



November 17, 2011

This Week: Must-See Arts in the City

WNYC's Arts Datebook: November 17 - 23, 2011.

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An important exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum examines gay identity, street photography gets its due at Laurence Miller, a contemporary artist showcases geometric wood abstractions and a renowned fine food purveyor displays works by video artists. Plus, it's the final week for Performa, the performance art biennial. There's lots going down in the city. Here are our weekly picks:

Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture at the Brooklyn Museum Late last year, a Smithsonian Institution exhibit that explored issues of sexuality and gay identity generated a full-blown culture battle when anti-gay protestors accused curators of featuring anti-Christian works. (If you need a refresher on that skirmish, see my write-up and read the New York Times review of the show.) Now the Brooklyn Museum will be showcasing this same show, complete with the David Wojnarowicz film that was removed from the original exhibit after the controversy erupted. Featuring approximately 100 works of art — from Thomas Eakins' masterful 19th century paintings to black-and-white photography from the '70s to gripping canvases that chronicle the ravages of AIDS — this is an all-too-rare examination of gay and lesbian sexuality in our culture. Consider it a priority. Opens Friday, in Brooklyn.

Urbantics, The City Seen and Unseen, at Laurence Miller Gallery What are all the things you miss when you're walking through the city, tethered to the screen of your smartphone? A lot, according to this new exhibit at the Laurence Miller Gallery. Displaying the work of 15 talented street photographers, Urbantics includes pieces by renowned picture-makers Helen Levitt, Burk Uzzle, Andre Kertesz and the many others who have an innate ability to sniff out the hidden corners of our cities. Should be inspiration enough to put down the darn phone. Through December 22, in Midtown.

Videobytes, presented by James Cohan Gallery at Russ & Daughters As far as I'm concerned, the marriage of smoked fish and art is a perfect one. Which is why I'm very excited about this installation by the James Cohan Gallery on the Lower East Side. The gallery has gathered works on video by more than half a dozen established and emerging artists — including bigwigs such as John Baldessari — and will be playing them on a loop at the Russ & Daughters lox emporium on Houston Street. If you get there after closing, no big whoop. The videos will be on view 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the window. You just won't be able to get any herring. Through December 9, on the Lower East Side.

A Break From Content: Jason Middlebrook at Dodge Gallery Large, thin slices of walnut, redwood and elm tree are transformed into geometric-abstract sculptures that straddle the divide between painting and sculpture. A play on John McCracken's shining fiberglass planks, Middlebrook's pieces allow for the organic shape and contours of the wood to shine through, even as he creates hard-edge patterns inspired by the tree's natural ring lines. Opens Saturday at 6 P.M., on the Lower East Side.

Accumulations: Bruce Conner, Yayoi Kusama and Christina Marclay at Paula Cooper Gallery This is a mixed-bag the-holidays-are-upon-us kind of show, but it provides an opportunity to look at a number of pieces by artists who like to play with perception, repetition and the ability to make a viewer say, Duuuuude. If you haven't seen it yet, pop into check out Christian Marclay's "Moebius Loop," a 20-foot-long piece woven entirely out of



Middlebrook is inspired by minimalist artists of the 1970s, but instead of using industrial materials, he uses wood -- as seen in the sculpture 'Once again a version of nature through my eyes.'

Courtesy the artist and DODGEgallery
Photo: Karen Pearson

cassette tapes. It's the ultimate fetish object for anyone into retro technology. Through December 17.

PLUS: Performa — it's not over yet. In case you were wondering, the performance art biennial is still here. So, if you haven't caught any of the performances, you still have a week in which to marinate yourself in contemporary art weirdness. Good possibilities include: Zhou Xiaohu's Crazy English at Judson Memorial Church this Saturday, a gig by Christian Marclay and Otomo Yoshihide at the Japan Society (also Saturday), and filmmaker Guy Maddin's remixes of his own classic Tales From the Gimli Hospital, at Lincoln Center. Performa is on through Monday, in locations around New York.