



MATTHEW HIGGS

MATTHEW HIGGS IS AN ARTIST AND HAS BEEN THE DIRECTOR OF WHITE COLUMNS, NEW YORK, SINCE 2004. A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO ARTFORUM, HE WILL SELECT THE TENTH ITERATION OF LOOKING BACK, WHITE COLUMNS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION, IN JANUARY.

1

JAMES "SON FORD" THOMAS (BOWSE GALLERY, NEW YORK; CURATED BY JONATHAN BERGER, MARY BETH BROWN, AND JESSICA IANNUZZI GARCIA) A pioneer of the Delta blues and a former gravedigger, Thomas (1926–1993) was also a visionary self-taught sculptor whose principal material was the "jumbo" of his native Mississippi. He fashioned this local clay into portrait busts, often using human hair (particularly in many less-than-flattering takes on George Washington), human skulls kitted out with dentures, and a menagerie of small birds and animals. This powerful exhibition, the largest and most thorough survey of Thomas's oeuvre to date, was another example of the inspired and maverick programming at NYU's BOWSE, which, under the leadership of Berger, has become one of the most vital spaces for art in New York.

2

SUSAN CIANCIOLO (BRIDGET DONAHUE, NEW YORK) This presentation of Cianciolo's "kits"—ad hoc vessels filled with various objects—was a revelation. Working across the thresholds of craft, fashion, performance, publishing, and art, Cianciolo revels in a genuinely interdisciplinary—perhaps even activist—approach to making. Her quasi-hobbyist kits, filled with both found and constructed objects, provoke loose autobiographical narratives, tales that were vividly recounted (on request) by dealer Donahue herself, acting as her own gallery's docent.



3

CHRISTOPHER KNOWLES (INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, PHILADELPHIA (CURATED BY ANTHONY ELMS AND HILTON ALS); AND GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE, NEW YORK) Despite having worked as a poet, performer, and visual artist since the early 1970s, Knowles had not had an institutional survey until the ICA's examination of the past four decades of his mercurial practice, deftly choreographed by Als and the ICA's Elms. The show is an essential primer on one of America's most elusive and vital artists. At the opening of Gavin Brown's Lower East Side exhibition, Knowles performed new and old poems in front of a never-before-shown group of his signature typing works from the '80s: radiant pictograph-like "drawings" made using a manual typewriter.



4

PETER DOIG (LOUISIANA MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, HA BÆK, DENMARK; CURATED BY ULF KÜSTER) As an avid fan of Nordic noir—the melancholic and psychological wrought mystery novels that have proliferated in Scandinavia over the past four decades—I found the forest-bound coastal Baltic Sea setting of the Louisiana Museum a cerebral and poignant context for this near-definitive retrospective of the work Doig has produced since the late 1980s: cinematic artifice that the artist has long encouraged negotiated in his work and the нарочно inclined aesthetic that characterize his project felt, if anything, brighter in the museum's subterranean, daylight-free spaces. Co-organized with the Fondation Beyeler, Basel.

4. Peter Doig, *House of Pictures (Carrera)*, 2004, oil on canvas, 78 1/2 x 118 1/2". *S. Spread from The Face*, no. 13 (October 1989), "The Fashion Heroes," photograph by Stéphane Sednaoui, styling by Romel with Carlos, art direction by Elizabeth Dja. From "Fashion Stories."



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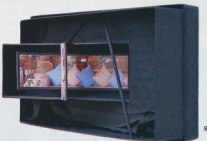


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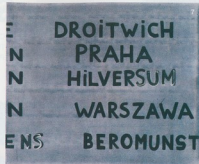
'FASHION STORIES' (BETWEEN BRIDGES, BERLIN) This deceptively modest exhibition—a sequence of magazine spreads featuring fashion editorials published in the late-1980s and early-'90s British style press (*i-D*, *The Face*, and *Arena*) and presented on a chest-high shelf running around the gallery's perimeter—was selected by *Between Bridges'* proprietor, the artist Wolfgang Tillmans. His inspired curatorial gesture spoke to the creative labor and collective imagination of a promiscuously talented generation of stylists, photographers, designers, and art directors—Corinne Day, Simon Foxton, Phil Bicker, Nick Knight, and Juergen Teller, among many others—a group whose ideas, influence, and attitude persist to this day.

6

ZOE PETTIJOHN SCHADE (KAI MATSUMIYA, NEW YORK) Like Bridget Donahue's new space, Kai Matsumiya's storefront gallery is a newcomer to the Lower East Side, yet it already feels like a distinct voice in an increasingly crowded neighborhood gallery scene. Everything Matsumiya has shown to date feels relevant: A case in point is Pettijohn Schade's exquisite, labor-intensive, psychedelic gouache paintings, which draw inspiration from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French textile studies and the Magic Eye autostereograms that became iconic in the 1990s, to which they bear an uncanny resemblance.



6. Zoe Pettijohn Schade, *Crowd of Crowds 1 (Monkeys, Feathers, Graves)*, 2014, gouache on paper, 21 1/2 x 16 1/2". 7. Walter Swennen, *Radio PRAHA*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 39 1/2 x 47 1/2". 8. Vincent Fecteau, *Untitled*, 2015, acrylic paint, dowel, paper, collage, 8 1/2 x 14 1/2 x 5 1/2". 9. Albert York, *Brown Cow in a Landscape*, 1984, oil on wood panel, 9 1/2 x 13". 10. Renzo Piano, *Whitney Museum of American Art*, 2015, New York. Photo: Ed Lederman.



7

WALTER SWENNEN (GLADSTONE GALLERY, NEW YORK) It has been twenty-three years since Swennen's last solo exhibition in New York. This in and of itself seems like an extraordinary oversight—for all concerned—given that his defiantly awkward paintings would have made perfect sense here at any point in the intervening decades. A former poet who turned to art, not unlike his compatriot Marcel Broodthaers, Swennen makes seemingly offhand yet perfectly accomplished paintings that display a keen investment in the instability of both words and images.

8

VINCENT FECTEAU (KUNSTHALLE BASEL; CURATED BY ELENA FILIPOVIC) Borrowing its title from an Arthur Russell song, "You Have Did the Right Thing When You Put That Skylight In" offered a pitch-perfect display of ten pedestal-based sculptures (produced since 2000) and fifteen three-dimensional collages (all made this year), constituting the San Francisco-based artist's largest exhibition to date. Not exactly a survey—we'll have to wait for that—the show underscored Fecteau's prevailing and unabashed interest in decor and the decorative itself, all filtered through his signature slyly deviant take on modernism.

9

ALBERT YORK (MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY, NEW YORK) York (1928–2009) was hailed by Calvin Tompkins in a 1995 *New Yorker* article as "the most highly admired unknown artist in America." Certainly I was unaware of his work prior to seeing this quietly mind-blowing exhibition and reading its brilliant, already out-of-print catalogue, which features contributions from Tompkins, Fairfield Porter, and Bruce Hainley. York's unassuming paintings—typically of such vernacular subjects as flowers in vases, dogs, cows, or the landscapes of Long Island's East End, where he made a living as a housepainter—somehow transcend their apparent ordinariness to reveal nothing less than what Bruce Nauman, in his own work, has called mystic truths.

Co-organized with Davis & Langdale Company.

10

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK There is much to celebrate about the arrival of Renzo Piano's handsome and sublimely functional new Whitney, which opened

