

4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Jonathan Lyndon Chase's cowboy paintings; objects with personality; Catalina Ouyang's sculptural grotesques; Jordan Nassar's new textile works.

Published Nov. 11, 2020 Updated Nov. 12, 2020, 9:24 a.m. ET

Jonathan Lyndon Chase

Through Nov. 20. Baby Company, 73 Allen Street, Manhattan; 646-756-4547, companygallery.us.

Jonathan Lyndon Chase's New York solo debut at Company in 2018 introduced a remarkable young painter. The artist's sophomore effort, "Wind Rider," at Baby Company — Company's new project space — provides ample corroboration. It continues a startlingly frank, exuberant exploration of the intersection of race, homoeroticism and personal identity. The new paintings introduce the additional subversive theme of the gay Black cowboy, and with it, lawlessness and the myth of straight white masculinity. The riches of this territory are once more conveyed by entanglements of bodies and faces, now joined by horses, cowboy hats and hints of frontier buildings. All motifs benefit from ingenious combinations of strident drawing and suave stained color; they are often simultaneously transparent and opaque, explicit and mysterious. Graffiti, spray paint and glitter are used.

There is plenty of action. In the work "grandma's garden (heart emoji)," a pair of possibly naked young men — one of them apparently backward on his horse — high-tail it out of somewhere. In "gathering on 5th Street," the yellow light streaming from the Chinese restaurant illuminates a black-hooded executioner type. And "lucky lovers" depicts two men in shades of hot pink engaged in either rough sex or murder. Drawings abound; sculpture — more plentiful than previously — includes a pair of swinging saloon doors, horseshoes made of foam, painted shovels and a horizontal slab that is identified on the checklist as "a Baptist church door," painted deep lavender. Chase makes skillful use of numerous precedents, among them, it seems, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Max Beckmann. This is an amazing show. *ROBERTA SMITH*

'Living Things'

Through Nov. 28. JTT, 191 Chrystie Street, Manhattan; 212-574-8152, jttnyc.com.



Still from the short film “Footsi,” in which Pat Oleszko slips two tiny black shoes onto her middle and index fingers and takes them out for a walk. Pat Oleszko and JTT

The highlight of that excruciating election week, for me, was a 1979 short film called “Footsi.” In it, the performance artist Pat Oleszko slips two tiny black shoes onto her middle and index fingers and takes them out for a walk. The fingers traverse her own naked body, go wading in the kitchen sink, and run on a spinning LP. With two more shoes on her left hand, Ms. Oleszko even reprises the famous “mirror scene” from the 1933 Marx Brothers comedy “Duck Soup.”

“Footsi” appears in “Living Things,” a group show whose works chart a delicate line between whimsy and paranoia as they consider how we invest objects — or body parts — with personality. Charles LeDray’s jaw-dropping installation “Free Public Library” suggests a story as dense as the average novel. An eight-foot section of concrete sidewalk complete with stone edging, this piece is covered with meticulous miniatures of tote bags, cardboard boxes and books with real titles. (Two evocative examples: “Puppies and Kittens” and “Prisoners of Childhood.”)



Charles LeDray’s installation “Free Public Library” (2015-2019) in the group show “Living Things.” JTT and Peter Freeman, Inc; Charles Benton

The illustrator William Teason’s book-cover mock-ups are ominous but weirdly cheerful; the young sculptor Anna-Sophie Berger conjures a clown face with two black circles and a light bulb; and sculptures by Anthea Hamilton and Maren Hassinger summon a world of twittering spirits just out of sight. But it’s “Udder Delight,” another entry by Ms. Oleszko, that best fits the current mood. A costume covered in cartoonish inflatable breasts, it’s an ambiguous infantile fantasy, at once absurd and terrifying. *WILL HEINRICH*

Catalina Ouyang

Through Dec. 6. Lyles & King, 21 Catherine Street, Manhattan; 646-484-5478, lylesandking.com.



Catalina Ouyang's "otherwise, spite: 1. whores at the end of the world / 2. from every drop of his blood another demon arose (1829-1840)," from 2020, various materials. Catalina Ouyang and Lyles & King

Catalina Ouyang's art falls into a category you might call the sculptural grotesque. Her work, which often features isolated or exaggerated body parts, evokes a kind of surreal humanity: She recently showed a nearly 19-foot-long bench shaped like a woman with breasts running down the torso. She heightens the sense of otherworldliness by employing unusual materials, including horse tibias and cigarette butts.

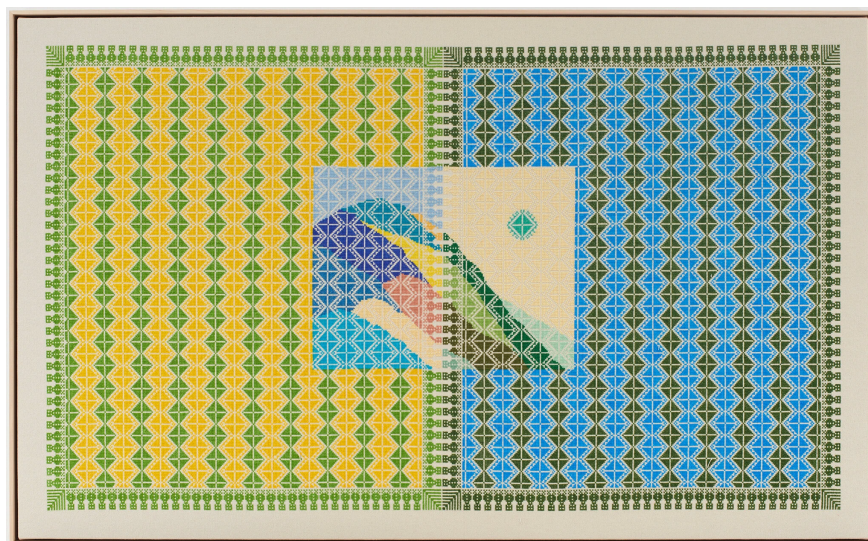
I love this style for its intriguing blend of the familiar and strange. But Ms. Ouyang's exhibition at Lyles & King stands out within the category because of its conceptual complexity. Entering the gallery's backyard, you step through the looking glass into a space dense with allusions to literature, history, anthropology and more.

Without knowing or understanding them all, you can still pick out a central theme: the forms of violence perpetrated against bodies identified as feminine. This is encapsulated in the centerpiece, "otherwise, spite: 1. whores at the end of the world / 2. from every drop of his blood another demon arose (1829-1840)," which reimagines a 19th-century colonial drawing showing an attack by a group of Indian thugs. Ms. Ouyang's tableau depicts a figure with an abstract, red face and a horse skull in its head — a reference to a guardian of the underworld in Chinese mythology — kneeling over a mutilated woman. The figure presses the woman's neck against the edge of a well and holds scissors to her eye — a chilling scene with an aura of mystery. Looking closely, the woman's mouth appears to form a slight grin. She knows something we don't. In that, there may be some power.

JILLIAN STEINHAUER

Jordan Nassar

Through Nov. 21. James Cohan Gallery, 291 Grand Street, Manhattan; 212-714-9500, jamescohan.com.



Jordan Nassar's "A Yellow World A Blue Sun," from 2020, hand-embroidered cotton on cotton. Jordan Nassar and James Cohan

In impressive new textile works, Jordan Nassar employs tatreez, Palestinian cross-stitch embroidery, to generate fields of ornate geometric patterns and interrupt them with insets of evocative, abstract landscapes — hills and valleys, the sun and sky. The effect is beguiling and deliberately ambiguous, with color and pattern choices that play between continuity and contrast. It suggests a world that eludes the constraints of the fabric grid, yet is subject, in the end, to the same mathematics.

Born and based in New York, Mr. Nassar invested himself in crafts to connect to his Palestinian family roots and explore cultural memory, how homeland is imagined across diasporic distance, how materials transmit and alter information. He is best known for his embroidery work, some of it in collaboration with female Palestinian artisans. This exhibition adds a new form: sculptures of glass beads, handmade in a style practiced in Hebron in the West Bank and mounted on undulating steel lattices, that depict landscapes in the same vein as the embroideries.



Jordan Nassar's "Bab Al-Zuhur (Gate of Flowers)," from 2020, hand-flamed glass beads, steel, wire. Jordan Nassar and James Cohan

The salient influence in color and energy is that of Etel Adnan, the distinguished Lebanese-American painter and poet, and a touchstone for Mr. Nassar. The show's title, "I Cut the Sky in Two," comes from one of her poems, as do titles of the textile pieces. The glass-bead sculptures are named after gates of old Jerusalem; the city's ancient walls inspired their lattices, though the region's more recent separation barriers, and the losses they enforce, also spring to mind. *SIDDHARTHA MITTER*