

ART & DESIGN

What to See in New York Galleries This Week

By THE NEW YORK TIMES SEPT. 15, 2016

‘Tenses’

‘Artists in Residence 2015-16’

Studio Museum in Harlem

144 West 125th Street

Through Oct. 30

Police violence has brought the image of the black body back into art with the symbolic force it had in the identity-conscious 1990s. The exhibition of work by the Studio Museum’s three 2015-16 artists in residence, organized by Amanda Hunt, could be read as a set of subtle variations on that presence, moving from realism to abstraction.

Jordan Casteel painted her large, vivid full-length portraits from photographs of men she regularly encountered outside her Harlem studio during the past year. They include a young skateboarder, Jared; some sidewalk merchants; and a neighborhood resident named Stanley, who sits under a poster with the words “Stop Police Terror.” The likenesses are carefully detailed, but there’s nothing distanced about them: In each case, the sitter looks directly at the artist. The expression on Stanley’s face is grave; his skin has an ashen pallor.

EJ Hill’s past work has been with durational performance, though, at first look, his main piece in the show, “A Monumental Offering of Potential Energy,” suggests that he has shifted his attention to sculpture: It’s a large wooden model

of an amusement park roller coaster, set on a low platform. Only when you walk the length of it do you find its resolution in the form of a body — that of the artist himself — lying still on the platform, as if the roller coaster had precipitously ejected him and left him for dead.

Bodies are ghostly in a multimedia installation by Jibade-Khalil Huffman. They're seen in occasional figures flickering in a video, and implied in a sculpture made of car windows that seem to have been shattered at points of impact, and in the overlapping, self-canceling words “your neighbor” in a silk-screen painting. Where the human presence is clear and direct is in sound: a constant undercurrent of diarylike, poetrylike words. It's as if an invisible body were all voice, fragmented but steadily and pointedly articulate.

HOLLAND COTTER

‘In the South Bronx of America’

‘Photographs by Mel Rosenthal’

Museum of the City of New York

Fifth Avenue and 103rd Street

Through Oct. 16

In 1975, the photographer Mel Rosenthal returned to his childhood neighborhood of Morrisania (now the South Bronx or, as some developers would have it, SoBro) and found an area that looked, in his words, like a “war zone,” with building after building abandoned, razed or torched by arsonists.

Posing against the broken windows and punched-out walls of what was once his bedroom, he captured himself looking defensive and slightly shellshocked. But he also sought out, and recorded, residents who couldn't or wouldn't leave and were simply carrying on as shelter and services disappeared around them: children fencing with sticks in a weedy lot, a man tending a community garden, a daily game of dominoes at the Social Club.

Like photographs of late-19th-century Paris in the throes of Haussmannization, Mr. Rosenthal's works in this small but gripping Museum of the City of New York exhibition evoke an eerie sense that he is just one step ahead

of the wrecking ball. The caption on one image of a woman in a sundress who is playfully waving away the camera reads, simply, “When I looked for her to give her the picture, her building had burned, and she had moved.”

KAREN ROSENBERG

‘No/Body’

Aneta Grzeszykowska

11R

195 Chrystie Street

Lyles & King

106 Forsyth Street

Lower East Side

Through Oct. 16

Get used to the double-solo exhibition, which is becoming less of a special event as galleries woo talent and fight “grow or go” pressures by demonstrating a willingness to share. In the best cases, however, the artist rises to the occasion with two shows that feel deeply intertwined yet could each stand on their own — as the Polish artist Aneta Grzeszykowska does at two Lower East Side galleries just blocks apart.

Jointly titled “No/Body,” these arresting exhibitions make up the second solo outing in New York for Ms. Grzeszykowska, who works in performance, photography, video and sculpture. Both use the body — the artist’s, mainly — to cultivate profound sensations of self-alienation, as filtered through Surrealist photography and film, and, especially, the work of revered feminist artists like Alina Szapocznikow, Ana Mendieta and Cindy Sherman.

At *11R*, in her new series “Selfie,” Ms. Grzeszykowska uses pigskin to make realistic-looking sculptures of human body parts and photographs herself interacting with them: displaying a female breast in her upturned palm, for instance, or painting lipstick on a masklike head. In a group of collages, “Halina,” she inserts her own nude body into the photographer Wojciech Zamecznik’s intimate portraits of his girlfriend — an exercise that feels more rote and

academic, but is quickly redeemed by two whimsically weird videos, “Headache” and “Bolimorphia,” in which Ms. Grzeszykowska orchestrates compelling black-and-white ballets of isolated body parts: part Busby Berkeley, part David Lynch.

At Lyles & King, Ms. Grzeszykowska transforms herself with full-body makeup so as to defy the reversals and negations of analog photography. In the video “Negative Process” she covers the front side of her body toe-to-head in black with white highlights, which are reversed in a subsequent series of negative prints so that we see her as an oddly flattened, cartoonlike figure inhabiting a world of humans. Photographs of the artist David Wojnarowicz roaming New York in his Rimbaud mask come to mind, as do those popular video tutorials on the proper application of contouring products.

This series, in particular, has some question marks and ellipses — the politics of darkening or lightening one’s skin, for instance, remains unaddressed as Ms. Grzeszykowska embodies the photographic duality of positive/negative. But here and in the other half of her show, there are also some resonant, Sherman-esque meditations on what it means to maintain a constant state of camera-readiness.

KAREN ROSENBERG

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