

Nobody asked me for a Top Ten Exhibitions of 2013 list this year, so I asked myself.

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Dan Cameron's Top Ten Exhibitions of 2013

2013 Carnegie International – So much has already been written about this year's edition of the country's oldest contemporary art survey that it's difficult to avoid offering points that seem superfluous. What especially struck me was the degree to which the three curators seemed to challenge each other's methodologies, to the point where every work has a specific place not only within the broader curatorial framework, but also relative to adjacent works. The added touch of incorporating artists' projects into the geology, botany and classical sculpture sections of the Carnegie Museum might have gone seriously awry, but they proved to be high points in an already impressive exhibition.

Sean Shim-Boyle (LAXART) - This LA artist's first solo institutional exhibition was a daring experiment that somehow worked. Installing vertical crossbeams of raw timber that had the double effect of lowering the project room's rafters and introducing the smell of cut wood, he then placed two sets of sliding doors at the far end of the room. Operated by electric eye, the sliding doors are just close enough to each other that they continuously setoff each other's movement detectors, causing them to open and close at random, oddly threatening intervals. The result is a stilted mechanistic ballet within the rustic, cramped interior, which only compounds the work's poetic effect.

Yamini Nayar (Thomas Erben) – I knew nothing about this young photo-artist's work before walking into her second solo exhibition, but the sensibility captured in these densely illusionistic photos is deeply compelling. The photos are of the studio-setup genre familiar enough since the 1970s, but the succession of layers of torn, distressed and then re-photographed surfaces makes it mostly impossible to determine what has been incorporated into the composition, and at which stage of its creation. This combination of crisp details and spatially ambiguous frames-within-frames keeps the viewer looking for the key, even after it's clear there isn't one.

Josh Kline (37 Canal) – One of the few stars to emerge from last season, Kline followed up his curatorial debut at PS1 (which I missed) with a solo exhibition that was nothing less than hair-raising in its morbid depiction of mass culture's fetishistic relation to youth. Interviews with holograms of Whitney Houston and Kurt Cobain seemed squarely in line with the previous year's debut at a music festival of a fully digital double of the late Tupac Shakur, and the installation itself resembled a low-rent clinic for injections or other medical procedures of dubious benefit.

Amie Siegel (Simon Preston) – The premise of Siegel's film *Provenance* is quite simple: tracing the movement of original furniture from the Le Corbusier-designed city of Chandigarh, India, her film begins simply enough with lengthy shots of chairs, tables and settees placed in upscale rooms in New York, Paris in London. As the film progresses, we go back in time to the auction sales where these pieces commanded record prices, through restoration and shipping, and end at the city of Chandigarh itself – a modernist utopia that is being systematically (and probably illegally) stripped of its modernist heritage in order to provide more expensive baubles for the international ultra-rich. Siegel's video never comes out and points fingers, but it doesn't have to: by simply tracing a trajectory of questionable provenance, she lets us connect the dots, whether they lead to the Elgin Marbles or art looted by the Nazis.



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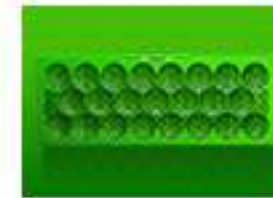
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Bob Mizer (Invisible Exports, MoCA at Pacific Design Center, 80 Washington Square East) – I never understood until this year what a ubiquitous force Mizer has been in American visual culture, and the gradual unpacking of his estate over the course of a handful of exhibitions this year only reinforced my awareness of how he singlehandedly transformed masculine archetypes already associated with the West Coast (cowboys, surfers) into homoerotic triggers for a hunger that most of the culture pretended didn't exist, until Hollywood, gay culture and Calvin Klein brought it all front and center in the 1980s. No longer just an acquired taste for beefsteak fans, Mizer's vision is proving to be more mainstream than even he might have imagined.

Barbara T. Smith (The Box) – One of the secondary benefits of the exhaustive Pacific Standard Time surveys of 2011-12 is the increased local appetite for learning more about pioneering figures like Smith, whose long-term dedication to an experimental and often ephemeral practice grounded in performance has rendered her career into a sort of meta-cult. This exhibition, covering the Xerox-based work she began in 1965 while still at home in Pasadena with her husband and three children, was surprisingly fresh and intimate nearly a half-century later, and helped clarify the copy-machine origins of Smith's deployment of her body as a principal material.

Ragnar Kjartansson (Luhring Augustine, MoMA, Venice) – It was hard to avoid Kjartansson this year, what with his extraordinary nine-channel *The Visitors* at Luhring Augustine and his sleepover residency at PS1's Colony installation last summer. My favorite Kjartansson moment, however, came at the end of a hot, tiring Sunday at the Venice Biennale. Having trekked miles that day to see most of the Giardini and Arsenale, I was mostly looking for an exit when I spotted the peculiar sight of a boatful of musicians, performing earnestly for whoever happened to be sitting, standing or strolling nearby. It wasn't until they pulled into the loading dock and I read "S.S. Hangover" that it dawned on me just who was responsible for this magical moment of musical serendipity.

Gutai (Guggenheim) – Until this year, Japan's most consistently radical art movement was known to Americans only in a shorthand version, in which the individual artists & their distinct contributions never seemed to come to the forefront of viewers' awareness. This long-overdue exhibition changed that, giving us a sort of timeline for each artist by showing who did what first, who stayed with it until the end, and who drifted. Coming in the wake of Paul Schimmel's definitive *Destroy the Picture* at MoCA in 2012, the Gutai survey demonstrated that there are still decades of catching up for American art-lovers to do before we'll be able to appreciate that the importance of Kazuo Shiraga's early work, to take one example, is on a par with that of Tapies or Rauschenberg.

John Mason (Kordansky) – It wasn't until I walked into this exhibition that I had to admit to myself that I'd never actually seen a solo exhibition of John Mason. Considering his towering role in the modern history of U.S. ceramic art, I thought I had nobody to blame but myself, until I read his biography and realized that in a five-decade career there have been only four solo exhibitions in New York, making him one of the most egregiously neglected of major West Coast artists. A massive plinth constructed in the center of the gallery served as a stage for the seven tall monochrome works, made between 1997 and 2002, which constituted this beautiful overview. Built from massive slabs of clay, each work had an impressive sense of gravity, and Mason's close dialogue with the history of Minimalism was clearly demonstrated in the mute solidity of the grouping, which encourage walking around multiple times to see each sculpture from every possible angle.

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