

# HYPERALLERGIC

Art

## With a Medieval Flair, Spring Break Art Show Celebrates the Eccentric

From bread sculptures to fabric galore, the pent up energy of the pandemic was overflowing at this grassroots art fair that continues to wow.



by Hrag Vartanian  
2 weeks ago



Jude Tallichet curated a solo presentation of the estate of Matthew Freedman, titled *Out of the Blue, Things Happen to You* (all photographs Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

The **Spring Break art show** is a barometer of New York’s grassroots art scene and the creativity bubbling below the surface of the overall commercial art world. This year’s theme, *HEARSAY:HERESY*, pokes at the recent concern over truth, fact, and conspiracies. The topic pushed a whole series of participants to explore various medieval-inspired themes, which was hinted at in the fair’s original call for submissions. The mood overall seems to capture the fragmented nature of reality nowadays and the dark ominous undertones that it all suggests.



Michael Sylvan Robinson’s “To Ward Off Late Stage Capitalism” (2021) is one of the textile works that dominated this year’s Spring Break art show

Some use design and architecture to frame their presentations — one booth curated by David Behringer, and featuring art by **Chambliss Globbi**, has a real 15th-century table at the center, while **Cade Tompkins Projects**, featuring artists Bob Dilworth and Nafis M. While, even recreates an arcade of pointed arches that evokes stripped Tuscan churches. Others fully embrace embroidery, tapestries, and other woven works, including Steve Locke’s Jacquard works at **Rivalry**, Anne Spalter’s **AI-generated plague tapestries**, Michael Sylvan Robinson’s “**To Ward Off Late Stage Capitalism**” sculptural garment, and Macauley Norman’s spider-like works at

**The Castle of the Spider’s Web** — and these are only a sampling of the dozens of works in this vein. A few even use decorative bread, combining the romance of medieval bread making with a more recent pandemic one (Bianca Abdi-Boragi’s excellent chair and table made of bread is a showstopper at the **Spelling Afterlife** presentation by curator Taylor Hansen Hughes, and Adriana Gallo’s bread sculptures at **Blessed Bodies**, curated by Abby Cheney and Hanna Washburn, are a delight).

I kept asking artists and curators why they thought there was a great deal of fabric and woven works. Macauley Norman had the most convincing explanation as he talked about spiders,

which he uses extensively in his current body of work presented by [Deep Space Gallery](#), and how the arachnid fixes its web when it is damaged (echoing the feelings of pain and stress we have all felt in the last year and a half) and how the repetitive nature of such work can be meditative.



Kymia Nawabi's "AND THEN THERE WERE THREE" (2021) was part of a small exhibition curated by Jac Lahav, Tali Hinkis, and Jodie Lyn-Kee-Chow called [The Closet: America's Dressing Room](#)

In the last few decades, woven and knitted works are becoming part of the growing mainstream vocabulary of contemporary art that continues to reexamine hierarchies of art and authorship. Historically, woven works were not seen as authored, unlike paintings, sculptures, even metal work, perhaps in part because they were often made by women. Rugs are a good example of these types of objects whose authors were not recorded, and here rug-like works appear prominently in Chiara No's impressive [Unbellowed](#) installation at Field Projects, curated by Kris Racaniello, and in presentations by Emily Oliviera, who exhibits hook rugs in Spantzo Gallery's *Mimzie* and a larger quilt-like work in Chris

Bors & Fred Fleisher's *Nothing Shocking*. Is this reconsideration of authorship one of the things to makes textiles so alluring to artists today?

I can imagine working with textiles and other soft materials were also attractive to those of us who spent much of the pandemic in cramped spaces, since they are odorless, don't often involve toxic materials (unless you're dyeing them), and are easy to store, a constant issue for artists through the ages. While the motivations to make this type of work are certainly diverse, I can also imagine that being robbed of hugs and physical contact during the pandemic also drove the desire for such tactile works, as if to overcompensate for the continuing prohibition to touch those around you.

There is a wide range of painting on display, including [Kyle Hittmeier](#)'s funny and strangely alluring works about freeports that use images of post-it notes and the Cayman Islands, Daniel Morowitz's vibrant drawings and bold use of color in what appears to be mythology inspired images, and Bruno Leydet's beautifully queer canvases that feel quite intimate and quirky. And since it is 2021, M. Charlene Stevens's [Chapel](#) exhibition includes a few NFTs for sale, though it's worth noting that the whole digitally inspired show is beautifully coherent.

Overall, it feels like one of the strongest years for Spring Break, and a celebration of the community they've gathered under one roof and nurtured for roughly a decade.



Kyle Hittmeier's "Chasing a Sunset Into Port Francs" (2021) is one of the works in Amanda Nedham's [Gather Rusted Satellites](#) and it explores the idea of freeports by incorporating images of the Cayman Islands (a well known site for such shadowy activities) and post-it notes



A view of ***Dogmatic Magic***, curated by Nicole Basilone and Daniel Morowitz, included works by Nicole Basilone, Daniel Morowitz, and Mark Zubrovich



Artist Yachin Chang with some of her humorous still life paintings, including "Team Work 2, Crushing Garlic" (2020) and "Flash Frozen" (2019), at Queenie Wong's ***The Power, The Word, The Image: What Is Your Story?***



Paul Gagner's "Sleeping Beauty" (2021) is flanked by work by Chris Lucious at Libby Rosa's **The Dead Last**, which focused on the use of humor in the social acceptance of death



Works by Ben Blaustein are featured in **Curtain of Blue**, curated by Francesca Pessarelli



Cade Tompkins Projects impressive presentation, **The Weaving of Tales**, with works by artists Bob Dilworth and Nafis M. White



The 15th century table at the center of David Behringer's **Us and Them** featuring the intricate Bosch-inspired art of Chambliss Globbi made with melting crayons



Anne Spalter's AI generated plague tapestries, curated by Margo McIlwain Nishimura, in a presentation called **Plague Planet**



Artist Jaishri Abichandani's majestic "The Alchemist" (2021) sculpture at **woMANTRA** by Sadaf Padder, which also included works by Sahana Ramakrishnan and Sanie Bokhari





Chiara No's impressive **Unbellowed** installation at Field Projects, curated by Kris Racaniello



The colorful work of Pranav Sood was featured in **I Am More Than Who I Am**, curated by Ovodova Ekaterina



Artist Macauley Norman (center) and his spider-like works at Deep Space Gallery's [The Castle of the Spider's Web](#)



A view of [Chapel](#), curated by M. Charlene Stevens, and featuring art by Sophie Kahn and Colette Robbins



Adriana Gallo's bread sculptures at **Blessed Bodies**, curated by Abby Cheney and Hanna Washburn



Jamie Martinez's "Permission" atop Bianca Adbi-Boragi's (yes, it's made of real bread on top of an armature) "Hybrid Buffet," which integrates architectural forms from a church turned mosque in Algiers, at Taylor Hansen Hughes's **Spelling Afterlife** exhibition



A view of Indra Cesarine's *The Keep*, which features artist Meg Lionel Murphy



A view of Stuart Lantry's "It Takes a lot of Moving Parts to Hit the Nail on the Head" (2020-21) in Shona McAndrew's *Autonomy, Automata, and I*



A view of Andrew Craven's **Modern Medieval (An Ode to Marbodius of Rennes)** featuring the art of Bruno Leydet



Emily Oliveira's "hidden beneath the leaf mold, beneath the ferns and mushrooms, a flower as small as a fingernail, white as milk" (2020) in a **one-room exhibition curated by Chris Bors and Fred Fleisher**



Sarah Celentano's chapel-like **Book of Hours: A medieval mediator in a post truth world** features the work of Phil Buehler and includes some of the QAnon messages that fueled the Q conspiracy theory



Artist Sarah Bereza's small solo presentation was titled **"Psilocybic Eucharist"** (as was this painting) and curated by Ambre Kelly and Andrew Gori.



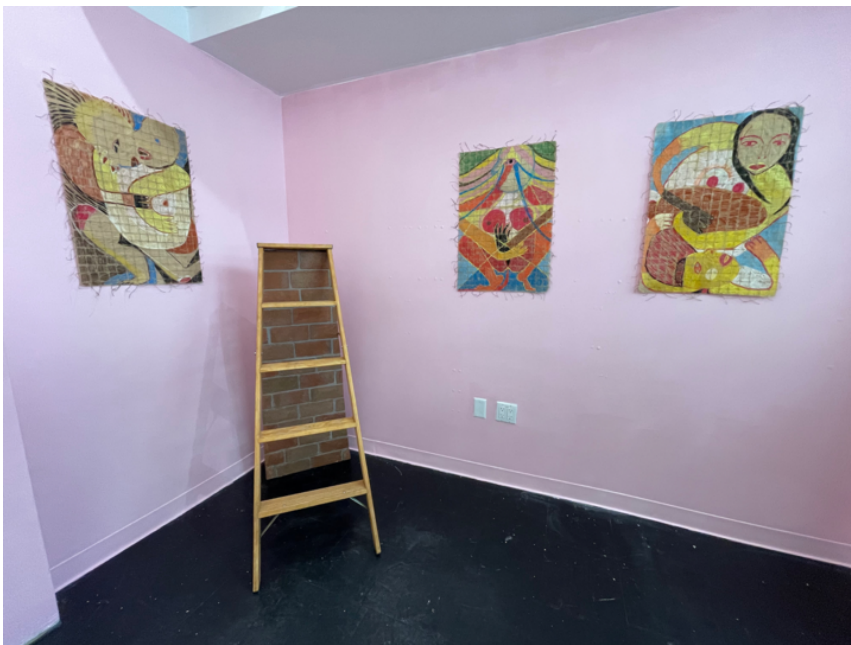
Jen Catron and Paul Outlaw's "Slicing Ham (2020/1792)" was a crowd favorite and was the focus of Magda Sawon's *Slicing Ham* exhibition, which included a number of smaller dioramas and sculptures by the artists



Joe Bochynski's chapel work is something he built in his Bushwick studio during the pandemic. It was part of the presentation by curator John Witty titled [Spolia](#).



Amy Hill's "Substance Head" (2012) was one of two artists featured in **The Banquet** by curators Kathleen Vance & Daniel Aycok



Works by Kimia Ferdowsi and Icy & Sot in **Spiritual Capital**, curated by Zahra Sherzad





A view of Qinza Najm's [#PleasureReclaimed](#), which was curated by Rebecca Goyette



Part of [Cathie Pilkington: Night Sea Journey](#), curated by Karsten Schubert London



Works by Bucet Savci are curated by Maria de Los Angeles in **Wrong Side of the River (Pink Room)**



A view of Tomato Mouse's curated show, **Old Mistresses**, at Spring Break

The 2021 **Spring Break** art show continue at 625 Madison Avenue (Midtown, Manhattan) until September 13, 2021.

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