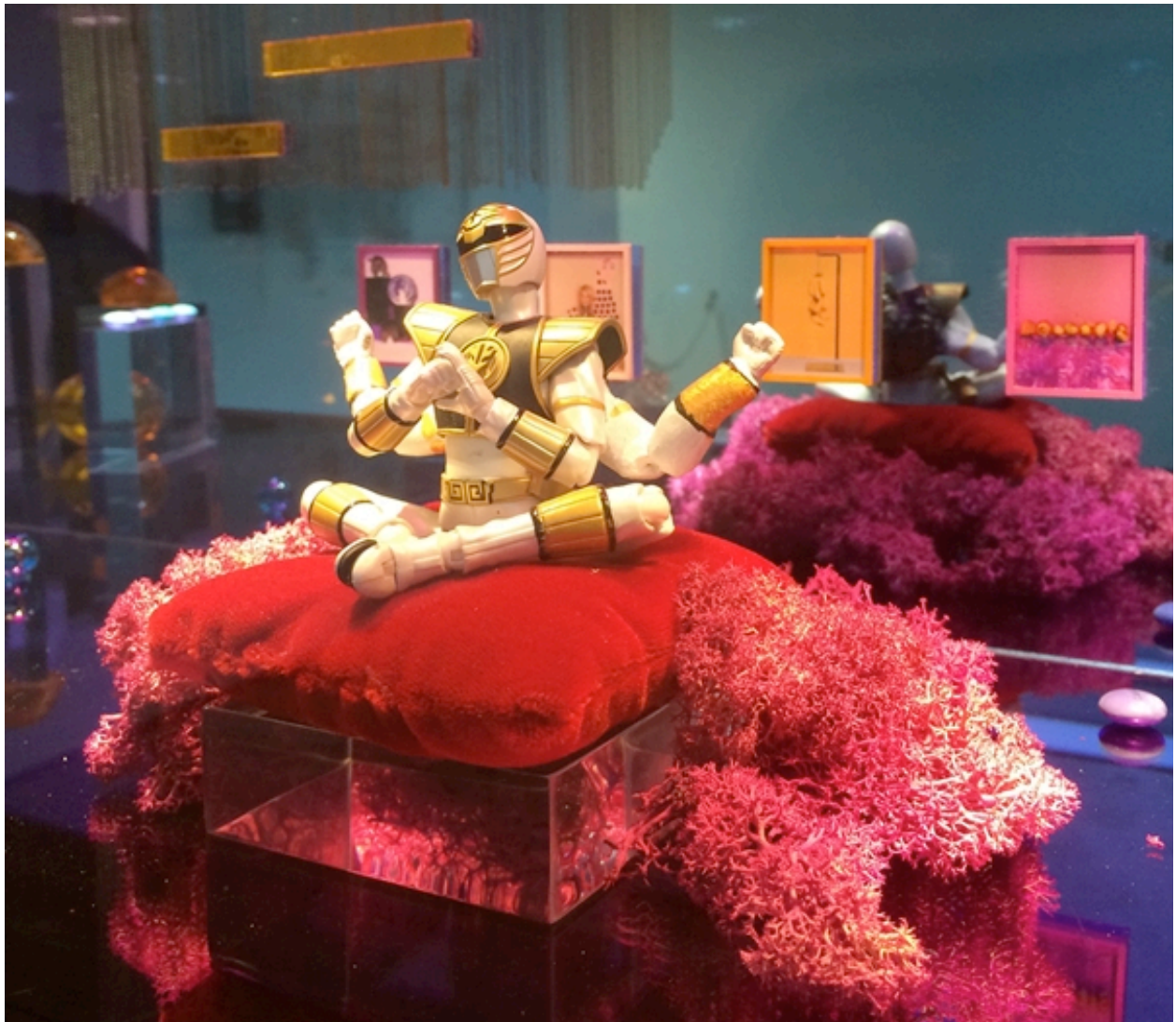


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New York's Standout Gallery Shows Are on the Lower East Side
Benjamin Sutton, Wednesday, September 24, 2014



Detail of Ajay Kurian, *Comfort Zone #2 (Enlightenment)* (2014) at Rachel Uffner Gallery.
Photo: Benjamin Sutton.

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The fall art season is off to a typically bloated start in New York, with many complaining of a lackluster lineup of shows at Chelsea galleries—but a stroll through the Lower East Side reveals this month's best exhibitions, with a verve unmatched elsewhere in the Big Apple right now. Herewith, a highly subjective selection of must-see shows on and east of the Bowery.

"Flat Neighbors" at Rachel Uffner Gallery, through October 19.

This Ajay Kurian-curated group show comes across as a refreshing playground for the senses, packing a real surrealist punch through improbable juxtapositions. The smoky, incense-like odor in the gallery comes from Elaine Cameron-Weir's huge sci-fi clam shell sculpture, rimmed in neon and with a small flame burning fragrant frankincense and myrrh where its pearl would be. Elsewhere, Kurian's own aquarium-sized sculpture, *Comfort Zone #2 (Enlightenment)*, offers a Power Ranger action figure seated in the lotus position amid a glimmering diorama featuring miniature paintings, a melting letter G, and mirrored decor that resembles a kid's playtime version of a strip club. But the most interesting works, for my money, are a pair of pieces by Dora Budor, jutting from the gallery ceiling and wall like big, flat TV monitors. One of these features dozens of fake frogs encased in translucent resin—they are the actual props that pour down on Los Angeles in the climactic scene of the Paul Thomas Anderson movie *Magnolia* (the artist knows someone who was involved in the production and was able to procure the props). Glimpsed from below, with light filtering through from the skylight above, this outstanding piece conjures a genuine sense of unease.

Genesis BREYER P-ORRIDGE and Pierre Molinier at Invisible Exports, through October 12.

I've never gotten into Genesis BREYER P-ORRIDGE's work; it just doesn't do it for me. Part of its appeal is that it offers a view into her/his life and the subculture she/he inhabits, which are admittedly fascinating subjects, but I've never been drawn to the work as photographs in and of themselves. In this particular show, a couple of her/his sculptures are welcome additions (though they should really be in "Killer Heels" at the Brooklyn Museum), but the reason to go is really how P-ORRIDGE's works are successfully paired with photographs by the fascinating Pierre Molinier (1900–1976), a French Surrealist who was too extreme even for the Surrealists. Molinier's incredible black-and-white self-portrait photomontages cast him as a mutant drag queen with extra arms, legs, butts, torsos, and heads, often rocking customized heels augmented with dildos. These homespun hybrid nudes alternate between burlesque theatricality and a more raw stripe of eroticism that anticipates P-ORRIDGE's work (and Cindy Sherman's). It's a wonder we know so little about Molinier, but that seems bound to change.

Kent Henricksen, "Disharmony in Blue and Gold" at the Lodge Gallery, through October 5.

"Violently beautiful" is the most concise way to describe this show. With the Lodge Gallery's walls all painted midnight blue and covered in a stenciled grid of golden dots, Kent Henricksen conjures a dreamy atmosphere, even if the rest of the installation is distinctly nightmarish: a small forest of wooden spears painted gold, some of them topped by clay pots emblazoned with monstrous faces (this device is inspired by classic moonshine jugs, which featured scary faces to frighten away the kids). On the walls, canvases feature his trademark historic fabric patterns—cherubs, pastoral scenes, Bible episodes, etc.—augmented with hand-embroidered hooded figures. Somewhere between KKK knights, ghosts, and avant-garde pranksters, the figures (like everything else in the exhibition) are at once playful, menacing, and wonderfully crafted.

Jean Lowe, “Lost Time” at McKenzie Fine Art, through October 12.

A little satire goes a long way in a self-serious field such as ours, and Jean Lowe’s paintings and papier-mâché sculptures of parody auction lots, catalogues, and posters will have you chuckling. From the George Condo-esque finger puppets in her poster for the fictional “Roquefort’s” auction house’s “Printed and Manuscript Ephemera” sale, to the improbable auction lots themselves—like a newspaper clipping of an item about a Swedish man who escaped, naked, from a burning house only to freeze to death as he rode away on his snowmobile—it’s well worth spending some time poring and reading over these pieces. They won’t change your life, but they’ll probably stay with you longer than the results of the fall auctions at Sotheby’s and Christie’s.

Kristen Schiele, “Spirit Girls” at Lu Magnus, through October 12.

Kristen Schiele is really honing her craft. This new exhibition of large paintings with sculptural elements—recessed spaces filled with colors and images, additional small canvases grafted onto the tops and sides of larger ones like expansions and appendices—shows her work becoming more precise in its details and more elusive in its overall meaning. Fantastic and bold figurative fragments like the neon-hued camera lens in a losange-shaped painting, or the wiry figure absorbed in a magazine in another piece, are surrounded by strips and clusters of patterns, blocks of color, and scraps of text. Schiele’s move to explore techniques from collage and printmaking continues to pay dividends.

David Benjamin Sherry, “Climate Vortex Sutra” at Salon 94 Bowery, through October 25.

David Benjamin Sherry is both a futurist and an antiquarian. He is committed to the laborious dark room manipulations that result in his sorbet-hued landscape photographs, yet their unnatural tones intimate some coming environmental apocalypse—has pollution cast the atmosphere a deep purple, or did man-made bacteria turn all the vegetation a sickly hue of yellow? Here, Sherry juxtaposes his Ansel Adams-on-acid vistas with subversions of other art historical genres, including a pair of nudes whose classical poses have been upgraded with rainbow body paint, and a show-stealing self-portrait of the artist in makeup and a blond wig, looking like a mash-up of *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, Marilyn Monroe, and Amanda Lepore. Other inventive departures from Sherry’s standard practice include a psychedelic landscape collage and a dramatic black-and-white photo of a science park’s dueling dinosaurs. This retrofuturist’s wit is only getting sharper.