

# The New York Times

## 4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Alice Mackler's ceramic sculptures; Carol Bove's monumental works and tabletop pieces; Deborah Remington's drawings and paintings; and James Yaya Hough's drawings of prison life.

Alice Mackler makes her glazed ceramic figures — like this untitled 2020 example — through a process of improvisation. Credit... Alice Mackler and Kerry Schuss Gallery

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### **ALICE MACKLER**

Through June 19. Kerry Schuss Gallery, 73 Leonard Street, Manhattan. 212-219-9918; [kerryschussgallery.com](http://kerryschussgallery.com).

It took Alice Mackler six decades to break into the gallery scene. Born in 1931, she grew up in New York and New Jersey, studied at the Art Students League in the 1950s and later got a B.F.A. at the School of Visual Arts — because, as she recalls, a gallerist told her a degree would help her show. It didn't. But she kept at it, supporting herself with office jobs and painting and drawing on nights and weekends. She



mainly depicted the female form, drawing it with big, wiry loops surrounded by coronas of bright color.

In 1998, the year she retired, Mackler began making ceramics at Greenwich House Pottery, in the Village. There she also met the artist Joanne Greenbaum, who put her in a group show at James Fuentes Gallery and introduced her to Kerry Schuss, the gallerist who gave her a long-overdue New York solo debut in 2013.

The work in her latest outing with the gallery, nine sculptures accompanied by three small paintings, is her largest and most confident yet. There are two slender figures, one with his arm outstretched, that bring to mind Giacometti, and two exceedingly strange ceramic dioramas. Half-open boxes with faces on every surface, they're like little theaters of emotional turmoil. And of course there are several of the gestural, improvised characters she's become known for. A supine mermaid lifts her tail in an aquatic yoga pose; a jaunty little rooster boy, perched on a speckled rock, leans down and extends his wings as if finishing a magic trick. Comic but insightful, they're like psychological portraits of Mackler's own passing fancies. WILL HEINRICH

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## CAROL BOVE

Through June 19. David Zwirner, 537 West 20th Street and 34 East 69th Street, Manhattan. 212-727-2070; [davidzwirner.com](http://davidzwirner.com).

Carol Bove continues to mess with the mostly male history of postwar sculpture. The works from her "Chimes at Midnight" series, which form her sensational show in Chelsea, deftly layer references to Richard Serra's rusted hot-rolled steel, John Chamberlain's crumpled car bodies and Donald Judd's perfectionism as well as his signature color, cadmium red light, to name just the most obvious.

The show consists of seven tall sculptures in a room painted black — a grove of dolmens as it were, happened upon at night. The black enhances the works' contrast of raw and highly finished. Each combines three or four tall slices of battered, hot-rolled steel with a long column of stainless steel — softly dented, twisted and painted bright orange. The matte surfaces have a startling perfection that seems almost pliable, like fabric or flesh.

Bove's manipulations of previous sculptors' brands are homages of a sort. They also suggest her work as a kind of late 1980s Neo-Geo and early '80s appropriation art. They anoint her as an exemplar of postmodern formalism.

But while conceptually provocative, these works invite, if not demand, the same close looking as her exquisite early tabletop arrangements of small found and natural forms. For example, the bright orange elements of the Chimes pieces meet the floor in various ways; the steel plates' different smears of concrete, acidic erosion — not only suggest painting, but they also seem matched or opposed. The amount of visual information, and the constant tension between deliberate and random, create an intimacy unusual for monumental art.

Image

Installation view of “Carol Bove” at David Zwirner’s uptown gallery. The tabletop sculptures are “Monet Lavender” at foreground and “Tin Sunset” at back. Credit...David Zwirner; Maris Hutchinson

At Zwirner’s uptown gallery, nine tabletop sculptures contrast matte versus high-gloss pastels; crumpled versus smooth surfaces; defiled versus intact geometric forms. Most are mounted on pedestals or Judd-like tables. In a second room, two are displayed on actual Judd tables with a generic sofa, a Josef Albers painting and walls draped with rust-printed silk. It’s a soignée list of precedents, right down to Chamberlain’s parachute-covered, cut-foam couches. ROBERTA SMITH

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## DEBORAH REMINGTON

Through June 12. Bortolami, 39 Walker Street, Manhattan. 212-727-2050; [bortolamigallery.com](http://bortolamigallery.com).

Through July 30. Craig Starr Gallery, 5 East 73rd Street, Manhattan. 212-570-1739; [craigstarr.com](http://craigstarr.com)

Deborah Remington’s precisely composed, undefinable paintings are getting more attention these days. Lingering somewhere between abstraction and representation, industrial diagrams and popular illustration, their combination of forms look incredibly fresh. Two current shows — “Five Decades,” at Bortolami downtown, and “Early Drawings,” at Craig F. Starr uptown — focus on her work from the 1960s until a few years before her death in 2010.

Canvases like “Big Red” (1962), at Bortolami, show Remington dutifully creating abstract compositions, with a bold, muscular swagger. (One of her teachers was Clyfford Still, who was among the most uncompromising of the first-generation Abstract Expressionists.) Her stripped-down palette and dark hues echo Still and perhaps her distant relative, the Western painter Frederic Remington — but also the calligraphy she studied while living in Japan in the 1950s. Remington’s sketchbooks and drawings, often created with soot (on view at Craig F. Starr) move away from the gestural approach of “Big Red.” Instead, they resemble the darker, chillier Cold War-era work of Lee Bontecou or Lee Lozano.

Image

Installation view of “Deborah Remington: Five Decades” with “Dorset” (1972), left, and “Saratoga” (1972), right, at Bortolami Gallery. Credit...Bortolami; Kristian Laudrup

The mirror, a central motif of her work, appeared later in paintings like “Dorset” (1972) and “Saratoga” (1972), drawn with a flat, unexpressive application of paint that recalls ’60s Pop Art, the machine-paintings of Duchamp and Picabia and science fiction book covers.

Some of the later canvases also include what look like jagged metal or glass shards, as if something in the painting has blown apart at high impact. It’s a curious but surgically crafted mix. Looking at Remington’s paintings becomes an exercise of staring into the

void — or a deceptively painted mirror that hides its reflection: We never materialize, or actually see ourselves. MARTHA SCHWENDENER

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## JAMES YAYA HOUGH

Through June 11. JTT, 191 Chrystie Street, Manhattan. 212-574-8152; [jttnyc.com](http://jttnyc.com).

“Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” the landmark exhibition at MoMA PS1 organized by Nicole Fleetwood, presented over 40 artists (and more in her award-winning book of the same title) who grapple with the American obsession with putting people in prison — particularly poor, Black and brown people — and leaving them there. Many were incarcerated themselves; others had perspective as family members, advocates or documentarians.

James Yaya Hough’s mordant drawings of prison life were a highlight of the show. They are now the subject of a jarring yet tender solo exhibition, titled “Invisible Life,” at JTT gallery. They come from deep inside. The artist went to prison at 17, on a mandatory life sentence without parole, in Pennsylvania. He was released in 2019, after 27 years, during which time the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled such sentences for juveniles unconstitutional. He is working now at the hinge of art and criminal justice reform in his home state.

In ballpoint, pencil and watercolor, sometimes on the back of prison circulars, Hough’s visual language conveys with force and feeling both the deadening, procedural weight of a system that warehouses humans and the emotional particulars of the lives led within. One register is busy, surrealistic, grotesque: a Brobdingnagian nude woman swarmed with small figures in chaotic sexual poses; mummy-like forms, zippers up their thorax; body parts free-floating or severed; truncheons; bizarre machinery. In another mode, Hough offers quiet, empathetic character studies: Two men study at tables in a common area; a group in prison uniform gathers, out of scale, atop the building, two birds out of reach. His prison guards, too, wear their own kind of resignation — a reminder that this sinister system eats the soul of everyone involved. SIDDHARTHA MITTER