

Chelsea Summer 2022

Although Chelsea galleries are generally quiet in July and August, this summer there are several exciting shows. The most compelling is at David Zwirner, where Barbara Kruger reinterprets many of her iconic images into video format with powerful results. Also focusing on video work, Gagosian is presenting a Nam June Paik survey. Berry Campbell is featuring the fluid paintings of Walter Darby Bannard, Miles McEnery Gallery features Jason Middlebrook's work juxtaposing organic and geometric forms, and the esoteric group show at Asya Geisberg Gallery is a thought-provoking treat.

Barbara Kruger at David Zwirner

Barbara Kruger's silkscreen "Your Body is a Battleground," originally created for the Women's March in 1989, is possibly the late 20th century's most essential and prescient work of art. For her current show at David Zwirner, she reinvents it in video format, eleven-feet tall. The video starts with the iconic 1989 work breaking apart into jigsaw puzzle-shaped pieces, which begin to reassemble, slowly at first and then in rapid-fire succession, with the text changing: My body is money—Your will is bought and sold—Your humility is bullshit—Your neck is squeezed. In the wake of the reversal of Roe vs. Wade and recent anti-LGBTQ laws, the work is as relevant now as it was in 1989.

Nam June Paik at Gagosian

Gagosian is presenting a two-part survey of Nam June Paik's work. "Lion" combines a hand-carved wooden lion from India, painted by Paik, with multiple TV monitors beneath and behind it. Two large screens behind display psychedelic collages, while others loop various images of nature and an instructional dance video. Paik often combined images from diverse traditional cultures with contemporary technology, commenting on the relationship between technology, culture, and nature.

Jason Middlebrook at Miles McEnery

Jason Middlebrook creates his paintings using sustainably sourced wood from a mill near his studio in Hudson, NY. His exhibition "Light Lines," presented at Miles McEnery Gallery, explores people's relationship with nature and features artworks that, in the artist's words, "focus on the organic and the geometric pushing and pulling against each other." "Three Moons, Three Nights" juxtaposes views of the moon's surface with

contrasting vertical and horizontal black lines painted on wood, whose grain peeks through.

The geometric zig-zag painting “Road to the Top (Icebergs Are in Trouble)” invokes a winding mountain road leading to the summit of a mountain. The title infers that Middlebrook is commenting on global warming and melting polar ice caps but also references the race to the top of the economic pile and its devastating effects on the environment. Snowcapped mountains are subtly painted behind a series of black stripes, with the wood’s dark grain emulating the mountain’s texture.

Walter Darby Bannard at Berry Campbell

Berry Campbell presents the work of Walter Darby Bannard, a leading figure in color field painting in the 1950s. In “Vanadium,” Bannard emphasized the opticality of the painted surface, applying gesso with a squeegee leaving fine ridges. Thin layers of light green and ochre were poured and allowed to settle in the creases.

In “Glass Mountain Fireball,” Bannard’s liquid paint technique sees orange and yellow tints wash over green underpainting. While many artists are secretive about their methods, Berry says that Bannard freely explained his process, confident that other artists “aren’t going to be able to do it.” Having been the head of the painting department at the University of Miami, we can assume his claim was accurate.

“A Window Scrubbed for the Moon” at Asya Geisberg

Asya Geisberg Gallery presents the group exhibition “A Window Scrubbed for the Moon,” curated by Melanie Daniel, who explains that “it explores mindscapes and microcosms that hew elements from the real world and radiate through an otherworldly prism.” “Move Mountain” is a wordless stop-motion video, whose creator, Kirsten Lepore, says “is about loneliness, vulnerability, and perseverance and boasts the craziest night-rave sequence known to animation.”

Alessandro Keegan

Alessandro Keegan's mysterious paintings of jewel-like orbs have an unsettling aura. Referring to his work "Shath," included in the show, Keegan says that "by the time a cosmic post-human world exists, we will most likely resemble what we imagine to be alien lifeforms." An interesting thought to ponder with the release of photos from the James Webb Space Telescope.