

ART REVIEWS

2 Art Gallery Shows to Explore From Home

Galleries and museums are getting creative about presenting work online during the coronavirus crisis. Here are some shows worth viewing virtually.

By **Jillian Steinhauer and Jason Farago**

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‘How Can We Think of Art at a Time Like This?’

Ongoing; artatatimelikethis.com.

The title of this online exhibition is a question I’ve been asking myself the last few weeks. A pandemic rages; people are dying — who cares about virtual viewing rooms?

And yet, culture is sustaining many of us as we stay home and try to ward off anxiety and dread. It offers comfort and distraction, and can help us feel less alone.

What I like about “How Can We Think of Art at a Time Like This?” is that it’s less of a definitive statement about this challenging time and more of an open-ended platform. Its curators, Barbara Pollack (who has written for The New York Times) and Anne Verhallen, have invited artists to submit images of relevant, though not necessarily new, work as well as an accompanying statement. A new entry has been posted every day since March 17. The process gives us a glimpse of how others respond creatively to crisis.



A detail of Amir H. Fallah's "Delusion and Confusion" (2019). Amir H. Fallah and Denny Dimin Gallery

Highlights so far include Lynn Hershman Leeson's hauntingly prescient video "Seduction of a Cyborg" (1996); Deborah Kass's "Emergency" (2019), which marries Modernist monochromes and neon signage to sound the alarm; and Miao Ying's "Hardcore Digital Detox" (2018), an interactive web collage that wryly comments on censorship and privacy. Amir H. Fallah's paintings of cloaked figures in sumptuous interiors celebrate the possibilities of domesticity. Dread Scott and Jenny Polak shared a digital sketch that reads "Redistribute Health" alongside a list of principles and calls to action for surviving Covid-19. Art ranks 36th — necessary, they allow, but not the most important thing.

JILLIAN STEINHAUER

'The Inaugural Exhibition'

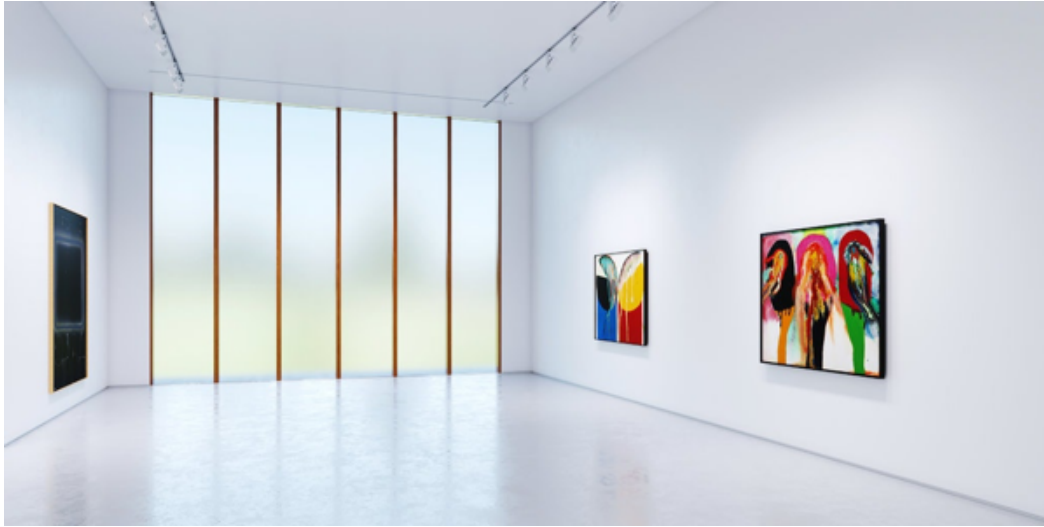
Through April 15. Fergus McCaffrey; exclusively online at fergusmccaffrey.com.



An installation view of Fergus McCaffrey's inaugural virtual display. From left, Marcia Hafif's "Black Painting: Ultramarine Blue, Burnt Umber I" (1979), and four sculptures by Barry X Ball: "Sleeping Hermaphrodite" (2008-2017), "Purity" (2008-2019), "Envy" (2008-2019) and "Saint Bartholomew Flayed (Body+Skin)" (2011-2020). Barry X Ball/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Marcia Hafif and Fergus McCaffrey

Fergus McCaffrey's principal location is in Chelsea, though the gallery also has outposts in Tokyo and on the French Caribbean island of St. Barts. (Now more than ever, I am thinking St. Barts needs an art critic in residence.) Just recently McCaffrey opened a "fourth location," called FM Virtual, that places paintings and sculptures in an architectural rendering that will remind you of real estate and interior design websites. In a curious blend of the concrete and the dreamlike, McCaffrey has promoted the digital effort as a "near-physical 3,600-square-foot gallery space" with "warm 24-hour north/south facing natural light."

I had trouble getting FM Virtual to load in my Chrome browser, though it started without incident in Safari, both on desktop and on mobile. Eventually I found its first show, which places strenuous paintings by Sadamasa Motonaga, Martha Jungwirth and Marcia Hafif, along with punk-classical sculptures by Barry X Ball, within an enfilade of "galleries" styled to please art lovers worldwide: white walls, frosted glass. These are not photographs of an exhibition, but renderings in which scans of the artworks can be plopped. Mr. Ball's "Saint Bartholomew Flayed," for example, an 8-foot-tall statue of the skinned saint in red striated marble, is actually installed at the moment at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas.



A gallery of works by Sadamasa Motonaga includes, from left, “Big Square of Gray” (1981); “Sakuhin C” (1966); and “Untitled” (1965). Sadamasa Motonaga and Fergus McCaffrey

The renderings-in-space are handsome, and I admit it’s nifty that the gallery can now “show” the same sculpture or painting in multiple circumstances. But these are ultimately insufficient; while you can pivot 360 degrees around a set vantage point in each room, you can’t scrutinize the sculptures from all the angles you’d like. The presentation also lacks proper documentation of each individual work, and does not permit you to zoom in with anything like the closeness you’d want before dropping more than \$2 million sight unseen on Motonaga’s abstract composition of drippy ellipses.

I can complain more about glitches, but those are venial problems. The real question is: Who is this for? Ahead of exhibitions or fairs, galleries routinely send their best clients a PDF of works for sale, from which collectors can plan their attack. If a gallery’s “virtual experience” is to be nothing more than the sales PDF translated into a Corcoran walk-through, better to spend the money on research.

JASON FARAGO

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