

White Columns

The Best New York Art Shows of 2021

VULTURE

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Installation view of "From the Archives." Art: Courtesy of White Columns. Photography by Marc Tatti.

It may not be possible to overstate how consistently excellent White Columns has been since its inception in 1970. Not only was it among the first, glorious wave of nonprofit spaces that blossomed in that decade, it has opened doors for more young artists than any space of its kind in New York history. Over the past 15 years, under director Matthew Higgs, it has been at the forefront of art by the self-taught, the disabled, and all of us who came into the art world through the back door. It's unpredictable and ahead of the curve. Anyone may submit work here — and might be chosen. That is radical openness. This stripped-down retrospective of the gallery's history came in the form of invitations, old pics, letters, and paraphernalia tacked to the wall in a wrap-around timeline. It was a magnificent testament to an institution that has never lost the thread.

—Jerry Saltz