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ART & DESIGN | THE BEST IN CULTURE 2015

The Best in Art of 2015

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The co-chief art critics for The New York Times on the most notable themes of the year.

Roberta Smith's Top 10 Amid Rising Rents, Visions Flourished

There's always much to complain about in the New York art world: the insane circus of auctions and shop-alike collectors; the Guggenheim Museum's expansionism; the Museum of Modern Art's infamous overcrowding; and the effect of surging Manhattan rents on the art scene's lifeblood: artists and galleries. But then there is the art, which is what we're all here for. In that regard, 2015 was a banner year for New York, so much that to my chagrin I barely went elsewhere. Here are a few high points.

1. The Whitney
2. 'Picasso Sculpture'
3. The Guggenheim
4. 'Frank Stella: A Retrospective'
5. The Met
6. Folk Art
7. Alternative Spaces
8. An Eye for History
9. Solo Shows

Living artists of all ages shone in solo gallery shows: Richard Serra's not-quite cubes of solid steel formed a spiritual union with surrounding space at David Zwirner. Cecily Brown presented the best paintings of her career at Maccarone. Karma attended splendidly to Stanley Whitney's paintings and drawings. Dona Nelson continued to attack painting front and back with vehement color at Thomas Erben. Jamie Isentein's performing sculptures returned at Andrew Kreps. In his debut at Simon Preston Gallery, Clement Siatous turned the painterly political in 13 sunlit beach scenes that revisited life on an island in the Indian Ocean before the United States Navy took over. And in an outstanding sophomore appearance, on view until Dec. 20, Lucy Dodd cultivates her unusual fusion of Color Field painting, sewing, cooking, music and hanging out in a mutating show at David Lewis.

10. Resilient Galleries