

HYPERALLERGIC

Rose B. Simpson: "15 Art Shows to See in New York City This Summer"

By Lisa Yin Zhang

July 1, 2024



Installation view of Suchitra Mattai, *We are nomads, we are dreamers* (2024) at Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens, New York (photo by Scott Lynch, courtesy Socrates Sculpture Park)

From the Bronx-forward work at Wave Hill down to Robert Podavano's liminal paintings in Staten Island, shows that'll make you want to stick around a sweltering city.

Not everyone can flee the hot mess of summer in New York City — it ain't all "what pleasure, what joy" down here, as it seems to be Upstate. I kid — I'm probably just salty from the heat ricocheting off the concrete, sending sweat down my face. But hey, we've got gardens down here, too. The manicured greenery of Wave Hill cocoons the Bronx-forward work within, while Suchitra Mattai's sculptures erupt from rough earth in Socrates Sculpture Park, contrasting with the quiet sculptures in the Noguchi Museum's shady courtyard mere steps away. The exhibitions below will transport you — whether to parts of the city most of us ought to visit more, like the Staten Island waterfront or the northern tip of Manhattan, or to the city's past, as in the Met's Harlem Renaissance show, or to pockets of the psyche both nostalgic and repressed, as in Diamond Stingily's architectural interventions at 52 Walker. Stand before Amalia Mesa-Bain's moving altars in Spanish Harlem, elbow your way through the careerists in midtown to find yourself before Rose B. Simpson's bronze-and-steel sentinels. Living here has always been about finding the way through the labyrinth. We've unspooled some string to guide you through.

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Toshiko Takaezu, "Closed Form" (2004), porcelain, 19 1/2 x 11 inches.

(© Family of Toshiko Takaezu; photo by Nicholas Knight, courtesy the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum)

Toshiko Takaezu: Worlds Within

Find your way through a train-deserted, low-lying, still-industrial section of the Astoria waterfront and you'll be rewarded with a shady oasis studded with the quietly elegant stone sculptures of Isamu Noguchi. Inside, the museum will guide you through a 200-work chronological survey of the life and work of late Japanese-American artist Toshiko Takaezu, who embodies the museum's namesake with works that seem to quiver with the energy of unseen frequencies. On view are functional wares, acrylic paintings, weavings, large-scale sculptures, and ceramics glazed with hues ranging from twilit gradients to a cobalt so stunningly severe you'll forget every other blue you've ever seen.

The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum (noguchi.org)
9-01 33rd Road, Astoria, Queens
Through July 28

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Archibald J. Motley, Jr., "The Picnic" (1936), oil on canvas, 30 x 36 inches

© Estate of Archibald John Motley Jr. All reserved rights 2023 / Bridgeman Images; image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo by Juan Trujillo, courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism

A couple in nape-to-ankle fur beside a slickly gorgeous limited-edition Cadillac V-16 on a brownstone-lined street; a woman so deeply lost in rollicking music that she swoons backward, trumpets blaring behind her; a group of friends in a verdant park, sipping wine and smoking cigarettes while a curious dog looks on, the summer sun making everything feel a little brighter than life. All of that is only a ride on the M2 bus — and a little bit of imagination — away, at the Met Museum's *Harlem Renaissance* exhibition, which draws together artworks by James Van Der Zee, William H. Johnson, Archibald J. Motley, Jr., and so many others. Savor the treat of this show that slows the pulse, reminds us that the city is an organic, ever-changing thing, fed so richly by generations of art. Then wind your way up to the Met's rooftop where Kosovo-born artist Petrit Halilaj graffiti's the city's skyline with gargantuan line-drawing sculptures of spiders, pigeons, and angels.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art (metmuseum.org)
1000 5th Avenue, Upper East Side, Manhattan
Through July 28

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Installation view of Roger Ferney-Cortés, "Johny Paleta" (2024), mixed media
(photo by Stefan Hagen, courtesy the artist and Wave Hill)

Ruben Natal-San Miguel: *Nature Finds a Way*, Katherine Sepúlveda: *Halloween House*, and Roger Ferney-Cortés: *Johny Paleta*

Lush greenery climbs the grid of a pergola before river views amid that most precious of city assets, *space* — 28 acres of it — a short walk from the northern end of the 1 train in the Bronx. The pell-mell pieces of Roger Ferney-Cortés's installation reflect the wide-open spaces of Wave Hill's sunroom. The *paletero*, or ice cream cart, centerpiece makes the experience all the sweeter. The Bronx pride runs deep here — it's literally tattooed across the back of a beachgoer in one of Ruben Natal-San Miguel's photos, and a Yankees sticker can be spotted among the bright pink kaleidoscopic altar of Katherine Sepúlveda's standalone house structure, alongside neon crucifixes, bottles of Jose Cuervo tequila, cookbooks, photographs, and so much more.

Wave Hill (wavehill.org)
4900 Independence Avenue, Riverdale, Bronx
Through August 4, August 11, and August 11

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Installation view of Amalia Mesa-Bains, "Venus Envy Chapter I: First Holy Communion, Moments Before the End" (1993/2022)
(photograph by Matthew Sherman, courtesy El Museo del Barrio)

Amalia Mesa-Bains: Archaeology of Memory

A spiritual summer seems to be in the cards for the art world. At El Museo del Barrio in Spanish Harlem, intricate ritual altar installations enfold you in Amalia Mesa-Bains's sensuous retrospective. Figurines, eggs, and votive candles are arranged on a stainless steel cart, surrounded by lavender; a goddess figure lounges before a massive bejeweled hand mirror on moss-green carpet; a corner installation made of diaphanous fabrics shimmers like a vision.

El Museo del Barrio (elmuseo.org)
1230 5th Avenue, East Harlem, Manhattan
Through August 11

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Installation view of Javier Téllez, "Charlie don't surf" (2024), derby bowler hat, Cavalry hat, sunglasses, metal handcuff, bamboo cane, artificial hair, Fabriano paper, cardboard, 57 x 50 x 50 inches (photo by Kris Graves, courtesy Center for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA))

Javier Téllez: Amerika

Along the edges of a sidewalk-like concrete floor, blank black posters held up by boot-wearing poles lean against the wall like sheepish figures trying to hide from sight. At the center of another wall, the chain that connects twin poles like a sidewalk barrier reveals itself as handcuffs, and bowler hats and sunglasses mark these posts as figures who stare unabashedly back. The iconic mustache on one signals its referent: In "Amerika" (2024), a film that plays in the next room, Téllez casts Venezuelan refugees living in New York to reenact scenes from classic Charlie Chaplin movies, extending the actor and human rights advocate's sociopolitical critique to our treatment of immigrants in our own city.

Center for Art, Research and Alliances (cara-nyc.org)
225 West 13th Street, West Village, Manhattan
Through August 11

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Paul McCartney, "George Harrison. Miami Beach, February 1964" (1964), chromogenic print
(© 1964 Paul McCartney under exclusive license to MPL Archive LLP; courtesy the Brooklyn Museum)

Paul McCartney Photographs 1963–64: Eyes of the Storm

A different kind of fervor can be found with a ride straight down to Brooklyn: Fans reach past barriers, line awnings at the Miami Airport, and chase their hero down 6th Avenue in photographs at this exhibition celebrating the cult of Beatle Paul McCartney. But these aren't just homages to celebrity — the photos were all taken by McCartney himself, and they convey his self-conscious explorations of that status. Among the standouts are a blurry self-portrait taken above the dresser in what is likely one in an endless string of hotels; a shot in which John Lennon meets the gaze of McCartney's lens with a melancholic expression; and a fun photo of George Harrison poolside, looking like he just stepped out of the East Village with a shaggy haircut and wrap-around sunglasses, being handed a cold drink by a bikini-clad woman.

The Brooklyn Museum (brooklynmuseum.org)
200 Eastern Parkway, Crown Heights, Brooklyn
Through August 18

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Suchitra Mattai, "becoming" (2024) (photo by Scott Lynch, courtesy Socrates Sculpture Park)

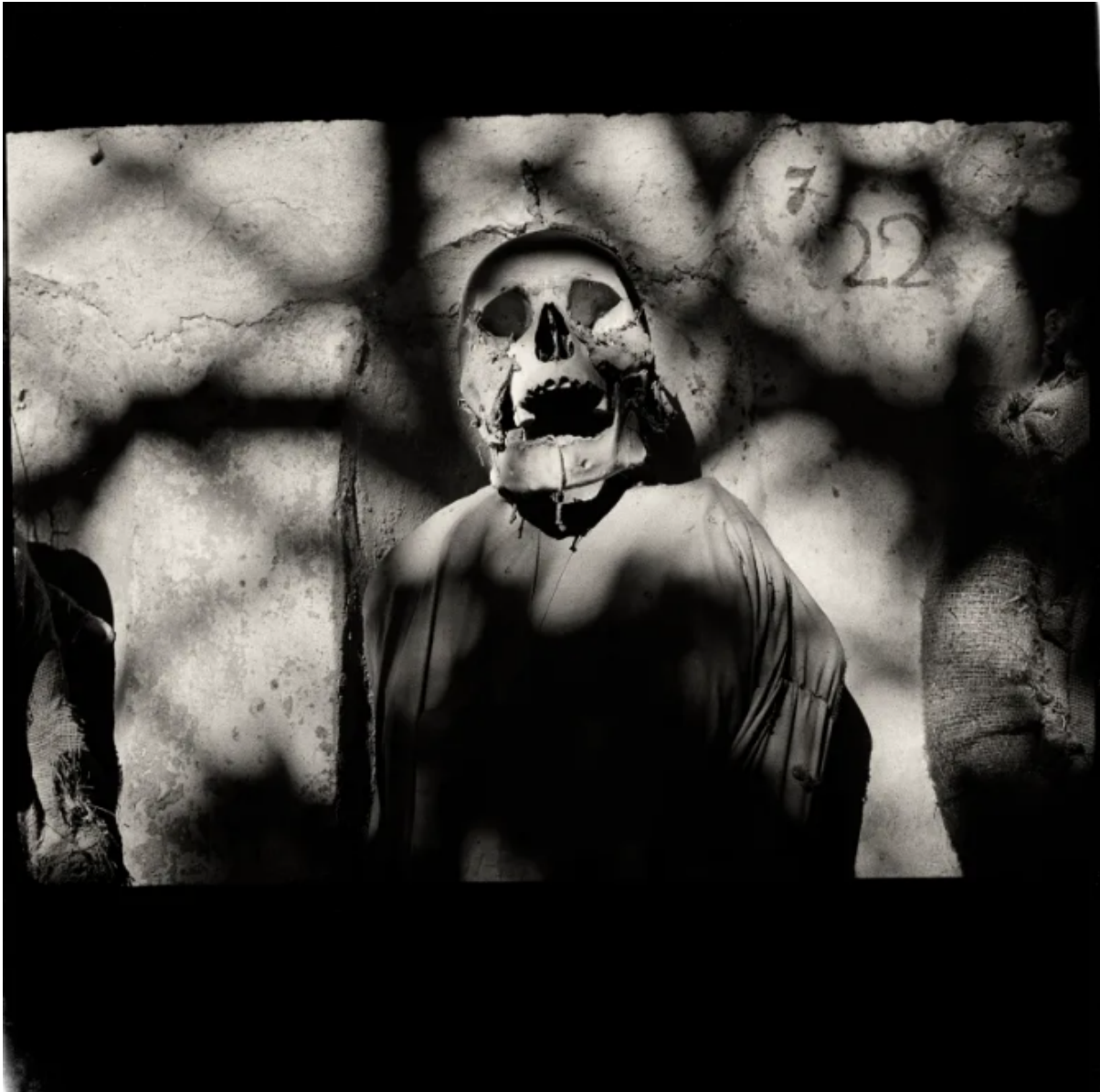
Suchitra Mattai: We are nomads, we are dreamers

Socrates Sculpture Park is yet another underrated green space in the city, with sculptures that erupt vertiginously from tufts of grass along undeveloped waterfront. Beautiful as they are — shiny fabrics ripple in wave formations around their sides — Suchitra Mattai's sculptures are grotesque as well: Their mirrored surfaces reflect sunlight like warning beacons, and their black bases appear as if twisted uncomfortably out of their own skin. Inspired by the East River's passage into the Atlantic Ocean, host to myriad migration journeys including that of Mattai's family, the sculptures recall topographical masses on a slow course, embodying both the promise of new possibilities and the threats of such collisions.

Socrates Sculpture Park (socratessculpturepark.org)
32-01 Vernon Boulevard, Astoria, Queens
Through August 24

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Peter Hujar, "Palermo Catacombs #1" (1963)

(© The Peter Hujar Archive - Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY; courtesy the Ukrainian Museum)

Peter Hujar: Rialto

This exhibition brings us back to a time long ago, when Peter Hujar's studio was centered in what is now a cinema in the East Village. Seventy-five of his earliest photographs are on view here, showcasing his idiosyncratic eye. In one from the Palermo catacombs, for instance, sunlight dapples a skull that rears upward, as if seeking salvation.

The Ukrainian Museum (theukrainianmuseum.org)
222 East 6th Street, East Village, Manhattan
Through September 1

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Robert Padovano, "Silvercup Sunset II" (2019), acrylic on canvas, 22 x 28 inches (courtesy the artist)

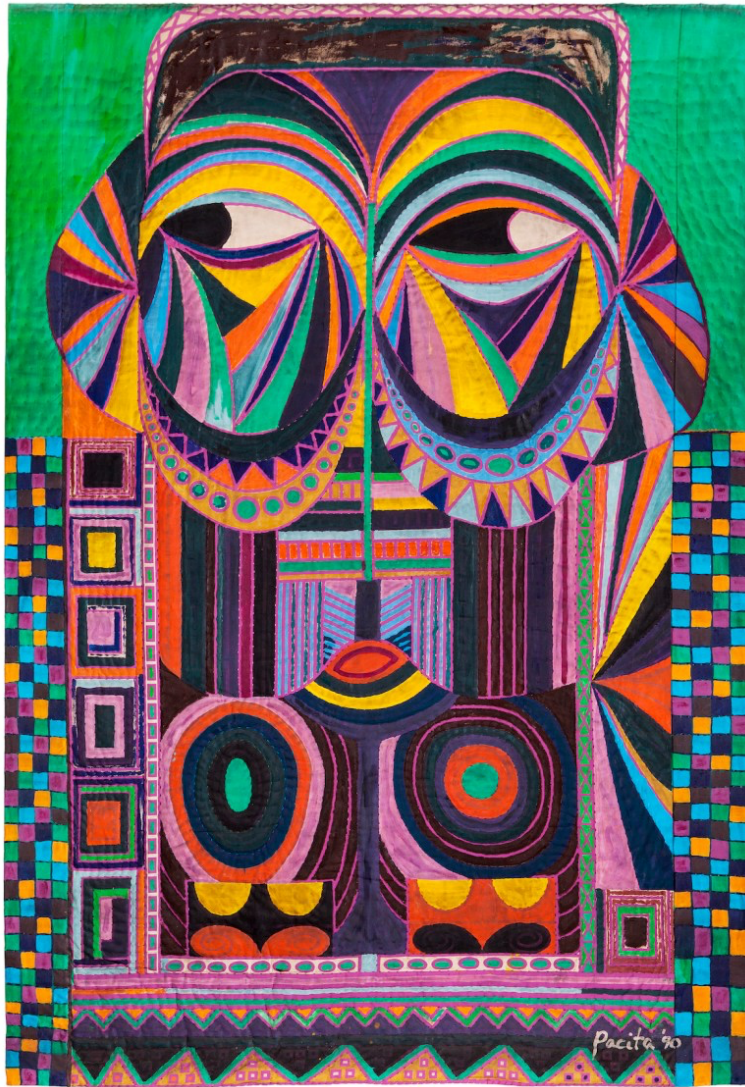
The Sea, the City, & the Golden Hour: Impressionist Maritime and Urban Landscapes by Robert Padovano

The 7 train tilting around the precarious bend behind Silvercup Studios, headlights blaring, is a sight close to my own heart. Robert Podavano captures such in-between moments in acrylic paintings at the Noble Maritime Collection, typically pictured at dusk, as day blends into night. Two ships meet at the marina, one prow pitching conspiratorially upward, as if sharing a juicy secret with a friend; a quiet residential street, its flags limp after a long day; passengers engrossed in their own worlds, ignorant to the golden hour sun setting them ablaze — these paintings rekindled an aching love in me for this city of close strangers.

The Noble Maritime Collection (noblemaritime.org)
1000 Richmond Terrace, New Brighton, Staten Island
Through September 1

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Pacita Abad, "European Mask" (1990), acrylic, silkscreen, thread on canvas (photo by At Maculangan/Pioneer Studios; courtesy Pacita Abad Art Estate and Tate)

Pacita Abad

Pacita Abad was born in the Philippines, but traveled everywhere: Across a three-decade career, she spent time in the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Kenya, and other locales. You can see this in her MoMA PS1 survey: Chinese and Spanish silk, Mindanao beads, Yakan cloth, and so many other materials picked up on her journeys weave themselves into her work, and her sense of personal obligation to the systematically oppressed infuses her subjects. You'll want to wrap her *trapuntos* – a term she adapted for her plush, quilted paintings – around you to be held by their tenderness of vision.

MoMA PS1 (momaps1.org)
22-25 Jackson Avenue, Long Island City, Queens
Through September 2

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Installation view of Isaac Julien, "Lessons of the Hour" (photo by Emile Askey, courtesy the Museum of Modern Art)

LaToya Ruby Frazier: Monuments of Solidarity and Isaac Julien: Lessons of the Hour

LaToya Ruby Frazier and Isaac Julien both resuscitate forgotten narratives in separate exhibitions at MoMA. Julien probes, and sometimes undermines, abolitionist Frederick Douglass's optimistic belief in photography to dispel racist tropes; by naming his 10-channel video "Lessons of the Hour" (2019) after Douglass's speech of the same name, he suggests that that hour of reckoning, nearly 200 years later, still isn't up. Frazier's exhibition seeks to redress similar lacunae in the historical narrative of her hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania, and other Midwestern cities fraught with racial and economic oppression, through photographs whose subjects range from her family to industrial sites and workers in the Rust Belt.

The Museum of Modern Art (moma.org)
11 West 53rd Street, Midtown East, Manhattan
Through September 7 and September 28

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Detail of Diamond Stingily, "Window 1" (2024) (© Diamond Stingily; courtesy the artist and 52 Walker)

Diamond Stingily: Orgasms Happened Here

If you want to (psychologically) escape the grind of the city, why not do so to a place temporarily entitled "Orgasms Happened Here"? Diamond Stingily has transformed 52 Walker gallery with site-specific architectural elements that suggest the moments of privacy, curiosity, whimsy, and longing stolen in various spaces of American suburbia: The soldered intersection of a stained glass windowpane, for instance, suggests to me a detail fixated upon during a daydream at a church sermon. The name of the exhibition is drawn from a post-it note Stingily's brother found above a closet door when they moved into their childhood home: a declaration of presence, of pleasure. We should all take note.

52 Walker ([52walker.com](https://www.52walker.com))

52 Walker St, TriBeCa, Manhattan

Through September 14

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Frank Walter, "Untitled (Black bird in tree)" (undated), oil on biocomposite material, 7 5/8 inches in diameter (image courtesy the Walter Family)

Frank Walter: To Capture a Soul

The late Antiguan artist Frank Walter was one of those obsessive makers who seemed to subsume whatever was at hand into his expressive thinking: paper, cardboard, even the backs of polaroids. The enigmatic works on view include portraits, abstracted landscapes, and genealogical charts with mysterious glyphs, though his body of almost 10,000 objects is nearly impossibly wide-ranging. He detailed his almost compulsive need to create in a 1994 poem entitled "Death and the Universe": "I am obliged," he wrote, "by what I may perceive."

The Drawing Center (drawingcenter.org)
35 Wooster Street, SoHo, Manhattan
Through September 15

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Lyle Ashton Harris, "Brotherhood, Crossroads and Etcetera #2 [in collaboration with Thomas Allen Harris]" (1994), polaroid
25 x 20 inches (image courtesy the Queens Museum)

Lyle Ashton Harris: Our first and last love

Two lovers kissing while one presses the long barrel of a gun into the fleshy sternum of the other; a dark-skinned man in odalisque-esque repose atop a wooden shelf, wearing a shell-trimmed African mask – Lyle Ashton Harris's distinct visual vernacular weaponizes the element of surprise. His show at the Queens Museum spans his 35-year practice, incorporating both the works that brought him acclaim and others that fill in the gaps to reading his work. Across these photographs and installations, Harris layers the material of identity formation, including cultural objects such as Ghanaian funerary textiles, handwritten notes, and his own hair.

Queens Museum (queensmuseum.org)
Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Corona, Queens
Through September 22

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Installation view of Rose B. Simpson, "Seed" (2024) (photo by Elisabeth Bernstein, courtesy Madison Square Park Conservancy)

Rose B. Simpson: Seed

Brave the navy-vested finance bros known to menace the area and you'll find Rose B. Simpson's towering steel-and-bronze sentinels in a protective ring around a sculpture of a woman who seems to rise up among leafy plants at Madison Square Park. But I recommend a trip uptown to fully experience these works. Inwood Hill Park is also known as Shorakapkok Preserve – or "the sitting place," in the Munsee language of the Wecquaesgeek, who called the area home for seven centuries. Sit for a moment with these eight-foot-tall sculptures; think upon the land, our interventions, our place.

Madison Square Park Conservancy (madisonsquarepark.org)
Madison Square Park, 11 Madison Avenue, Chelsea, Manhattan
Inwood Hill Park, Payson Avenue and Seaman Avenue
Through September 22

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