

# TOO MUCH TO WORRY ABOUT

LOWER EAST SIDE ROUNDUP  
VARIOUS VENUES  
MARCH – APRIL 2020

Many years ago, I travelled to the Louisiana swamps, down past Morgan City to the part where the state dissolves into the sea like a patchy monoprint. The skies were broody and the swamps were furred over with late summer’s algal blooms, a startling, shocking chartreuse that looked almost solid. But what I remember most is the carpet of corpses of the armoured black grasshoppers known as “Eastern Lubbers” or more evocatively, “cheval diable” and “graveyard grasshoppers”. Locals had sprayed the day before; I imagined them falling out of the sky, even as I later learned that their massive size – four

inches – meant that they couldn’t fly, only clumsily hop.

Driving back to New Orleans that evening in a heavy downpour, we heard the Fugees’ “Killing me Softly” no less than four times on four different radio stations. As we stocked up and boarded ourselves in for Hurricane Isaac a week or so afterwards, followed by Sandy a couple months later when I was back in New York, the whole day took on an ominous timbre. I can’t stop thinking of it now as I inhale coronavirus articles and updates and all those videos of people suddenly fainting, keeling over, collapsing in the street.

The mood in New York is one of apprehension rather than all-out fear. The mayor has declared a state of emergency and theatres, concert venues, and major museums have all announced temporary closures in what sounds an awful lot like the revenge of post-internet art. There is talk of mutual aid, of forming emergency relief funds to support precarious artists, adjuncts, and sex workers who are especially affected by closed universities and cancelled gigs. But galleries remain open – at the time of writing – and all the art



Scott Reeder, *Bread & Butter (Beach)*, 2019  
Acrylic and oil on canvas  
76 x 102 cm

people I know seem more interested in stocking up on wine than wet wipes.

Earlier today, I saw a tweet about the virus go viral, with no recognition of the inherent irony involved; it said *today was like “if we didn’t start the fire” was a day*. American artist Jeanette Mundt provided an analogue with a suite of somewhat anodyne paintings at Company featuring archetypes of various genres (the nude, the landscape, and so on) licked with flames. Rather more interesting was the wall treatment behind them, a suede-like length of fabric that may have been a literal red carpet. The total effect was intriguingly redolent of Austrian Airlines, but the title of the show reminded us that it was all “Still American.”

Much more incendiary were Jana Euler’s painted and sculptural gastropods at Artists Space’s new location. A duo of paintings loom over a stairwell, all rusty orange and intestinal furrows, each with a pair of antennae peeking over the painting’s edge. Inside, it’s Cirque du Slug, with stuffed, painted linen molluscs twirling like aerialists around austere, fluted columns, their forms mirroring the high red pipes in the space. Other distended specimens – there’s real postprandial uncle energy – can be found strapped halfway up a column, or comfortably slumped on the floor. A theme emerges: funny, weird, wonderful sculptures that outshine the *fine* but snoozy paintings that accompany them. Hung on one end of the long gallery are six canvases mostly featuring human men coiled and contorted to fit the frame, as if crammed into a cube or crawl space; they seem to be all fingers and toes. On some, the skin is preternaturally smooth enough to suggest airbrushing, overlaid with finely detailed hair: a textural contrast that invokes a mild visceral reaction, but the canvases still feel like saleable afterthoughts.

The fugal subject continues in Scott Reeder’s show *Didactic Sunset* at CANADA, in its new Tribeca location, where it has been joined by Chelsea emigres Andrew Kreps and James

Courtesy of Canada, New York



Photo: Daniel Pérez. Courtesy of Artists Space, New York

Jana Euler, *Unstretched, bound outside, outside mission*, 2020  
Acrylic on linen, bubble wrap, ratchet strap, chicken wire, dimensions variable  
Installation view, “Unform”, Artists Space

Cohan. The latter has a real stunner of a Tuan Andrew Nguyen show about Vietnamese-Pinoy boat people in their Chinatown location; at Bortolami, Rebecca Morris’s gilded grids are lovely too. Other Tribeca highlights include a Jonas de Andrade film at Alexander

and Bonin that extends the artist’s interest in language (in this case, sign language) and opacity to a tiny Brazilian town with a large deaf community.

Let’s return to “the midwestern Magritte,” as the press release rather bombastically calls Reeder, though. There’s

something quite pleasing about his flat pastel-coloured scenes featuring bread and a block of butter on a day out at the beach, or having a therapy session. Other paintings swap in fruit characters – a pear, a banana, some grapes – to canoodle in various configurations as another banana jealously peers through a window. Particularly delightful is a scene featuring the bunch of grapes on the therapist’s couch. Stray grapes roll onto the floor and into the foreground: it seems to be coming undone. But it’s an installation of assorted ceramic objects crowded onto a raised rectangular platform that really resonates. Beer bottles, snacks in a bowl, half a sub sandwich, a skateboard, a bong, a mic, some bongos, a trumpet – all the ingredients for a third-wave ska band, really – join a handheld mirror, mushrooms, oysters, pills, slippers, a chess set, leaves, and so many other objects that really speak to this moment of crammed minds and crammed cupboards, of photosynthesising by the light of our phones, like the droopy sunflowers in another Reeder painting.

Further east lie other delights. At Bridget Donahue, the profusion of Susan Ciancolo’s colourful more-is-more fabric and fashion illustration and occasional botanicals collages totally overwhelm. One longs for a more edited presentation, but they do enchant if you can manage to focus in on individual works, but who can, with our synapses all so fried? At Simone Subal, Anna K. E. invokes hare hunting on a lonely Texan road, while David Lewis features recreations of John Boskovich’s legendary LA studio/residence/installation, another visual circuit overload.

Do you know that feeling when, upon returning from the gluten morgen regions of Europe – the parts where “gebacken” mysteriously means “breaded then obliterated in the deep fryer” – you feel a literal thirst for vegetables? I feel a visual version of the same now: there’s too much to see and process and worry about, and most of the shows up right now are



John Boskovich, "Psycho Salon" from "Boskostudio", David Lewis

Courtesy David Lewis, New York



View of Jana Euler, "Uniform", Artists Space



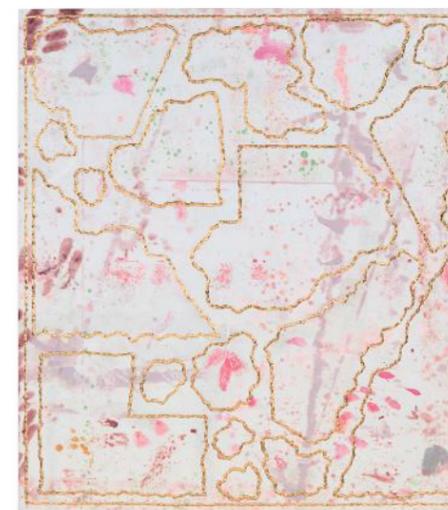
View of Janette Mundt "Still American", Company Gallery

Photo: Daniel Pérez. Image courtesy of Artists Space, New York



View of Anna K.E. and Florian Meisenberg, "Electric Forest (Bowery)", Simone Subal Gallery

Photo: Dario Lasagni. Image courtesy the artists and Simone Subal Gallery, New York



Rebecca Morris, *Untitled (#16-19)*, 2019, Oil and spray paint on canvas, 154 x 138 cm

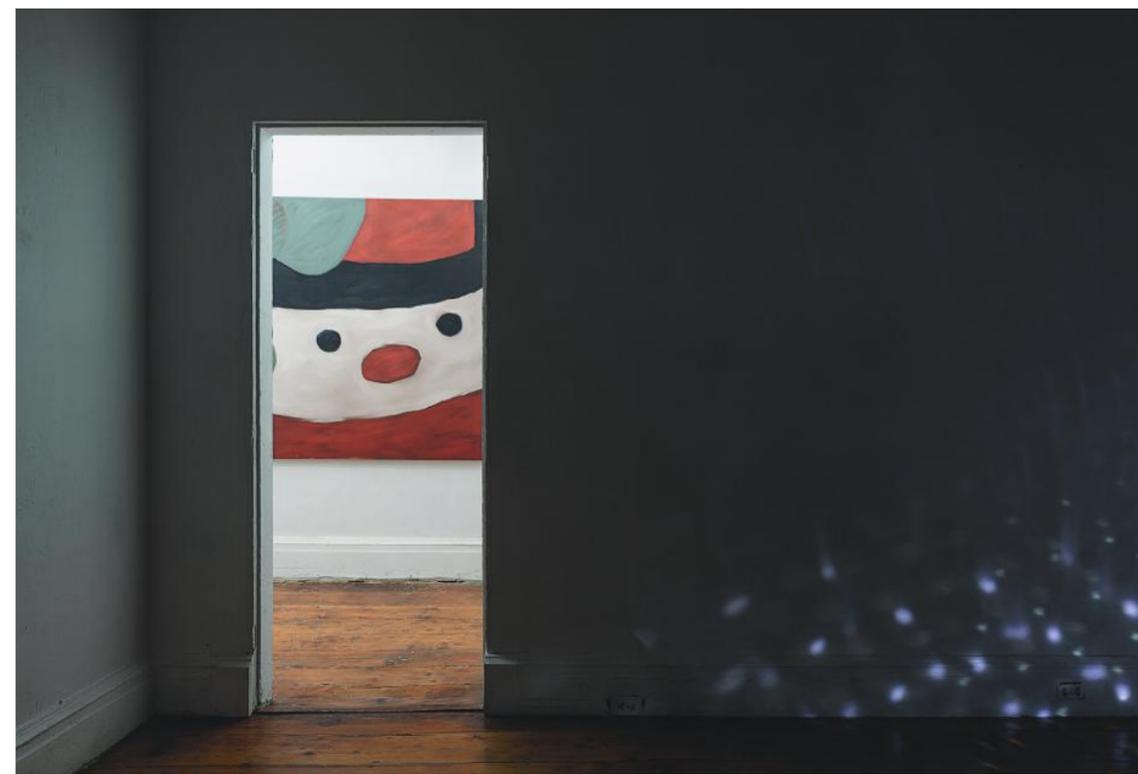
Courtesy the artist and Bortolami, New York

just adding to that. Only David Flaughter at Lomex provided some respite. I remember being charmed, all those years ago in New Orleans when the only things open were bars, one of which used their generator

not for cards despite the cash shortage, but to power the jukebox and cigarette vending machines. Here, there was somehow the same sense of soothing joy. Alcoves were hung with sweet snowman paintings

and the main gallery was dark, with lights simulating the snow that hasn't fallen all winter, or the dappled atmosphere of the third day of a hurricane.

**Rahel Aima**



View of David Flower, "Weekends and Holidays", Lomex