

The Most Influential Museum Shows of 2015

DECEMBER 16, 2015

This year's most talked-about and game-changing institutional shows have revisited overlooked artists, cemented the positions of two of 20th-century art's profoundest painters, and brought overdue attention to one of Latin America's most important artists. They have also catapulted two emerging artists to the mainstream, harnessed the power of technology, and asked: What is American art today?

“Greater New York” at MoMA PS1

This year, MoMA PS1 put a twist on its quinquennial survey of emerging talent—to muted acclaim. Up-and-comers like Mira Dancy, Eric Mack, and Sondra Perry mingled with lesser-known artists of the late 20th century, as well as some of contemporary art's most well-known figures, Glenn Ligon and David Hammons, among them. The age of artists in the show ranged from 20s to 80s. Like most ambitious, sweeping surveys, this multigenerational “Greater New York” wasn't a runaway success, but it has nonetheless given a swath of the city's young artists a serious career boost, and prompted calls for retrospectives of largely overlooked talent of older generations, such as Howardena Pindell. Perhaps most notably, 2015's “Greater New York” heralded the art world's return to figuration. At PS1, this came not only in the form of painting (including works by Gina Beavers and Greg Parma Smith), but also a magnificent room of human-body sculptures by the likes of Mary Beth Edelson, John Ahearn, Simone Leigh, and Ugo Rondinone.