

Tanya Leighton

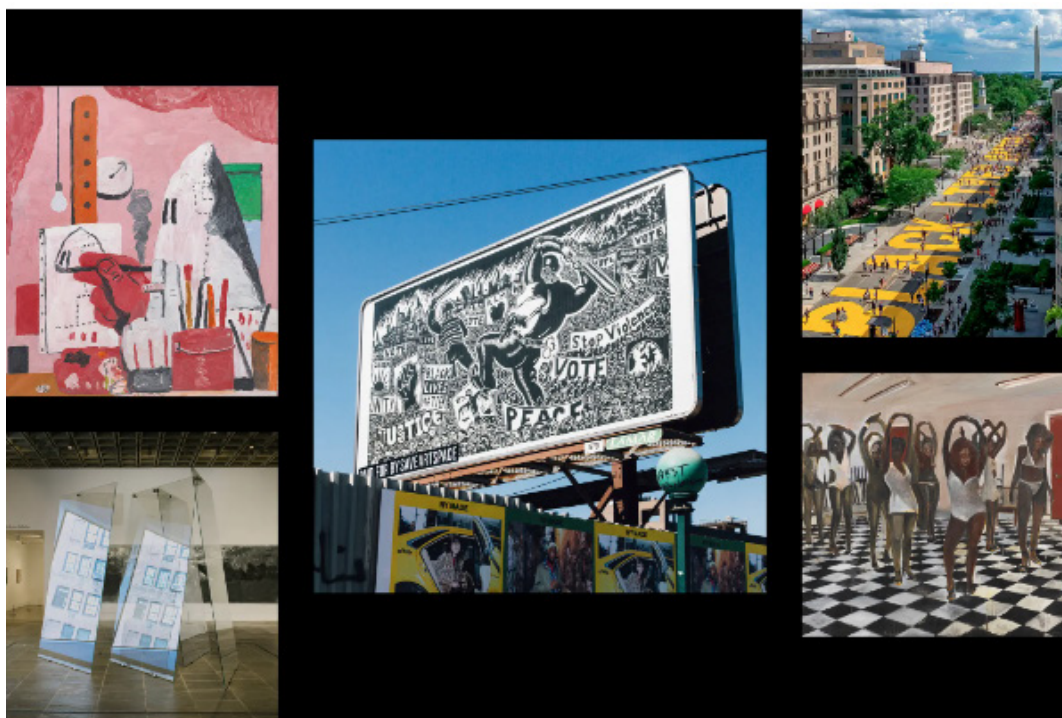
## The New York Times

### The Most Important Moments in Art in 2020

This was a year of protests and pivots. Monuments fell, museums looked inward. On the bright side, galleries persisted despite the pandemic's grip and curators rolled out magisterial retrospectives.

By **Holland Cotter**, **Roberta Smith** and **Jason Farago**

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Clockwise, from center, the “We Are Many. They Are Few,” billboard in Brooklyn by Sue Coe; the “Black Lives Matter” mural painted on 16th Street near the White House; Noah Davis’s “The Casting Call” (2008); Gerhard Richter’s “House of Cards (5 Panes),” at the Met Breuer; and “The Studio” (1969) by Philip Guston, whose retrospective was postponed because of disagreement over the interpretation of his hooded figures. Clockwise from center: Sue Coe, via SaveArtSpace and Art at a Time Like This; Carlos Vilas Delgado/EPA, via Shutterstock; The Estate of Noah Davis; Charlie Rubin for The New York Times; The Estate of Philip Guston and Hauser & Wirth

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HOLLAND COTTER

# No Longer Business as Usual

The year was a 12-month stress test. When I asked friends “how are you?” the repeat answers came: “anxious,” “depressed,” “bored.” The first two I could relate to, but bored is something I rarely am. As a journalist, I’m addicted to art-specific information, to taking it in, parsing it, sorting it, trying to make sense of it. And there’s been a ton of it this year, all pretty intense. So as long as I’ve had a laptop, a home library, and at least some access to “live” art, I’ve been OK in lockdown mode. Here are some things that have kept me focused.

## 1. Best in Show

Art, fundamentally, is information. It’s as much about issues as about objects, about how we live and think, ethically, politically, emotionally. This has been clear in exhibitions that have expanded our knowledge of what’s in the world, near and far. Among those I revisit in my mind are “[Sahel: Art and Empires on the Shores of the Sahara](#)” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; “[Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration](#)” at MoMA PS1; and “[Sky Hopinka: Centers of Somewhere](#)” at the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College. And to those, I’ll add three Manhattan gallery shows: a museum-ready survey of portraits by the still-undersung [Benny Andrews](#) at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery; a solo of work by Frederick Weston (1946-2020) at the Ace Hotel; and, at David Lewis Gallery, a reconstruction of rooms from the Los Angeles home of the reclusive artist and filmmaker [John Boskovich](#) (1956-2006), who called his living room the “Psycho Salon” and made it a rousing place to shelter.

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The Robert E. Lee monument in Richmond, Va. was among the public art projects that came under scrutiny after George Floyd died in police custody in May. Protesters reclaimed the site by decorating the statue's pedestal with Black Lives Matter slogans and memorials to victims of police violence. Steve Helber/Associated Press

## 6. Indigenous Presence

A concentration of Indigenous artists lit up New York galleries and museums this year. They included, along with Sky Hopinka at Bard, Edgar Heap of Birds (Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho) at Fort Gansevoort; Nicholas Galanin (Tlingit and Unangan) at Peter Blum; Jeffrey Gibson (Choctaw and Cherokee) at the Brooklyn Museum; and the Indigenous Canadian painter Kent Monkman (Cree) at the Met. In addition, the Met, which stands on Lenape homelands, [hired Patricia Marroquin Norby](#) (Purépecha Indigenous Mexican) as its first full-time Native American curator.