

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Brooklyn Museum
"This Place"

When the French photographer Frédéric Brenner invited eleven colleagues (including such big names as Jeff Wall and Thomas Struth) to join him in documenting Israel and the West Bank, he was hoping for pictures that, in his words, "reflected the complexity of the place, with all its rifts and paradoxes." The exhibition is, perhaps inevitably, a mixed bag, but the range of styles and stances is one of its strengths. Some of the most engaging projects deal with the complexity head-on. Wendy Ewald gave cameras to groups (Israeli soldiers, Bedouin schoolchildren, Domari Gypsies) and exhibits the resulting snapshots in grids that pit commonalities against differences. Family and community are key themes in work by Brenner, Nick Waplington, and Rosalind Fox Solomon, but landscapes predominate, most powerfully in Josef Koudelka's imposing panoramas of the wall in East Jerusalem, seen from both the Israeli and the Palestinian side. The photographers, nearly all outsiders investigating the territory for the first time, avoid polarizing clichés and discover something tantalizingly close to common ground. *Through June 5.*

Neue Galerie

"Munch and Expressionism"

For more than a century, Munch's reputation has circled the canon of modern art like a high plane seeking a runway. He is famous, sure, for the flayed, undulating figure of existential panic in "The Scream" (1893) and for a few other images, touching on love and death, from the first, rock-star-like decade of his career. But the subsequent, prolific glories of the Norwegian painter, who lived until 1944, are little recognized. This exciting show settles his one textbook claim to historical consequence: he is the father of Expressionism, the most important modern movement in German and, to some extent, Austrian art. Powerful Expressionist works in the show, such as Ludwig Kirchner's sensational touchstone, "Street, Dresden" (1908), perform like an honor guard for forty-seven Munchs, including the artist's 1895 pastel copy of "The Scream." (This picture was briefly the costliest art work ever sold at auction, when it fetched nearly a hundred and twenty million dollars, in 2012.) The Expressionist whom Munch liked most was Emil Nolde, another thornily independent spirit, who is represented in the show by a large lithograph, "Young Danish Woman" (1913), and three hand-colored repetitions of it: works of fantastic intensity, with distorted features and dissonant colors, that dare unusual ugliness to take unusual beauty by surprise. But even Nolde—who, incidentally, fell prey to Nazi sympathies, as Munch did not—tends toward generality in what he expresses. Munch specifies. His example to other artists is simple, really: be a highly gifted but, especially, a particular person, and go for broke. *Through June 13.*

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

William Gedney

The New York photographer was championed by the pioneering photography curator John Szarkowski and compared to Walker Evans, but when he died, in 1989, at the age of fifty-six, his work was essentially unknown. Gedney remains a cult figure—fondly remembered, regularly rediscovered—and this excellent, compact survey suggests some reasons why. His black-and-white pictures, made mostly in the sixties and seventies, are small, quiet, and intensely personal—a delicate balance of careful observation and genuine feeling, most evident in the pictures he took of a Kentucky coal miner's extended family, subjects he eyed with the mixture of empathy and restraint that was his trademark. *Through March 19.* (Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Karen Kilimnik

New little pictures by the elfin artist pose a test: when is Kilimnik enchanting and when twee? Start with cat stickers on photographs of canopied beds, captioned with cute remarks of the felines. They may pain even cat nuts, never mind the cat nots among us. Then regard nice enough collages that take dreamy inspiration from Renaissance and baroque art. But enter a curtained, dim, chandeliered room and behold four ravishing glitter-enhanced paintings of fanciful woodland scenes with men and horses: the magical right stuff. *Through March 26.* (303 Gallery, 507 W. 24th St. 212-255-1121.)

Ana Mendieta

With a reputation that has been slowly building since her violent death, at the age of thirty-six, in 1985, Mendieta now verges on canonical, for her implicitly feminist, jolting performance-based art. Ten short films and some videos, from her student years at the University of Iowa, herald a fiercely original talent. Blood is seen trickling down the artist's face from an imperceptible source, and clotted on a sidewalk, where it's mostly ignored by secretly filmed passers-by. A weather balloon explodes and releases a small blizzard of turkey feathers. Mendieta asks schoolchildren to define the soul. One girl guesses that it's like a rubber band that stretches as you grow, until "you get too big and it snaps, and you die." *Through March 26.* (Galerie Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

Pope.L / Will Boone

When an exhibition pairs a venerable artist with a young hotshot, it can feel like a bid for reputation inflation. But, in this smart double bill, works by the up-and-coming Boone (best known as a painter) and the veteran Pope.L, (a genre-defying provocateur) are mutually beneficial. Pope.L, who won raves for his retrospective at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art last year, shows videos, sculptures, and stencilled canvases that balance humor and politics. (Two small paintings read "white cop, whiter donut.") Boone has less edge but just as much flair. Big striped paint-

ings, in white or red on black, are striking, if a bit zombie-formalist. But boxes lined with shattered mirrors and magazine clippings, and a vinyl seat salvaged from the cab of a truck, share Pope.L's Rabelaisian vision. *Through March 5.* (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

Mickalene Thomas

The painter's irresistible photographs mix exploitation sass with art-historical references (odalisques abound). They're accompanied by a delirious sculptural tableau of a living-room and a savvy selection of works by other photographers who have inspired Thomas, from Malick Sidibe to Renee Cox. The aesthetic is pattern-on-pattern, sometimes collaged but more often a riot of clashing clothing, wallpaper, and upholstery that suggests Matisse let loose in a thrift store. The show is audaciously kitschy, pointedly celebratory, and not to be missed. *Through March 17.* (Aperture, 547 W. 27th St. 212-505-5555.)

Fred Tomaselli

Early works show what excellent gimcrackery the New York artist was up to before settling on his evilly decorative embeddings of cannabis leaves and other intoxicants (pills, mostly) in resin. To activate "Geology Lesson" (1986), you sit in a chair and depress a foot pedal. Eighty-four small conical speakers, facing up on a table, buzz as little piles of cat litter jiggle in them. For "Current Theory" (1984), a hundred and seventy-nine Styrofoam cups, tethered to a blue tarp on the floor, perform balletically in breezes provided by electric fans. An artist this inventive might have gone on to do anything. Might he still? *Through March 19.* (Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Thomas Bayrle

For half a century, the German artist has used repetition and wit to reflect a media-saturated world increasingly dominated by speed and technology. In his cinematic works, highways coalesce into a Brancusi-like head (in a black-and-white loop from 1988-89) or fracture into a scrolling collage that coheres into a medieval Crucifixion (in a color piece from 2006). Four recent paintings, in which Caravaggio's "Inspiration of St. Matthew" is made up of hundreds of iPhones, might appear glib if they were made by a younger artist. But in the context of Bayrle's films they suggest an attempt to make peace with art's diminished place in a world dominated by digitization. *Through March 13.* (Brown, 291 Grand St. 212-627-5258.)

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

Lili Reynaud-Dewar

In a rousing pair of projected videos, the French artist strips off her clothes, paints herself red, and dances through two exhibition spaces in Venice. She appears at once free and weirdly artificial—at times, her crimson body looks almost computer-generated. If it sounds sybaritic, it's worth noting that the artist's recent works have touched on themes of queer sexuality and AIDS. Here she invokes Walt Whitman, reciting his poem, "I Sing the Body Electric," over a grinding techno score, while performing her danse macabre. *Through March 6.* (Clearing, 396 Johnson Ave., Bushwick. 718-456-0396.)