separate – Still Unequal" @ Smack Mellon
Gallery, Brooklyn, N.Y. | June 24-Aug. 6, 2017**

This group exhibition was organized in response to "the racial violence and vitriol that has been occurring in the United States" and seeks to examine race and racism through art and history. Last summer, the show focused on racism during the American Revolution. The current presentation considers the legacy of school segregation through contributions by artists who are classroom teachers.

HANK WILLIS THOMAS, "And I Can't Run," 2013 (screenprint on retro-reflective vinyl mounted on aluminum). |The Baltimore Museum of Art: Promised gift of a MAD Gathering to The Baltimore Museum of Art. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York via BMA

"Black Box: Kara Walker and Hank Willis Thomas" @ Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Md. | June 28-March 18, 2017

The museum's Black Box gallery is dedicated to screen-based media works. The latest installation brings together two innovative works exploring the legacy of slavery. For "Salvation" (2000), Kara Walker combines her cut-paper silhouette method with layered imagery from an overhead projector. "And I Can't Run" (2013) by Hank Willis Thomas bridges vintage photography with cell phone technology to create a haunting image. Mohamed Bourouissa. MOHAMED BOUROUISSA, "Still from Horse Day," 2015 (video diptych, 14 mins, 7 secs.). |© ADAGP Mohamed Bourouissa. Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London via Barnes Foundation



"Mohamed Bourouissa: Urban Riders" @ Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia. | June 30-Oct. 2, 2017

Mohamed Bourouissa explores "stereotypes associated with geographic and social spaces" and creates fictional counter-narratives in response. Three years ago, in a North Philadelphia neighborhood undergoing a revitalization, he worked with a local stable and staged, filmed, and photographed an elaborate "Horse Day" equestrian event. This exhibition documents the project, the Algerian-born, Paris-based artist's first in the United States, through video and about 85 drawings, photos, costumes, and sculptures. CT