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# Art Gallery Shows to See in September

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**By Max Lakin, Carolina A. Miranda and Will Heinrich**

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*This week in Newly Reviewed, Max Lakin covers Sara Anstis's unsettling mystery, Yvonne Jacquette's aerial views and George Rouy's sobering turn.*

CHELSEA

## Sara Anstis

Through Oct. 24. Olney Gleason, 509 West 27th Street; 212-563-4474, olneygleason.com.



“Three Heads in a Bed” (2025) by Sara Anstis. Sara Anstis, via Olney Gleason, New York

Sara Anstis mixes up a strange brew: part Renaissance severity, part Gothic dourness, spiked with a Surrealist lift — Lucas Cranach the Elder cut with Gertrude Abercrombie’s unsettled weirdness.

Anstis makes her pastels flatten like tempera, getting a soft finish that’s powdery and opaque, compounding their mystery. Pictures seem to be lit from within, their protagonist’s milky complexions emanating a lunar glow against a palette of saffrons, rusts and coffee browns.

Like George Tooker, who also translated a fondness for old master painters into a queasy magical realism, Anstis skims the porous boundary between whimsy and dread. She sets her action in prediluvian pastorals suspended between Paradise and Purgatory, and submits her protagonists — all female, often naked — to Dante-level tribulations.

They endure baroque beauty rituals and deeply uncomfortable sleeping arrangements, their heads stacked vertically like dinner plates. They pilot a bathtub strung with curing carp and are afflicted by the crippling indecision of a robust hat wardrobe. These scenes read less like nightmares than subconscious processing, what Tooker called "reality impressed on the mind so hard that it returns as a dream."

Anstis devotes several pictures to the strangest trial of all: having kids. Mothers — pregnant, giving birth and toting small children — appear in varying degrees of bewilderment. Anstis draws a line between motherhood and painting, each an unfathomable act of creation, equal parts tender and trepidatious. *MAX LAKIN*

CHELSEA

## Yvonne Jacquette

Through Oct. 31. Karma, 549 West 26th Street; 212-717-1671, karmakarma.org.

“Route One, Maine” (2008) by Yvonne Jacquette Estate of Yvonne Jacquette, via Karma

In the late 1970s, while keeping the poet and critic Edwin Denby company in his 17th-floor hospital room, Yvonne Jacquette began drawing the view out the window, translating the traffic on the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive and the lights along the East River into glowing pastel. She spent the rest of her life looking down.

Enamored with the aerial vantage point, Jacquette’s earliest, Constable-like studies of clouds seen through rounded airplane windows gave way to expanded perspectives, pushing outward from the plane body to the terrain below. She continued to find new ways to paint from above: chartering planes, working from high-rise hotel rooms or taking in Midtown Manhattan from a helicopter. In the late 1990s, during an artist residency in the World Trade Center, she cobbled together composite views of downtown as seen from the towers.

Fidelity was not as important as feeling. Her cityscapes feature a compressed perspective — less of a verifiable topography than an emotional one — jigsaw puzzles pieced and packed to her liking. She pushed buildings around and played with scale, slowing down the unremitting city. They can read like Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblock prints: a vertiginous floating world, dizzying but holding still long enough to clarify.

Jacquette, who died in 2023, mainly split her affections between Manhattan and Maine. But, as if to avoid the obviousness of that state's natural splendor, she directed her attention to its unlovely industrialized corners.

Her night scenes from Maine are some of her most incongruously beautiful — nocturnes for parking lots and highway traffic. She rendered a Walmart in the city of Augusta in striations of diffuse color, asphalt rippling like Impressionistic tributaries, as if Seurat painted strip malls. "Route One, Maine" (2008), the sparest picture here, is miraculous in its geometric economy. It's just a scattering of dashes and haloed orbs sunk into an inky ground, yet there's no question what we're looking at, the information tapped out in luminous morse code. Its tilt suggests takeoff, hurtling away from the earth — a certain psychic freedom. "Trouble in the air is very rare," Amelia Earhart noted. "It is hitting the ground that causes it." *MAX LAKIN*

CHELSEA

## George Rouy

Through Oct. 17. Hauser & Wirth, 542 West 22nd Street; 212-790-3900, hauserwirth.com.

“Floodlight” (2026) by George Rouy. George Rouy, via Hannah Barry Gallery and Hauser & Wirth; Photo by Damian Griffiths

There’s something unsettling about George Rouy’s paintings, but probably not in the way he intends. Clusters of spectral nudes stretch across wall-size canvases. Bodies glitch in and out of focus, or dissolve into static interference. Heads are blotted out or otherwise not attempted.

A few years ago, Rouy’s figures were agreeably globular, streaked with woozy color, ruptured and leaking — interesting in a funny-peculiar way. Now they’ve stiffened up and dried out. The paintings here favor tonal compositions of drab, muted grounds, some slicked with chrome paint, giving them the sheen of something expensive. Perhaps Rouy felt the occasion — his New York blue-chip gallery debut at 32 — called for something sober. They stutter between figuration and abstraction, as if unwilling or unable to choose. But at six-figure prices, why should you?

These are not portraits. Rouy has said his blurred and decollated figures are imagined, plucked from the internet and digitally manipulated before being translated to paint — stand-ins for a generalized assessment of modernity. What that assessment is is anyone’s guess. Unstable? Atomized? Dispossessed?

These would all undoubtedly be accurate, but the pictures' vague air can't tell you why. They're too cool to say much, too bloodless to provoke. There's an obvious affinity for the artist Francis Bacon — who instructed "to paint the cry rather than the horror" — but they're Bacon pushed through a Vitamix, a fleshy slurry with the fiber stripped out.

If the works here are meant to suggest anxiety about our tech-addled moment, they end up doing so elliptically. They recall early attempts by artificial intelligence at rendering the human figure, regurgitating images with errors like extra fingers, failures that now seem quaint. Rouy's pictures remain haunted by the algorithm, a dispiriting feedback loop of the painter mimicking the machine mimicking the painter, with something lost in translation. *MAX LAKIN*

## More to See

Gronk, Echo," 2025 oil pastel and acrylic on wood panel. Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica CA

SANTA MONICA, CALIF.

# Gronk

Through Oct. 31. Craig Krull Gallery, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Avenue, Santa Monica; 310-826-6410, craigkrullgallery.com.

In Greek myth, the nymph Echo is condemned to repeat the words of others for eternity. In "X Reason," a small solo show by the Los Angeles artist Gronk (born Glugio Nicandro), an expressionistic painting titled "Echo" (2025) presents a silhouette of a limbless torso against a putty-colored background, mirrored by a similar figure in one corner.

Below, the word "echo" appears in red paint. It's a resonant image at a moment when talking points are parroted relentlessly on television, and calamity is greeted by helplessness.

Gronk, a founder of the influential art collective Asco, has had a fruitful career as a set designer (regularly collaborating with the opera director Peter Sellars), as well as being a painter. He has produced work that can burst with exuberance as well as dig into somber states.

His wry paintings and canvases frequently comment on society and politics in coded ways. Another painting showing a limbless silhouette hangs next to “Echo,” this one emblazoned with the word “chorizo,” a reference to the sausage, and a word that also serves as slang for male genitalia and a fraudster or thief.

One of Gronk’s recurring symbols is Tormenta, a mysterious woman in black whose face is never revealed — likely an alter ego. Sometimes she contemplates her own shadow; at others, she surveys scenes of bedlam. In one of the new paintings, a shadowy figure has seized control of her body, suspending her in the air. Tormenta is often depicted as a confident character, but here she inhabits a grim world where things have slipped beyond her control. *CAROLINA A. MIRANDA*

An installation view of “Susan Silton: Diving Into the Wreck” at Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Photo by Brian Forrest

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

# Susan Silton

Through Nov. 22. Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, 4800 Hollywood Boulevard; 323-644-6269, lamag.org.

Some artists make work about process. Susan Silton, who lives in Los Angeles, makes art about processing: rage, discomfort, being confounded.

In 2017, as she reflected on the ramifications of Trump's first election, Silton teamed up with the pianist Vicki Ray and the choreographer Flora Wiegmann for an all-women performance of "Quartet for the End of Time," a chamber music piece the French composer Olivier Messiaen wrote when he was being held in a Nazi prison camp. It was performed at the camp in 1941. For a night, an audience gathered in an austere warehouse in Downtown Los Angeles to experience the work and consider what it means to persist in the face of the unthinkable.

Documentation from that memorable night is on view in "Susan Silton: Diving Into the Wreck," a survey that brings together more than 150 of her works.

A conceptualist whose art straddles a range of media, Silton's most effective projects circle around violence and grief. An early sculpture wrestles with the ravages of AIDS, while a more recent video shows Silton dancing in defiant tribute to those injured and killed during a mass shooting at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla., in 2016.

Amid rising anti-immigrant sentiment in 2013, Silton gathered nine others to help her retype John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath" on manual typewriters — a tale of labor and migration retold through the furious clacking of her unusual story circle. For this survey, she has invited the public to help her retype

Octavia Butler's novel "Parable of the Sower," about a world throttled by climate change. A poignant choice in a city remade by furious fire last year. *CAROLINA A. MIRANDA*

Urs Fischer, Louis XIV," 2014, cast bronze Jeffrey Deitch

Hollywood, Calif.

## Urs Fischer

Through Oct. 3, 2026. Jeffrey Deitch Los Angeles, 925 North Orange Drive; 323-925-3000, deitch.com.

In 2013, the Swiss-born Urs Fischer, who lives in Los Angeles, was the subject of a sprawling survey at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA). The show filled half the museum's headquarters on Grand Avenue, along with

most of the Geffen Contemporary, a warehouse gallery in Little Tokyo.

At the Geffen, Fischer laid out several tons of modeling clay and invited more than 1,500 volunteers to shape the materials as they wished. The artist also joined in on the fun.

The results were eclectic and ephemeral. Volunteers produced objects like a frog creature with breasts and the shark from “Jaws” — all of which began to dry and crumble as the exhibition wore on. Before it all turned to dust, Fischer had two dozen of his own clay pieces, with some additions from volunteers, cast as bronzes, and these are now on display at Jeffrey Deitch Los Angeles in a solo show titled “YES.” It is a full circle of sorts: Deitch was MOCA’s director during Fischer’s show.

There is a charm to these pieces that eludes Fischer’s other works, which are too often preoccupied with name-checking art history. The sculptures at Deitch are funny and odd. A crude throne chair seems to deflate. Greeting visitors by the main door is a boy sticking out his tongue; in the distance, you’ll find a giant foot.

A lesson, perhaps, that small, strange acts of creation can be more compelling than a room full of big-budget one-liners. *CAROLINA A. MIRANDA*

EAST HARLEM

## ‘Octopus & Others: Acts of Collaboration & Poetics’

Through Nov. 15. El Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Avenue; 212-831-7272, elmuseo.org.

Installation view of “Octopus & Others: Acts of Collaboration & Poetics.” Matthew Sherman/El Museo del Barrio, New York

In 1982, the artist Papo Colo orchestrated “Octopus: An Act of Sculpture,” a collaboration in the courtyard of El Museo del Barrio. It comprised a series of eight-foot plywood panels that Colo and other artists and poets from the downtown scene painted in black and white and displayed upright, connected with hinges, like a giant, accordion-style book.

There’s a fire hydrant by David Hammons, a faux brick wall of “I” statements by Vito Acconci (“I am a stevedore,” “I am a jeweler”), a Russian obscenity neatly lettered by the Soviet defector duo Komar & Melamid. But the particulars aren’t really the point. The effect of these and other disparate, more or less hasty efforts comes almost entirely from the fact that they’re all standing together.

In other words, it's a piece about community — at once a record of a moment in the life of New York's artists and museums and a visual demonstration of how such a network can transcend its parts.

An even stronger demonstration is the incredible flowering of related work hanging around the panels in the museum's current group show "Octopus & Others: Acts of Collaboration & Poetics." Deliberately blurred photos of Puerto Rican artists and activists by the artist Adál accompany Pedro Pietri's free-form 1996 essay "Nuyoricans Out of Focus." There are one-person anthologies of drawings, photos and other images by Amalia Mesa-Bain, who compiled her "Codex Amalia" by hand on one long sheet, and by Jorge Soto Sánchez, whose "El Paquete," with its line drawings and appropriated images, was made possible by Xerox machines.

Andrea Moccio's "Poesía blanda" slices a phone book into a strange and beautiful form that evokes the grain of an ancient tree, and a host of prints from the East Harlem workshop Taller Boricua are too much to see in a single visit. *WILL HEINRICH*

LOWER EAST SIDE

## Morgan O'Hara

Through Sept. 26. Mitchell Algus Gallery, 132 Delancey Street; 516-639-4918, mitchellalgusgallery.com.

Installation view of “Morgan O’Hara: Different Times That Populate the Universe.” JMay Photo Studio

For more than 50 years, Morgan O’Hara has been carefully documenting the way she spends her time, often while observing or participating in jobs that don’t seem especially artistic.

One tall, narrow chart, included in her densely hung new show at Mitchell Algus Gallery, tabulates neatly, in day-by-day stripes colored orange, yellow, pink and green, a summer she spent with commercial salmon fishermen in Alaska. For every day there’s a tally of hours spent making art or doing “fishwork” and a two-word summary like “REST/SORT,” “MEND/HATE” or “WORK/ACHE.” Art production for the period peaked at 4.5 hours on July 1, 1988, but was more commonly zero; fishwork took as much as 15.5 hours on the 22nd, but the largest catch, 4,670 pounds, happened on the 15th.

Despite their idiosyncratic organization and sometimes fanciful colors, O'Hara's charts aren't just excuses to make drawings. Workmanlike in their execution and relentlessly specific, they're clearly driven by an imperative to record information.

Still, what's most striking about them is the sheer eccentricity of the information itself. A social scientist or fisheries expert, given enough charts like this one, might elaborate a theory of something or other. But what does that 4,670 pounds mean in itself? Altogether the work ends up functioning like a series of Zen koans, bombarding you with details until, if you're lucky, in one sudden flash of insight, you find that you can see their primal mystery again. *WILL HEINRICH*

UPPER EAST SIDE

## Noah Jemisin

Through Oct. 24. Donald Ryan Gallery, 15 East 71st Street; 917-740-3570, donaldryangallery.com.

Noah Jemisin, “Fate’s Capriciousness,” 1978, encaustic on canvas with mixed media, pheasant plumage and gesso. Noah Jemisin, via Donald Ryan Gallery

Human and animal figures move through Noah Jemisin’s paintings almost like ghosts. A white outline floating against patches of orange and red in “Carnivore’s Dream” evokes a koi spotted underwater; above it, an equine shape bucks and a rooster hangs by the neck. Elsewhere a bearlike figure hunches across a partly unpainted canvas and burn marks applied with an iron commingle with vaguely figurative bulges and drips.

But what’s most striking about these phantasms is just how solid they are. Jemisin painted these works, nearly all of them in the late 1970s and early ’80s, with encaustic, which has a particularly evocative object-like feel. (You can find rows of captives in “Back Through Middle Passage,” but also abstract smears of peanut butter, chocolate pudding and creme fraiche.) He attaches real objects as well, like a burned piece of wood, to some paintings.

Even without such clues, though, it’s clear that the world Jemisin is painting is one in which forms change, fates vary, identity is just an idea — and all of it is equally real.

In “Fate’s Capriciousness,” a dry beige canvas is marked with a large, violent, multicolored V and a some glued-on clumps of pheasant feathers. A few white squiggles fly from the edges, a pair of white arrows signal significant moments,

a splotch of lobster-pink on the left looks like blood, and a seam runs straight down the middle. It's a spiritual diagram of sudden death: sticky, sordid, inexplicable. *WILL HEINRICH*

**See the August gallery shows here.**