

2016: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

THE YEAR IN, AND BEYOND, THE GALLERIES OF NEW YORK: A RELATIVELY
CONCISE CHRONICLE OF HIGHLIGHTS AND A TOP 10 LIST

By Andrew Russeth

NOT SO LONG AGO, it seemed that new galleries would keep sprouting up forever in New York, and that existing ones would keep on expanding. Over the past 12 months, though, some have closed. Growth has slowed, sales are down, and people are nervous, especially in the wake of the disastrous U.S. presidential election. But all of that was belied by the art on view this past year. It has been a great time to be a New Yorker in love with adventurous art, whether you're a connoisseur of early modernism or a seeker of new, untested stuff. The city continues to deliver. What follows is a synopsis of shows that stuck with me, followed by a top 10 list of my favorites.

ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE SPLENDOR...

...—nothing fussy, nothing wasted—was the prevailing style for many of the most exciting gallery shows, whether Maggie Lee and her charming childhood-channeling dioramas in fish tanks at Real Fine Arts, or Theodore Sefcik and his bewitching animations in the basement of 247365, which combine the aesthetics of early computer games and early color video art, or Annie Pearlman and her sui generis paintings at White Columns, which feature shifting planes of flat color and vaguely nightmarish cityscapes—really odd, really wonderful. Nicholas Buffon showed more of his ingenious, hand-fashioned foam and paper models of buildings and urban objects at Callicoon Fine Arts, Ajay Kurian went small, as well, in peculiar new wall-hung sculptures that resembled maquettes for dystopian playgrounds at 47 Canal; one featured a Tootsie Roll bunker. An esteemed veteran of the mode, B. Wurtz, had a tight selection of his abstract sculpture—wood blocks, plastic bags, the odd sock—at 83 Pitt Street.

ALTERNATIVE SPACES

The German maestro Lukas Düwenhogger had a remarkable painting display as the final show at Artists Space's Greene Street location, which also hosted a show by Cameron Rowland, a young gun working in the tradition of institutional critique. After a stellar run as director of Artists Space, Stefán Kalmar has decamped for the ICA London. The next director will have big shoes to fill, and a new space to find.

At White Columns, Matthew Higgs and Peter Doig spotlighted Truro, England-based Grenadian Denzil Forrester's subtly impressionistic, highly romantic paintings of reggae clubs. At The Kitchen, Sondra Perry established herself as one to watch—her masterful "Resident Evil" exhibition examined police brutality and racial violence through the aesthetics of video games and computer failure, indicting all types of operating systems. And up at the Park Avenue Armory, Martin Creed made clever use of the old building's rooms and corridors.