

AFAR

10 Incredible U.S. Museum Exhibits to See This Summer

Allison C. Meier 4.10.2019



Courtesy of Joyce Kozloff/DC Moore Gallery, New York

Joyce Kozloff's "If I Were an Astronomer: Boston" is one of the pieces in the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston's show celebrating maximalism in art.

Playful furniture, Native art, and hidden grottoes are a few of the highlights from this season's top exhibitions.

This summer, add art to your [U.S. travel itineraries](#) with these exhibitions on medieval monsters, playful design, and the history of camp in fashion. Stop by the [Newseum](#) in [Washington, D.C.](#), before it closes at the end of the year, explore solo shows featuring an influential feminist artist and a vernacular environment builder, and see group exhibitions for contemporary Chinese art and Native women artists.



Photo by Eric Swanson, courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York
Harmony Hammond's "Chicken Lady" is made with a variety of materials.

Harmony Hammond: Material Witness, Five Decades of Art

March 3–September 15, 2019; The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut

In this show on artist, lesbian scholar, and feminist activist [Harmony Hammond](#), visitors can experience five decades of her works in a huge variety of media. Her early 1970s installations transformed fabric discarded by female friends into colossal robe-like pieces; the 1989 "Chicken Lady" turned a vintage quilt and rusted roof tin into a statement on female outsiders. Throughout, materials such as burlap, pine needles, bone, hair, blood, charred wood, and linoleum are augmented with paint, bronze, and graphite to elevate women's craft traditions into reflections of the female body and its strength.



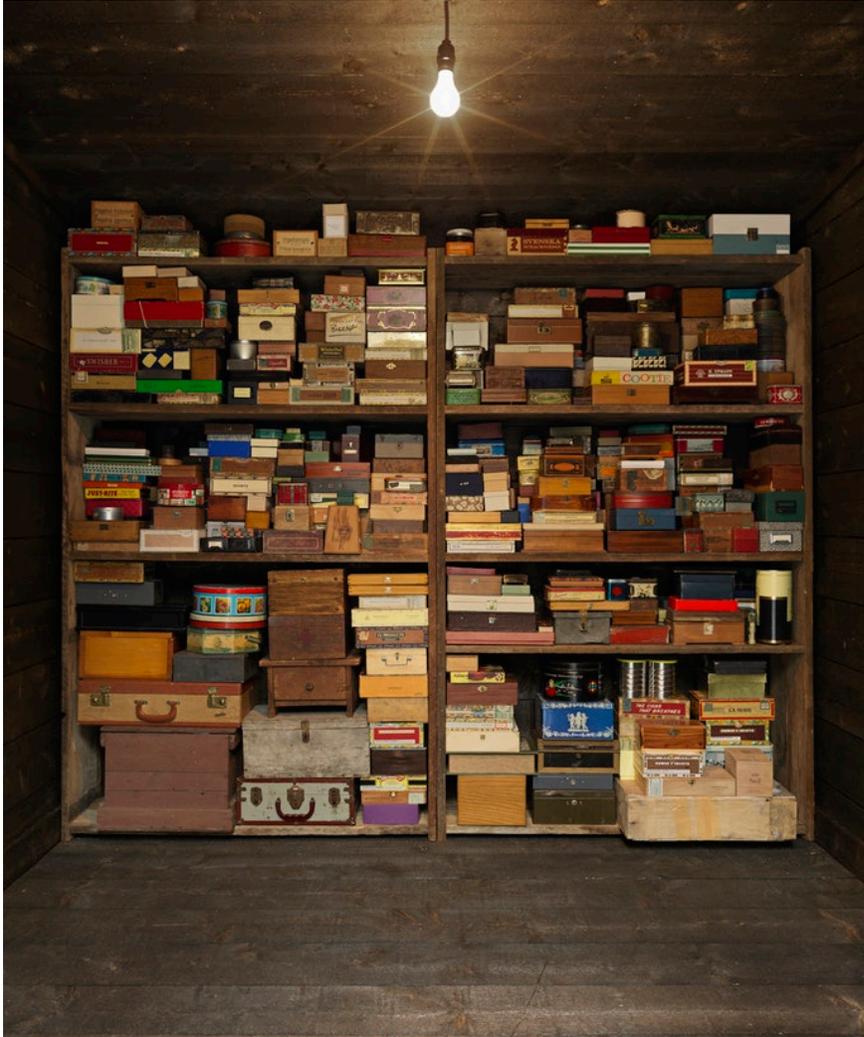
Courtesy of Newseum

An installation at “Rise Up: Stonewall and the LGBTQ Rights Movement” at the Newseum.

Rise Up: Stonewall and the LGBTQ Rights Movement

March 8–December 31, 2019; Newseum, Washington, D.C.

Before the Newseum shutters at its current location at the end of 2019, you can catch the journalism-dedicated institution’s [exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots](#). Highlighting publications and historic objects, *Rise Up* chronicles pivotal events like the June 1969 police raid of New York’s [Stonewall Inn](#) that sparked the LGBTQ rights movement, the 1978 assassination of Harvey Milk, and the more recent battle for marriage equality. In conjunction, the Newseum is hosting a yearlong program series with journalists, politicians, and others engaged in activism.



Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles
Mark Dion's "Memory Box" is one of the installations at Storm King.

Mark Dion: Follies

May 4–November 11, 2019; Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, New York

In the sprawling 500-acre sculpture park of [Storm King Art Center](#), visitors can discover a hidden grotto inhabited by a sleeping bear and a marine biologist field station for contemplating the ecological shifts of climate change. Each is a “folly” by artist Mark Dion, who fills these structures with objects evoking narratives on culture and nature. This exhibition [brings together 12 of these works](#), some dating back to the mid-1990s. They’re installed indoors and outdoors, such as “Hunting Blind (The Glutton)” nestled in a woods, and the functional “Buffalo Bayou Invasive Plant Eradication Unit” (2011), which involves a mobile workstation on a truck.



Courtesy of Herbert Bayer Collection and Archive, Denver Art Museum, photo courtesy of Denver Art Museum

Herbert Bayer's Kaleidoscreen installed in Aspen, Colorado, as captured in a photograph from the 1950s.

Serious Play: Design in Midcentury America

May 5–August 25, 2019; Denver Art Museum, Denver

The postwar era saw an infusion of playfulness in U.S. design, from Anne Tyng's modular building toys to the primary-hued pops of color on furniture by Charles and Ray Eames. ***Serious Play: Design in Midcentury America***, organized by the Milwaukee Art Museum and [Denver Art Museum](#), explores this whimsical innovation through over 200 works. Playground equipment, product design, and furniture are contextualized in a midcentury period of enhanced manufacturing and a growing middle class, as well as the ominous rise of the Cold War. Whether it's buoyant touches in an airline's identity, or now iconic objects like Irving Harper's Sunburst Clock, each demonstrates an inventive moment of escapism and experimentation.



Courtesy of Moschino, image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, photo © Johnny Dufort, 2019

This ensemble by Jeremy Scott for House of Moschino will be on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Camp: Notes on Fashion

May 9—September 8, 2019; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

In her 1964 essay [“Notes on Camp,”](#) Susan Sontag wrote that “the essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration.” [The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s](#) Costume Institute is celebrating ostentatious style in [Camp: Notes on Fashion](#). Featuring around 200 objects, including selections from high and low culture, the show delves into camp from the 17th century to the present. The extreme posturing of the royal court of Versailles is followed by investigations into Victorian-era drag queens and 1930s Berlin nightlife. More recent designs by Viktor & Rolf and Jeremy Scott showcase how drama and humor endure in contemporary fashion’s boldest statements.



Courtesy of Art Gallery Ontario, Toronto

“The Wisdom of the Universe” is an acrylic piece by Christi Belcourt that will be showcased in the first-ever exhibit focusing on Native women.

Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists

June 2—August 18, 2019; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis

The objects in this exhibition range from across more than 1,000 years and involve over 115 artists—yet despite that deep history, this is the first major art show to concentrate on Native women. [***Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists***](#) spans different media, with pottery, painting, textiles, digital art, and photography highlighting the mastery and creativity of generations of indigenous women. New commissions by the [**Minneapolis Institute of Art**](#) include Navajo master weaver DY Begay’s wool tapestry of a wintry Minnesota landscape and Osage artist Anita Fields’s contemporary take on traditional Osage wedding coats, which in the 19th century were made from military jackets.



Courtesy of Cai Guo-Qiang

Cai Guo-Qiang's "Mountain Range" is made with gunpowder on paper.

The Allure of Matter: Material Art from China

June 2, 2019—January 5, 2020; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles

Cai Guo-Qiang makes drawings through the ignition of gunpowder; He Xiangyu boiled down over 100 tons of Coca-Cola into an earthy residue to use in his installations. ***The Allure of Matter: Material Art from China***, organized by the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#) with the Smart Museum of Art, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Peabody Essex Museum, examines the close relationship between contemporary Chinese artists and their materials. LACMA has in recent years strengthened its contemporary Chinese art collection, with new acquisitions joining about 40 large-scale works.

Less Is a Bore: Maximalist Art & Design

June 26—September 22, 2019; Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Boston

While minimalism and decluttering have had a resurgence, ***Less Is a Bore: Maximalist Art & Design*** recognizes the decadent in art. Referencing Robert Venturi's argument against Mies van der Rohe's assertion that "less is more," ***the exhibition*** focuses on recent maximalist expressions, such as the 1970s Pattern & Decoration movement and how such statements have subverted and critiqued dominant, and usually Western-centric, notions of taste. Memphis Group

founder Ettore Sottsass's colorful designs join the geometric pattern experiments of Sanford Biggers and the vibrant textile installations of Virgil Marti.



Courtesy of the Morgan Library & Museum

Jean Poyer's "The Taming the Tarasque" is among the works captures the role of monsters in medieval art.

Medieval Monsters: Terrors, Aliens, Wonders

July 7—October 6, 2019; Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland

Unicorns, dragons, demons, and decapitated saints carrying their own heads appear throughout illuminated manuscripts, reflecting the anxieties and beliefs of medieval people. [This exhibition](#), which originated at the Morgan Library & Museum and draws on that institution's collections, considers the social role of these monsters. Whether turning marginalized people into beasts or using fantastic creatures to illustrate the power of kings and saints, these works show how monsters were used as sources of fascination and tools of power.



Courtesy of John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection
A Malcolm X sculpture by Dr. Charles Smith

Dr. Charles Smith's African-American Heritage Museum + Black Veterans Archive

July 14, 2019—June 21, 2020; John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

After Dr. Charles Smith returned from his Vietnam War service, he was troubled by how sacrifices by black men and women were overlooked in his home country. So in 1986 he started to turn his whole property in Aurora, Illinois, into the African-American Heritage Museum + Black Veterans Archive, populating it with concrete sculptures of important figures and scenes of history. When he decided to move to Louisiana in the early 2000s, around 200 of these works were acquired by the Kohler Arts Center, which is now displaying them [**in a single exhibition for the first time**](#). The installation is something of a preview of the Arts Center's upcoming Art Preserve, a facility scheduled to open in 2020 that will act as visible storage and a conservation preservation center for its collection of artist-built environments.