

### FRIEZE FORECAST: ARTISTS OPT TO EITHER PLY ANCIENT TRADITIONS OR EXPLORE THE OUTER REALMS OF THE FUTURE

by Svetlana Kitto



Jeremy Frey, *Loon* (2015), *Permanence*, (2023), and *Aura* (2023). Courtesy of the artist and Karma.

With Frieze week upon us, art amateurs and cognoscenti alike will be looking to see what styles and concepts are emanating from the New York City art scene. Historically, the fairs have been a reliable barometer; this time around, they match what's on at major Manhattan institutions—and diversity in all senses is the name of the game.

Four women artists currently have major museum shows—Wangechi Mutu at the New Museum, Sarah Sze at the Guggenheim, Georgia O'Keeffe at MoMa, and Cecily Brown at the Met—a showcase of identity, ideology, and practice that has been historically sidelined in the art world. The gloriously diverse visions of two of the four, Mutu and Sze, set a tone for the city at large, working, as they do, in surrealism, science fiction, futurism, spirituality, ritual, hapticality, and temporality. From this swath of modes, we can tease out a cluster of related themes that is presently bouncing all over the New York scene: celebration of craft and hapticality, spirituality and a return to ritual, and new mythologies and world-building. This overview of gallery shows and fair presentations articulates a picture of the New York City art scene in this moment.

Across the city, craft objects of all kinds—ceramics, textile, sculpture, assemblage—tell stories of touch and tradition, engaging in practices largely sidelined in art history. At NADA New York (May 18–21), Rebecca Camacho Presents will show delicately rendered copper-wire sculptures in the form of butterflies and chains by ektor garcia, and Maria Herwald Hermann's boldly colored, impeccably hewn ceramic sculptures that reframe our relationship to domestic objects and everyday life. "There is a tactile, mark-of-hand thread that connects all the work," Camacho says of all six artists in her presentation for NADA.

Over at Karma in the East Village, Jeremy Frey's handwoven baskets (on view in the solo "Out of the Woods" through June 17) also engage an intimate and culturally rich handiwork, drawing on indigenous traditions local to the Wabanaki of the northeastern United States. In its first presentation at Frieze New York, which bows at the Shed May 18–21, is welcoming first-time participants including, Silverlens of New York and Manila, which will showcase

work by Carlos Villa (1936—2013), a Filipino-American artist, activist, and beloved professor whose feathered coats and dynamic, swirling drawings draw on a diverse roster of non-Western ethnic traditions references such as Aboriginal feathered sandals and the patterns of Tapa cloth.

This turn towards craft is akin to another kind of return: to ritual and spiritual modes of problem-solving. “There’s a lot of interest out there in spirituality, the occult, and astronomy—I think because we’ve just run out of solutions for the world ending,” says independent curator Ksenia M. Soboleva. Spiritual investigation and mystical play abound in “Schema: World as Diagram” at Marlborough Gallery, which opened last week in Chelsea and runs through August 15. Organized by Raphael Rubinstein and Heather Bause Rubinstein, this survey explores diagrammatic ways of thinking in visual art. Over 50 artists are sourced from a number of eras, many of whose work feels extraordinarily in line with their peers of today.

Alan Davie’s brightly hued *The Studio No. 37* from (1975) borrows symbols from a multitude of religions and cultures, such as the mandala and the ankh, to conjure “mysterious and spiritual forces normally beyond our apprehension.” The collective Hilma’s Ghost work to extend Hilma af Klint’s spiritual vision into the 21st century by creating drawings, a Tarot deck, prints, and here, a geometric painting that celebrate the artist through feminist and mystical ritual. Two incredibly detailed Nineties 1990s works by Paul Laffoley mix science, Christian iconography, Buddhist mandalas, and William Blake, all recasting reality through the artist’s visionary lens.

Further downtown in Tribeca, Bortolami has unveiled a presentation of Joe Ray—one of the few Black practitioners from the Light and Space movement—explores the cosmos in his show “Inside Out” (on view through June 17). His “Nebula” paintings, an ongoing series of intergalactic landscapes that he started in the 1970s, composed of aerosol and resin, suggest a melding of inner and outer space, as well as Afrofuturist possibilities.

Futurism and new worlds and mythologies also seems to be on top of the mind for young artists, many of whom are working in an almost narrative mode, creating new mythologies and building new worlds. As part of Frieze New York, David Kordansky will present works relating to Lauren Halsey’s current installation on the Met Museum’s rooftop, the eastside of south central los angeles hieroglyph prototype architecture (I). The stone face of the monument, which references the museum’s Temple of Dendur and Egyptian wing, is replete with images of the Watts Towers, graffiti, protest slogans, and other signs of Black urban life and Afrofuturism. Halsey opts for a new suite of digital collages and gypsum-based engravings for Frieze.

As is evident across the city, artists are creating new universes for us to live in, says Lubov gallery owner Francisco Correo Cordeo. “There’s a lot of imagining what the future is going to look like,” he says, “as well as the different versions of the future that can happen depending on what we do right now.”