

10 BEST ART EXHIBITIONS OF 2015

BY LAUREN SMART

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Jackson Pollock's *Yellow Islands*

Dallas Museum of Art

Jackson Pollock: Blind Spots

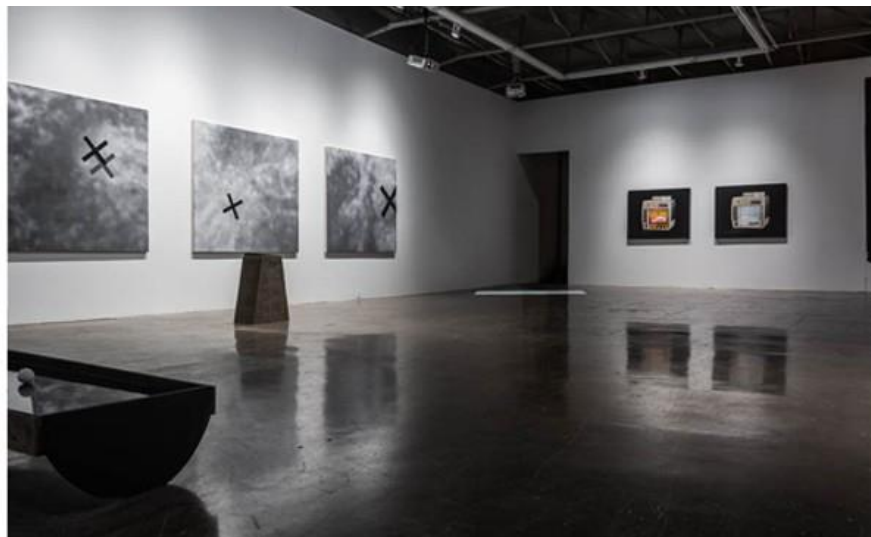
This one is obvious. Seriously, though, there have been too few exhibitions of this caliber, both in curation and in work on display. Each of these pieces warrants a bout of serious looking. Particularly with some of the later works in this exhibition, the paint pulls you in, shakes you up and pushes you back out. This is only the third exhibition ever dedicated to these black and white paintings, and it's the only time this many will share a space. This is a can't-miss show for art lovers young, old, new and experienced. And lucky for us, it stays on display through March 20, 2016. More at dma.org.



The Reading Room

Lucia Simek: Occiput at Reading Room

There was a quiet, beautiful show at the Reading Room, in which artist Lucia Simek explored ideas of self-exile, the tension between nature's beauty and the persistent threat of disaster or devastation. She paired images with text for a series of prints, and a dual stream of 10-second videos forming new relational context between the things she saw on a trip to Wyoming with her three children. [Read an interview with the artist here.](#)



Circuit 12

Jupiter Island at Circuit 12 Contemporary

Another show that dealt with isolation and anticipation in interesting ways was a group show at Circuit 12, curated by Chicago-based Lauren Fulton. She pulled together a series of artists,

several with local connections, whose work explore ideas including mass media and the manipulation of memory; militaristic strategy and violence; and questions of blind faith and afterlife. The show was at times dark or moody, transforming the gallery into a space for contemplating fear. Since opening in its new space on Levee Street, Circuit 12 Contemporary has proven to be a thoughtful, exciting space for heady exhibitions.



Conduit Gallery

Jules Buck Jones at Conduit Gallery

Austin-based artist Jules Buck Jones brought the natural world into the gallery with his show, *Portraits of an Invisible Predator*. Through a series of paintings, sculptures and sound installations, the abstract became dangerous, and, in a collision of color and evolutionary science, the viewer's imagination became a map for adventure. Plus, for the closing reception, the gallery brought in animals from the zoo, bringing the creatures into the 3-dimensional world.



Cydonia Gallery

[Where You End and I Begin at Cydonia Gallery](#)

Cydonia Gallery is one of the few spaces in town guaranteed to both engage and challenge the viewer. In no show was this more true this year than in the pairing of Dallas-based artist Frances Bagley and Portland-based artist Ryan Burghard. In some instances their work seemed an easy match, in others the way in which they explore humanistic concerns was more individual, but the relationships built in the viewer's mind linger long past original viewing. [Read a review here.](#)

[The House of Alba at Meadows Museum](#)

This year, the Meadows Museum celebrated its 50th anniversary with a number of good shows, the crown jewel of which is *Treasures from the House of Alba: 500 Years of Art and Collecting*, a stunning show of the pieces collected by the aristocratic Spanish family, much of which has never been seen outside of Spain. There are works by Renoir, Rubens, Sorolla, Van Gogh, Goya, and on and on. It's an incredible show. Through January 3, 2016.



In the foreground, "Altarpiece."

Kevin Todora/Dallas Contemporary

Nadia Kaabi-Linke's *Walk the Line* at Dallas Contemporary

Both heartbreak and resilience permeated much of the work of Berlin-based artist Nadia Kaabi-Linke, who uses numerous materials to explore themes of memory and place. Concurrent with four other exhibitions at the Dallas Contemporary, Kaabi-Linke's was the quietest in some ways, although hers also had the most movement, as volunteers strung colorful string between two columns in a repetitive loop, the long periods of walking appearing almost meditative or penitent in its unending motion. The way the artist was able to transform pain into beauty was stunning, addressing abuse at both the domestic and political levels through poetic language or gesture. For example, she traces a section of the Berlin Wall in Chinese ink and frames it as a triptych for "Altarpiece." This exhibition, along with the others on display this fall, also mark a new focus for the Dallas Contemporary, as it was the first series of shows overseen by Justine Ludwig, the institution's new director of exhibitions and senior curator.



Liliana Bloch Gallery

Du Chau at Liliana Bloch Gallery

The exhibition *Part of a Continuum* at Liliana Bloch Gallery by artist Du Chau was a captivating series of ceramic sculptures, which employ his scientist's eye (he works as both a pathologist and art instructor) to bring permutations of art into larger, organic, absolutely stunning works of art. In this exhibition there was a forest of wire yellow flowers on the reception desk. On the floor, what looks like a spiral of seashells is, at closer look, a series of small hands resting in one another. In this exhibition, he was interested in memories of early childhood, which perhaps explains the work's perspective on inquisitiveness and marvel. It was eye-opening to see such small works make up pieces that are fascinating both at a distance and upon closer inspection.

Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage—Visualizing the Self After the Internet

Over the course of seven months, eight single-channel videos were screened at the Dallas Museum of Art, as examples of the ways artists are reconsidering concepts of self in the post-Internet world. Works by the likes of Jon Rafman, Ryan Trecartin, Ed Atkins (incredible!) and more come to life in a whole different way on a large screen in a dark room, speakers loud, than

they do on the 13-inch screen of a laptop. It was the kind of exhibition that brought you back to the museum time and again to see whichever new work was playing that month.



Phyllida Barlow: *Tryst*

One of the most interactive exhibitions of the year was the huge exhibition of work by British sculptor Phyllida Barlow at the Nasher Sculpture Center. Her large-scale works had a precarious, enveloping quality that filled the museum with an exciting energy. She also curated the work of the collection in conversation with her work, and made a really important discovery: The Nasher could use more female artists. Before you could say, "Show me the money," Kaleta Doolin donated funds to push the museum to collect more work by women, and Barlow was added to the board for the Nasher Prize, making Barlow's *Tryst*, as sexy a show as it was, a much more impactful relationship with the Nasher.