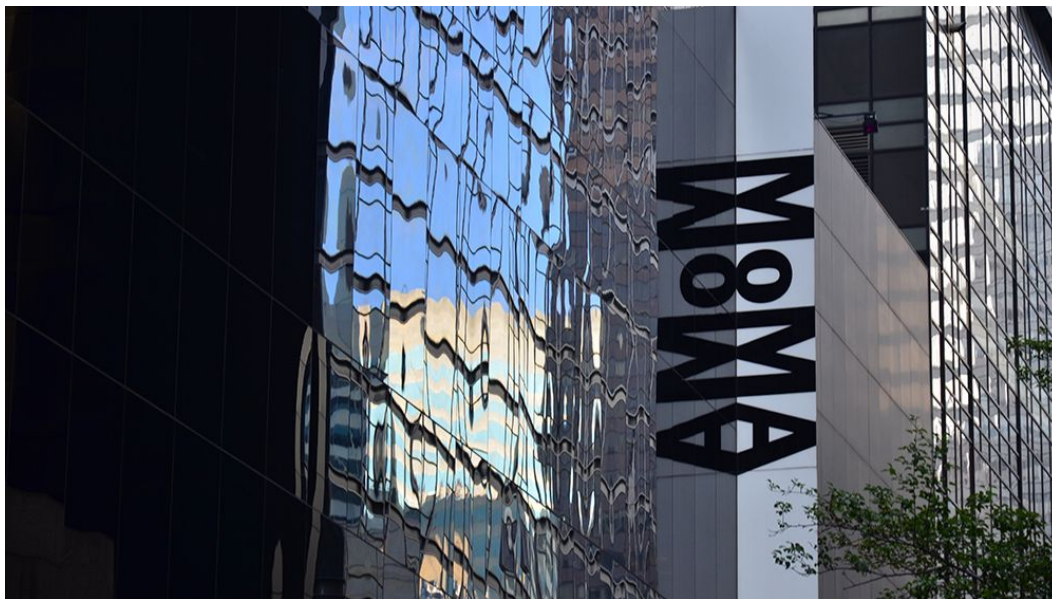


ARTnews

From Goya to Niki de Saint Phalle: 33 Essential Museum Shows and Biennials to See This Spring

A roundup of the best art to experience around the world.

The Editors of ARTnews Robb Report February 25, 2020



Courtesy of Jamison McAndie on Unsplash

Spring is almost here, and so too are a first glimpse at some of the year's biggest exhibitions. The first stop for a Yoshitomo Nara retrospective set to travel to three continents will be at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the first major survey ever devoted to Artemisia Gentileschi will make its debut at London's National Gallery of Art. And that's not all: this year's Venice Architecture Biennale and Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art are both set for May, and major exhibitions of the work of Donald Judd, An-My Lê, Judy Chicago, Otobong Nkanga, and others are also in the offing. These highlights and more are below, in *ARTnews's* guide to the spring's essential shows.

1. 'Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Paris!'; Centre Pompidou, Paris; March 18–June 15

The artist known as Christo and his late wife, Jeanne-Claude, are the world's most ambitious wrappers. They've wrapped the Reichstag, the Pont Neuf bridge, and the coast of Little Bay, in Sydney, Australia, making enormous sculptures out of landmarks. In April

Christo will continue his conquest of the world's monuments by wrapping the Arc de Triomphe in 270,000 square feet of fabric and 23,000 feet of rope. Such wrappings often take decades of bureaucratic wrangling, but Christo got his start doing more low-profile work in the French capital, and this exhibition surveys documentation related to sculptural works made by the couple in Paris between 1958 and 1964. The show culminates in a history of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's 1985 wrapping of the Pont Neuf, one of their most iconic artworks. It is hard to imagine this show won't earn the exclamation point in its title.

2. 'Judd'; Museum of Modern Art, New York; March 1–July 11

Writing recently about her early years at MoMA in the 1970s, curator Barbara London recalls that Donald Judd's Minimalist sculptures "distinguished the museum's aesthetic." That aesthetic synergy between the work of Judd, who died in 1994, and MoMA brings a certain piquancy to the museum's current Judd retrospective, the first anywhere in more than 30 years. The museum has changed—there have been three renovations and expansions since the '70s—and perhaps so, too, has our understanding of Judd's steely, boxy objects.

3. 'Cao Fei: Blueprints'; Serpentine Galleries, London; March 4–May 17

For Cao Fei, the online virtual world Second Life became a tool for art. Within it, she created her sprawling RMB City, its name a reference to Chinese currency. Dealing with fantasy worlds and their opposition to real-life ugliness, her work made her one of China's most closely watched artists before she turned 30. In her largest-ever exhibition in the United Kingdom, Cao will bring out some of her classic works—including *Whose Utopia?*, a 2006 video in which a group of Chinese factory workers briefly stop laboring and start dancing—and place them alongside a new VR project and her latest feature-length film.

4. 'Gerhard Richter: Painting After All'; Met Breuer, New York; March 4–July 5

There are (at least) two Gerhard Richters. There is the Richter of the gorgeous, multilayered abstractions made by pulling paint across a canvas with a squeegee, and there is Richter the exacting figurative painter who references photographs. Some of those figurative paintings, such as his 1988 series about a radical left-wing terrorist group, have taken as their subject German politics. On view for the first time in the United States in this 100-work survey at the Met Breuer—the largest presentation of Richter's work since his MoMA retrospective in 2002—are works from Richter's 2014 "Birkenau" series, which brought the two Richters together, with the artist alluding to a World War II concentration camp through abstraction. The Met is showing these works alongside pieces from the 1960s that made the artist a sensation in his home country. Richter fans can be assured his work is in good hands: Met curator Sheena Wagstaff has organized the show in close collaboration with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, an art historian who has written prolifically on Richter.

5. 'Remedios Varo: Constellations'; Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires; March 6–June 15

For years, the work of Remedios Varo, who died in 1963, languished in obscurity, not unlike that of other female Surrealists. But lately, it has been making a comeback. Last year, Varo's bizarre tableaux featuring floating figures and fantastical creatures showed up in MoMA's permanent collection rehang, and Eduardo F. Costantini, who founded MALBA and is one of Latin America's biggest collectors, snapped up one of her paintings at a Christie's auction for \$3.1 million. This show—among the biggest ever devoted to the artist in Argentina, where she worked for much of her life—may very well cement her fame.

6. 'Franz Erhard Walther: Shifting Perspectives'; Haus der Kunst, Munich; March 6–August 2

Long before participatory art became widespread in museums and galleries, Franz Erhard Walther was engineering pieces that made use of the viewer, often by having people hold large pieces of fabric together. A pioneer of Conceptual art and a winner of the top prize at the Venice Biennale, Walther is now being given the retrospective treatment with this 250-work show.

7. 'Mark Bradford: End Papers'; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; March 8–August 9

A little over two decades ago, Mark Bradford began making a series called "End Papers," employing the paper strips used to keep hair from overheating that he first came across in his mother's South Los Angeles beauty shop. Made before Bradford became one of today's most celebrated painters, the resulting paintings—which are surveyed in this show—delicately allude to his family history, transposing grids of end papers over detritus.

8. 'Studio 54: Night Magic'; Brooklyn Museum, New York; March 13–July 5

In 1977 Ian Schrager and Steve Rubell cofounded Studio 54, the famed New York watering hole known for its wild parties. In a recent documentary, Schrager said, "when I look back now, it is so preposterous. What were we thinking?" Is there a Studio 54 aesthetic? Find out in this exhibition, which surveys the club's impact on New York's 1970s social scene and art world through photography, paraphernalia, and more.

9. 'An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain'; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; March 14–July 26

Having grown up in Vietnam during the American war there, An-My Lê went on to produce documentary photographs covering war, its impact on the landscape, and the way conflict is represented in mass media. For a few memorable images, she shot on the set of a Hollywood film about the Civil War, leaving it largely unclear to viewers who didn't read the

adjacent wall texts that the explosions depicted were faked. At last, this season brings her first major mid-career survey, which includes 125 photographs.

10. Biennale of Sydney; Various venues, Sydney; March 14–June 8

Australia may be one of the few countries in the world where it is common to acknowledge historical violence against Indigenous peoples, but its art institutions have not yet adequately recognized the art of Indigenous communities. It is therefore momentous for Brook Andrew to be the first Indigenous curator of the 47-year-old Biennale of Sydney. A member of the Wiradjuri people, Andrew has included a significant quotient of Indigenous artists, among them Nonggirrŋa Marawili (Darrpirra/Yirrkala), S.J Norman (Wiradjuri), and Demian DinéYazhi' (Navajo).

11. 'Hélio Oiticica: Dance in My Experience'; Museu de Arte de São Paulo; March 20–June 7

Hélio Oiticica died in 1980 at just 42 years old; his impact on art has long outlasted him. Oiticica changed the way artists in his native Brazil—and far beyond—think about the relationship between art and life, and made them recognize in a new way the possibilities of utopian societies. This year, two of Brazil's biggest museums—MASP and the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro—will pay homage to Oiticica's enduring art, with his early experiments with geometrical abstraction, his performances, and his interactive works all represented.

12. 'Art in the Age of Anxiety'; Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates; March 21–June 21

A recent poll by the American Psychological Association suggests that people's anxiety levels are rising—a fact that no doubt has to do with a tense political climate around the world, the introduction of new technologies, and the increasingly fast pace of daily life. Curator Omar Kholeif addresses that phenomenon with this survey exhibition, featuring work by Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Simon Denny, Lynn Herschman Leeson, Guan Xiao, and many more.

13. 'Henri Cartier-Bresson: Le Grand Jeu'; Palazzo Grassi, Venice; March 22–January 10

We know what you're thinking: *Another* Cartier-Bresson show? Luckily, this one has a twist: people of note—including artist Annie Leibovitz, filmmaker Wim Wenders, and collector François Pinault, founder of the Palazzo Grassi—have been brought on to curate their own selections from Cartier-Bresson's 385-work "Master Collection." Their results could very well change the way the French photographer's work is seen in the years to come.

14. Christina Quarles; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; April 4–August 23

Christina Quarles practices a slippery kind of figuration. As one body of one color merges into another of a different hue, we are forced to confront difficult questions about gender, race, and sexuality. Whose parts belong to whom? Her works have tapped into today's shifting social mores, and not surprisingly, museums have responded with an unusual degree of excitement for a young artist. Not yet 40 years old, the Los Angeles–based Quarles has already appeared in the Hammer Museum's lauded Made in L.A. biennial in 2018 and a major New Museum show about gender and sexuality in 2017. In this, her largest museum show to date, she will present paintings made over the course of the last four years.

15. 'Artemisia'; National Gallery, London; April 4–July 26

In a landmark 1971 essay for *ARTnews* titled “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” art historian Linda Nochlin wondered why we didn't hear more about the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, daughter of painter Orazio Gentileschi. Nochlin attributed this to art-world misogyny, and since then Gentileschi's 1610 masterpiece *Judith Slaying Holofernes* has made its way into survey courses the world over, with scholars seeing in its graphic sexual violence a kind of feminism avant la lettre. This show at the National Gallery is the first major one devoted to her work in the United Kingdom.

16. 'Hilma af Klint: Artist, Researcher, Medium'; Moderna Museet, Malmö, Sweden; April 4–September 27

What are the chances that the best-attended show ever at the Guggenheim Museum in New York would be that of an early 20th-century abstract painter interested in spiritualism? No, we are not talking about Wassily Kandinsky. An exhibition of Hilma af Klint, a far lesser-known female contemporary of Kandinsky, brought a whopping 600,000 visitors to the museum. Now, another af Klint show is coming to the Moderna Museet, where—who knows—it may make an even bigger splash. The expansive survey features the first complete showing of one of af Klint's most famous series, “The Ten Largest” (1907).

17. Yoshitomo Nara; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; April 5–August 23

When the Japanese painter and sculptor had his first New York gallery show 20 years ago, *New York Times* critic Roberta Smith wrote a memorable description of the characters that would make him famous. Looking at “his cast of cute but demonic cartoon toddlers,” Smith wrote, might put you in mind of “the scathingly arch, big-eyed infant of *Family Guy* crossed with a Kenneth Noland target painting or an Yves Klein International Blue monochrome.” For an artist whose reputation is based on something of a punk aesthetic, Nara has awfully high prices: last fall, one of his paintings made

\$25 million at auction. LACMA's survey, staged in partnership with collector Budi Tek's Yuz Museum in Shanghai, will travel to the Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain.

18. Niki de Saint Phalle; MoMA PS1, New York; April 5–September 7

Niki de Saint Phalle's bright, colorful, curvaceous figural sculptures were out of sync with her time, but they are looking more and more relevant to our own. The self-taught artist brought the female figure to a monumental scale and made it exuberant during a period when the avant-garde was more focused on stern minimalism, but since her death in 2002 (and especially in the past few years) there has been a surge of interest in new ways of defining and celebrating women in art. This will be the first-ever museum survey devoted to Saint Phalle, and it will feature 100 objects ranging from paintings to sculpture and jewelry. Included will be works that attest to Saint Phalle's activist spirit, which led her to create feminist works during the 1960s and drawings about the AIDS crisis during the '80s.



Sanford Biggers, Serenade, 2018. Courtesy of Sanford Biggers

19. 'Sanford Biggers: Codeswitch'; Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York; April 8–September 6

Asked in 2018 by the *New Yorker* what he hopes to achieve with his work, which often involves sculptural installations alluding to Black history, Sanford Biggers said, "to have there be layers of history and politics," along with a good dose of humor. He said

that, with his works, he wants to flip through different timelines and locales—to “code-switch,” as he put it, using the word that forms the title of this show, which includes 60 works by the Harlem-based artist that are constructed from quilts, in an homage to the history of the Underground Railroad.

20. Chen Zhen; Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan; April 9–July 26

Throughout the course of his relatively short career, Chen Zhen, who died in 2000 at age 45, repeatedly pondered the changes Western values and globalism had wrought on his native China. For one of his most famous works, he constructed a 65-foot-long dragon out of bicycle inner tubes and wheels—an allusion to both industry and Chinese history. Little more than a year after that work hovered over a major Chinese art survey at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Pirelli HangarBicocca is staging a retrospective of the late artist’s large-scale installations.

21. ‘The Paradox of Stillness: Art, Object, and Performance’; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; April 18–July 26

Performance art typically calls to mind bodies in motion, but this show proposes that this need not always be the case—the most cutting-edge works being made in the medium these days are making art out of stillness. For this enterprising survey, the Walker Art Center has brought together 100 works by 65 artists, among them Maria Hassabi, Senga Nengudi, Pope.L, and Jordan Wolfson, in an exploration of how performance relates to aesthetic concerns more often found in painting and sculpture. Included will be Anne Imhof’s lauded 2019 performance *Sex*, which in past iterations involved performers slowly enacting complex choreographies amid strobing lights.

22. Betye Saar; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; April 22–July 26

The 93-year-old artist has long grappled with racism and its legacy in such works as *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), a sculpture in which a mammy figure appears armed with a broom and a rifle. Having won the Museum Ludwig’s \$110,000 Wolfgang Hahn Prize earlier this year, she’s being honored with a solo show.

23. ‘STARS: Six Contemporary Artists from Japan to the World’; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; April 23–September 6

Takashi Murakami’s iconoclastic anime-inspired work has gained a foothold in popular culture worldwide through, among other things, his collaborations with Kanye West. Along the way, the work’s relationship with Japan has been somewhat lost. This presentation brings Murakami’s work home, along with that of five other world-renowned Japanese artists: Yayoi Kusama, Lee Ufan, Tatsuo Miyajima, Yoshitomo Nara, and Hiroshi Sugimoto.

24. Otobong Nkanga; Gropius Bau, Berlin; April 30–August 2

For a 2007–08 piece called *Baggage*, Otobong Nkanga shipped bags of sand from Antwerp, where she's now based, to Nigeria, where she was born, and then had people in the African country send similar objects back to Belgium. She was alluding to the way our globalist world impacts the environment, broaching all sorts of heavy issues about colonialism and the flow of ideas in the process. Such a heady blend of ideas has made Nkanga an artist beloved by curators, with her work celebrated at last year's Venice Biennale, as well as at the Sharjah Biennial. In 2019 she was also the recipient of the inaugural \$100,000 Lise Wilhelmsen Art Award. Her show at the Gropius Bau comes on the heels of a yearlong residency there.

May

25. 'Judy Chicago: A Retrospective'; De Young Museum, San Francisco; May 9–September 6

Judy Chicago is far more than her iconic *Dinner Party* (1974–79), an installation that imagines a table set for a feast for female pioneers throughout history, and has become a cornerstone of feminist art history. Chicago has long hoped that the public would embrace the whole of her output—"I used to say [I hoped I'd live] long enough to come out from behind the shadow of *The Dinner Party*," she told *ARTnews* in 2019—and with this retrospective she gets her wish. (*The Dinner Party*, on permanent display in the Brooklyn Museum, won't travel for it.) Including 100 pieces, the show will turn the spotlight on some of Chicago's more recent works, which deal with climate change and the rise of fascism.

26. Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art; Various venues, Riga, Latvia; May 16–October 11

At last year's Venice Biennale, the Golden Lion award for national participation went to Lithuania, one sign that the Baltic region has moved to center stage. For its second edition, the organizers of this biennial, which is dedicated to showcasing homegrown artists, have tapped Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel, a former curator at the Palais de Tokyo museum in Paris. Around 85 percent of the work included is being produced specifically for the show. Among the artists on tap are Paweł Althamer, Nina Beier, Dora Budor, Lina Lapelyte, Hanne Lippard, and Augustas Serapinas.

27. 'Kara Walker: Drawings 1993–2020'; Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland; May 16–August 23

Kara Walker has recently been associated with her sculptures recalling the horrors of slavery, such as her 75-foot-tall sugar sculpture of a mammy figure-cum-sphinx, which was installed in 2014 in a former Domino Sugar factory in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. This show is a welcome reminder that she is also a master of works on paper. With hundreds of pieces,

including some new ones debuting here, Walker's first major survey in Switzerland will pinpoint how she so intelligently synthesizes her disturbing images of racism and misogyny with art-historical traditions.

28. 'Goya'; Fondation Beyeler, Riehen, Switzerland; May 17–August 16

Alongside the modern and contemporary offerings trotted out by the world's biggest galleries at this year's Art Basel fair in Switzerland will be an unusual presentation: Francisco de Goya's painting *Witches' Sabbath* (1797–98), which is traveling from the Museo Lázaro Galdiano in Madrid to hang in Fondation Beyeler's booth at the fair. The occasion for such a loan is the Beyeler's major show devoted to the Spanish Romantic artist, who is known for his bizarre paintings about dreams and states of irrationality—and the horrors of war. Organized in collaboration with the Prado in Madrid, this is one of the biggest Goya shows ever mounted outside Spain.

29. Jennifer Packer; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; May 17–November 30

Among the stars of last year's Whitney Biennial were Packer's beguiling paintings in which Black sitters melt into their backgrounds. Though not yet 40 years old, Packer has established herself as one of the most important figurative painters working in New York today. This is her first West Coast survey.

30. Lynette Yiadom-Boakye; Tate Britain, London; May 20–August 23

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye has spoken of her paintings of Black men and women rendered in muted tones as being like what Zadie Smith once called "character studies of people who don't exist." Her alluring pictures have captured the attention of critics, curators, and young artists alike, and now Tate is mounting the first major survey of her work, with 80 pieces representing her output from the past 17 years.

31. 'To Tame a Wild Tongue: Art After Chicanismo'; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; May 21–August 23

During the 1960s and '70s, a group of Chicano artists used their work to radically redefine Mexican-American identity, presenting it as something far more complex than previously acknowledged. This survey, which takes its name from an essay by scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, explores the aftermath, during which artists delved deeper into that complexity. Some 30 artists are represented, including John Valadez and Ester Hernandez.

32. Venice Architecture Biennale; Various venues, Venice, Italy; May 23–November 29

Considering the world's current refugee crisis—which often boils down to the question of who will share space with those who have become placeless—the theme architect Hashim

Sarkis has chosen for this edition of the Venice Architecture Biennale is an apt one. He looked for work that deals with the “spatial contract,” the means by which people agree to live together. The offerings here are sure to range from the hippy-dippy to the academic, and all will likely point a way forward.

33. ‘Somewhere Downtown’; UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; May 30–August 30

There are few moments in art history more iconic than the 1980s New York art scene, which witnessed the rise of stars like Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat, and then saw many of them fall during the AIDS crisis later that same decade. That vibrant culture will be transported halfway around the world this season for “Somewhere Downtown,” a survey curated by critic Carlo McCormick, who has worked on some of the most important exhibitions and scholarship concerning the ’80s art world. The material in this show is relatively new to China, with some Haring and Basquiat works making their way to the country for the first time.