



5 Must-See European Galleries Reopening with American Artists
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By Paul Laster



© SARAH SZE, PHOTO ROB MCKEEVER, COURTESY GAGOSIAN

Sarah Sze, *Ripple (Times Zero)*, 2020.

With galleries in most American cities still in lockdown from the coronavirus pandemic, we've had to make do with **viewing room exhibitions**, which surprisingly have turned out to be quite stimulating.

But if you are like us, you also want to know that the art you are looking at online can also be viewed by the general public in real-time. Having to wait a bit longer for New York, Chicago, and LA dealers to reopen, we turned our sights on European galleries mounting recently opened exhibitions of American artists. We found an amazing assortment of solo shows in such cultural capitals as Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Vienna, and Zurich that feature both rising names and established stars presenting new works in a variety of media.



SARAH SZE, PHOTO REBECCA FANUELE, COURTESY GAGOSIAN

Sarah Sze, *Quartet (Mondrian suite)*, 2019.

[Sarah Sze](#)

Gagosian, Paris

May 23–July 18, 2020

After initially studying painting, Sarah Sze launched her career as a sculptor, but over the years she's added photography, video, printmaking, painting, and installation art to her experimental process with an aim of bringing the studio directly into the gallery. A winner of

the coveted **MacArthur Genius Grant** in 2003 and the United States' representative in the 2013 **Venice Biennale**, Sze recently returned to her painterly roots in expansive solo shows at Gagosian Gallery in Rome and New York's Tanya Bonakdar Gallery and now, more intimately, at Gagosian in Paris.

"I've always shifted between mediums as a way of discovering the infinite potential of a single idea, and of playing with the particular strengths of communication that different mediums possess," she shared in a 2018 interview. "Though I started off studying painting and architecture, it was sculpture that really exploded the boundaries between painting, drawing, sculpture, and assemblage for me. I've been making paintings, drawings, and prints alongside my sculptural installations for years now, so it was exciting to bring the two-dimensional works into the center of my practice again."

Visitors to the Paris show are greeted by the multimedia installation *Plein Air* (Times Zero). In a darkened gallery, bits of imagery are assembled on a network of metal rods, where drifting shapes of projected pictures connect and overlap during a looping orbit. The layered paintings in the rooms that follow energetically flatten the projected imagery into collapsed collaged canvases.

Her massive *Ripple* (Times Zero) painting presents a swirling constellation of landscape imagery on torn and taped photographs, which are combined with silkscreened painterly actions. A series of four smaller canvases, titled *Quartet* (Mondrian suite), reference modernist painter **Piet Mondrian's** morphing of a tree motif into pure abstraction through Sze's transformation of a single-layered image progressively rendered in an increasingly complex way.

Her *Plein Air* installation alludes to the French Impressionist artists, who preferred painting en plein air, or outdoors, while her collaged canvases quote such post-war, French Nouveau Réalistes as Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé, who employed lacerated street posters to construct their mediated collage works. Sze transforms the gallery into a total work of art—complete with her hybrid painting/sculpture *Double Wishbone*, suspended on a staircase and symbolizing hope for the future, a universal idea that is certainly right for the times.



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND TEMPLON, PARIS AND BRUSSELS © ADAGP, PARIS, 2020

Will Cotton, Flying Cowboy, 2020.

[Will Cotton: The Taming of the Cowboy](#)

Templon, Brussels

May 28–July 31, 2020

Celebrated for his realistically rendered Candyland compositions of confectionary landscapes and fantastical portraits of femme fatales floating in cotton candy clouds, Will Cotton makes contemporary art with a classical flair. Creating representational objects of desire from symbolic sweets, Cotton blurs the boundaries between childish cravings and grownup fantasies. His art direction for Katy Perry's music video California Gurl brought him pop culture acclaim and the costumes and sets for his ballet performance Cockaigne dazzled New York's downtown cultural clique, but his new paintings and drawings of cowboys riding and roping unicorns present Cotton's first attempt at fashioning subjects for a gay or female gaze.

“When I went to do an art residency in Wyoming, it was a totally new experience for me,” Cotton said a viewing room video accompanying the show. “I hadn't spent time in the West, so my experience of cowboys was through cinema and the mythology of the Marlboro Man. I made sketches, but to just paint cowboys didn't make sense to me. There was another character that I was working with in the studio, a pink unicorn, and I wondered how they would deal with each other in a symbolic sense, where it's kind of a mashup of different personalities.”



COURTESY TEMPLON, PARIS AND BRUSSELS

Installation view of Will Cotton: *The Taming of the Cowboy* at Galerie Templon, Brussels.

The painting *Flying Cowboy* depicts a daring bronco rider in chaps being bucked from a seductive pink unicorn sporting a stylish saddle, while his *Bareback* canvas captures a nude, young cowpoke with tan lines emphasizing his buttocks as he rises from the saddle of a colorful, candy-cane-horned-creature, an ironic twist on the usual definition of bareback riding, where a costumed cowboy rides a saddle-less horse. Cotton's drawings of cowboys and unicorns, however, are less pop cultural and more romantic. Realized in oil, chalk, and pencil on paper, they focus on the figure in the soft, sketchy style of the classical European masters that this New York artist so readily admires and skillfully achieves.



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GRIMM, AMSTERDAM AND NEW YORK
Dave McDermott, *Man*, 2020.

[Dave McDermott: West](#)

Grimm, Amsterdam

May 15–June 27, 2020

Best known for his mining of art historical, literary, and cinematic sources and his visually rich, sensuous approach to materials, Dave McDermott makes paintings and drawings that aim at sensation and feeling rather than mere comprehension. Born and raised in California but currently living and working in Brooklyn, McDermott metaphorically deals with the idea of duality through a series of associations in his pluralistic works. Taking the famous American saying “Go West, young man” as a point of departure, the artist’s fourth solo show with the gallery revisits his roots, while using other tales of the West as armatures to build a fascinating body of work.

“The works in this show orbit around the mythology of going West,” McDermott states in a viewing room video for the show. “I come from the West and I think its inherent qualities of openness, otherworldliness, awkwardness, strangeness, perversion, hedonism, desire, and indecipherability have always informed my work. I credit being raised in the West with my mindset as an artist—namely to avoid didactic and illustrative tendencies and instead aiming for a transmission of feeling, more poetry than point.”



PHOTO SONIA MANGIAPANE, COURTESY GRIMM, AMSTERDAM AND NEW YORK
Installation view of Dave McDermott: *West* at GRIMM, Amsterdam.

The *Painting Lesson* takes a canvas from the period of his second solo with Grimm, which dealt with the relationship between free will and fate, as a jumping-off point. Revealing elements of that show's signature checkerboard motif in the eyes, nose, and prominent punctuation mark that were cut from another canvas, the work elucidates the artist's intuitive yet deliberate process of creating his paintings.

The diptych *le Déjeuner (the Hermit and the Monk)* constructs a graphically simple psychological story, in which dual personalities share bodies that are chock-full of art historical references, including the famous **Manet** painting referenced in its title. *Man*, which depicts a soldier-like figure with haunting linear heads within his head, utilizes a well-known stripe motif from contemporary French conceptualist Daniel Buren as a springboard, while *Mother of Pearl - Bungalow 1* turns French realist Gustave Courbet's infamous painting of a female

nude, *The Origin of the World*, into a sexy California hideaway through the sly addition of a pitched palm tree.



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GALERIE ERNST HILGER, VIENNA

Yigal Ozeri, *Untitled; A New York Story*, 2020.

[Yigal Ozeri: My New Home](#)

Galerie Ernst Hilger, Vienna

May 26–August 28, 2020

Renown for his **hyperrealistic paintings** of striking young women in natural settings, Yigal Ozeri has exhibited his art worldwide over the past thirty years. The subject of the 2016 documentary film *Yigal Ozeri: The Chameleon*, the Israeli-born, New York-based artist, who started his career as an abstractionist, makes stunning photorealistic paintings composed from thousands of tiny brushstrokes, which magically transform or, as Ozeri calls it, erase his initial photographic imagery. After years of working in this signature style, the artist recently embarked on a new body of work, influenced by contemporary street photographers, who have captured Ozeri's eye.



COURTESY GALERIE ERNST HILGER, VIENNA

Installation view of Yigal Ozeri: My New Home at Galerie Ernst Hilger, Vienna.

The exhibition My New Home features these new paintings in two corresponding bodies of work: A New York Story, which walks us through the streets of Manhattan and down into the subways of the city that he currently calls home, and A Tel Aviv Story, which takes us back to the markets and cafes of the city that gave him his start. “The rhythm of the city translates into streaming movement across each canvas, interrupted by chance encounters he has chosen to focus on —targeting the unexpected moments rather than censoring them,” declares Shear Ozeri, the artist’s daughter and studio manager, in a recently published catalogue of his work.

Inspired by the street photography of Philip-Lorca diCorcia, who dramatically documented New Yorkers moving through crosswalks and lingering on sidewalks, Ozeri captures everyday people in motion on the city’s bustling thoroughfares. Chinatown is a favorite subject,

with crowds gathered on Canal Street and homeless men lying on the sidewalk and sleeping in cardboard boxes, while in the subway people are seen waiting on platforms and staring into space when in transit on the trains. Contrastingly, his colorful paintings of Tel Aviv show shoppers in the open air markets and young people traveling on electric scooters—looking as though they didn't have a care in the world, which may be how the artist recalls his youthful days there.



© SHARA HUGHES, PHOTO JSP ART PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER, ZURICH AND NEW YORK

Shara Hughes, Sun Shower, 2019.

[Shara Hughes: Day By Day By Day](#)

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

June 2–Sept 19, 2020

An abstract artist primarily known for her vibrantly painted imaginary landscapes, Shara Hughes has been exhibiting her expressive artworks since the mid-00s, but her big break came when she showed her colorful canvases in the 2017 [Whitney Biennial](#), where she was critically acclaimed. Since that time, international museum and gallery shows have followed, with this being her fourth solo exhibition at Presenhuber, which has three spaces in Zurich and one in New York. Her new show at the Zurich gallery, which focuses on drawing, continues her investigation of psychologically charged, invented landscapes inspired by such modernist movements as Fauvism, Art Nouveau, and German Expressionism, yet completely her own oeuvre.

“It’s funny, ten or fifteen years ago I was making paintings that had specific reproductions of other paintings in art history inside my paintings, because I almost couldn’t figure out what kind of painter I wanted to be,” Hughes said in a recent video interview. “I was like I guess I’ll just try all of them in one painting. Through that, I was teaching myself how to paint and how to live with the mistakes. When I dropped being really specific about the other artists within my own work is when I realized that I was also a good painter. I just needed to see it for myself.”



COURTESY GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER, ZURICH

Installation view of Shara Hughes: *Day By Day By Day* at Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich.

In a show focused on drawings and monoprints, the two large paintings on view could be viewed as the icing on the cake. *Sun Shower* dynamically depicts a passing rainstorm pounding a pastoral realm reminiscent of one of Van Gogh sunlit fields, while *Making It Work* passionately portrays a rushing waterfall between two mountain peaks in a more muted, German Expressionist way.

The drawings and monoprints, which the artist makes at home in a single session, utilize a variety of media, including ink, watercolor, markers, crayons, oil pastels, colored pencils, and paint pens. The larger monoprints, like *Tutti Frutti 2* and *Trying To Seem Clean Cut 2*, show worlds within worlds, while such smaller drawings as *Little Dances* and *Let's Calm Down* capture rambling bits of bigger nature

scenes. As playful in her use of materials as she is at imagining lively spots in the environment, Hughes makes—as the title of her lovable show implies—colorful places where we could easily spend day by day by day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Paul Laster is an artist, critic, curator, editor, and lecturer. He is a contributing editor at ArtAsiaPacific and Whitehot Magazine of Contemporary Art and writer for Time Out New York, Galerie Magazine, Harper's Bazaar Arabia, Architectural Digest, Cultured, Garage Magazine, Ocula, ArtPulse, Observer, Conceptual Fine Arts and Glasstire. He was Artkrush's founding editor, started The Daily Beast's art section and was art editor of Russell Simmons' Oneworld Magazine, as well as an Adjunct Curator of Photography at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, now MoMA PS1.