

The 10 Best Art Shows of the Year

By [Jerry Saltz](#) Published Dec 8, 2013



Mike Kelley's 'Deodorized Central Mass With Satellites' (1991-99).

(Photo: Joshua White/Courtesy of Perry Rubenstein Gallery, Los Angeles. © Estate of Mike Kelley.)

1. “Come Together: Surviving Sandy, Year 1”

Curated by Phong Bui

I call birdbrained-bullshit on all those who snip that New York is a pure trading floor, one that’s lost its place as a nexus of artistic activity. Every inch of “Come Together: Surviving Sandy, Year 1” organized by *Brooklyn Rail* publisher Phong Bui—a show of 627 works by nearly 250 local artists in a spectacular

setting—gives the lie to this idiotic swipe. With well-known names but mainly lesser-known local artists, this exhibition verified that New York is as alive and brilliant as ever. Maybe more so, with artists spread out into all the boroughs, living poor but with style. Which is one of the foundational conditions of any great indigenous art scene. Naysayers, get out into the fray or stay home and stay silly.

2. Mike Kelley

At MoMA PS1

There are few young artists who don’t owe the late Mike Kelley some gratitude. This building-filling show proves that he remains the rare talent who could fill up PS1 and still make you want more. You are missed, Mike Kelley. You didn’t have to do it.

3. *Boxer at Rest*

At the Metropolitan Museum of Art

This astounding Hellenistic bronze masterpiece, briefly lent and shown in the long main hall of the Met’s Greek and Roman wing, struck me dumb the first time I saw it. Everything within me collapsed. I beheld some ultimate rendition of humanity, immeasurable depths, mysteries.

4. Carol Bove, “RA, or Why Is an Orange Like a Bell?” and “Qor Corporation: Lionel Ziprin, Harry Smith and the Inner Language of Laminates”

At Maccarone (organized with Philip Smith)

This excellent artist didn't sound an artistic off-note in either of her simultaneous gallery shows (or in her "MoMA Project," also up this summer). In "Qor," Bove co-curated the work of an overlooked cabal of shamanic artists; in "RA," which was all her own, she gave us something worthy of a MacArthur.

5. Lucy Dodd

At David Lewis Gallery

This 32-year-old pulled off the super-rare feat of making two of the ten best solo shows I saw this year. First, in an Upper East Side townhouse, she showed a handful of huge abstract paintings that looked like caviar organizing itself into knowable patterns of communication. Then, in her current outing, her speckled, stained, and splotched paintings sing the body mysterious. I spy a great talent in the offing; also maybe a great gallery.

6. Ragnar Kjartansson, "A Lot of Sorrow" and "The Visitors"

At MoMA PS1 and Luhring Augustine

This Icelander showed himself master of the razor-thin world between sincerity and irony—a new place for emotion, maybe called ironerity or sinrony.

Unspooling this space, he gave us the National performing "Sorrow" for six hours straight until bliss erupted; in his gallery exhibition, he showed us what the artist Laurie Simmons has called "the music of regret."

7. Eleanor Ray

At Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects

When I stumbled on the small oil paintings of this very young artist at this tiny Lower East Side gallery, I gleaned what might be the power of the conservative. Figuration, older ideas about space, surface, and paint in intimate interiors, street scenes, and winter landscapes—all evince delicate touch, acute eye, and quiet power.

8. Larry Bamburg

At Simone Subal

Mobiles made of bird bones, terrariums with living logs with crafted porcelain "wood," mushroom ecosystems growing on grafted bark in vitrines with nearly 100 percent humidity: This artist's ideas of unusual materials, form, space, and coloration make him a sculptor-chemist to be reckoned with. This gallery has some of that wild alchemy, too.

9. Katherine Bernhardt

At the Hole

The art world digs guys who paint big, gestural, and figurative. Not so much the women who do it. Enter the always unruly Katherine Bernhardt, who's been wowing me with her wild-style painting for ten years. Here, she teamed up with her Moroccan rug-dealer husband to create a cross between great painting and the Casbah.

10. In the Affirming Spirit of "Surviving Sandy," Seven Artists and

Events That Made New York Great This Year

Thomas Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument*; Trisha Baga at Greene Naftali and the Whitney; William Copley and Bjarne Melgaard at Venus Over Manhattan; [Trisha Donnelly at MoMA](#) and Rosemarie Trockel at the New Museum, lingering from the end of 2012; and Banksy's month of art in New York. Just kidding about that last one.