

Best of 2024: Artists' Favorite Artists

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Best of 2024

THE ARTISTS' ARTISTS

To take stock of the past year, *Artforum* asked an international group of artists to select a single exhibition or event that most memorably caught their attention in 2024.

- **JOAN JONAS**



Raven Chacon (Swiss Institute, New York)

Raven Chacon's exhibition and performance "A Worm's Eye View from a Bird's Beak" dealt with the immensity of the landscape in which he grew up, the Navajo Nation, as well as others shaped by Indigenous peoples' encounters with colonialism. Combining sound, video, and graphic scores (including one in mural form), it was simply beautiful, but also an important reflection of Raven's world and his experience.

- **PETRIT HALILAJ**



General Idea (Gropius Bau, Berlin; curated by Adam Welch and Beatrix Ruf with Zippora Elders)

Immediately upon entering the show and encountering General Idea's self-portrait as seals surrounded by Styrofoam (*Fin de Siecle*, 1990), I started crying: It was a genius way to represent something that is disappearing—the icebergs, but also their lives during the aids crisis. I connected with their use of costumes, and started to think about identity and the use of animals in my own work—birds and seagulls and my raccoon works with Álvaro Urbano.

You navigated from the discovery of that central installation to the rest of the exhibition, which was so well organized in the space. I was really impressed by the artists' use of structure, color, and form, and how these formal properties can fill me with so much emotion. This emotional structural accessibility was so inspiring and so touching; you learned so much about them and familiarized yourself with the beauty inherent in all these issues that are scary or difficult to access if you're not on the inside. They used their time to say something meaningful for the queer community in such a direct way. I thought about Jorge Zontal's and Felix Partz's deaths, and even though General Idea is gone, the work is still so powerful and so present.

- **ADAM PENDLETON**



Günther Förg (Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, on view through December 20)

This fall I went to Zurich to see an exhibition of works on paper by Günther Förg at Hauser & Wirth. I'd seen his drawings—or more aptly, I think, his paintings on paper—here and there, but never so many all at once. Förg is mostly known for his large paintings on canvas that repeat and overlay crosshatches in a multitude of earthy and sometimes surprising colors. He's one of those artists who looms large in a Euro-German articulation of art history, in which he is perhaps too neatly placed. His paintings exhibit a paradoxical compositional logic that is simultaneously tidy and untidy; they seem to break their own rules. This tension has made his work a perpetual concern of mine. Those crosshatches, the grid, the square, the rectangle, the line, repeated scribbles—these fundamental tools of painting and drawing, overlaid, translated, and transposed—all appeared in this generous selection in different combinations, scales, and mediums. I found each work riotous, unexpected, and inventive. Förg reveals the conceptual physicality of any single gesture, of any single element, uncovering how things come together and just as easily come apart. He was, like me, an avid collector of books. I see that compulsion in his work: trying to make sense of the world on a page.

- **CAMERON SPRATLEY**



Cj Shaw (Weatherproof, Chicago)

“IF YOU ARE INTERESTED I WILL SEND YOU THE FORMULA,” read one of the works in Cj Shaw’s show “it was revealed to me on my walk.” Cj’s paintings are like a mix of Jasper Johns and Three 6 Mafia. Or maybe they’re what the Abstract Expressionists would’ve painted if they had TikTok and the algorithm was the sublime they were trying to represent. They are mysterious and universal, nonchalant and existential. In human form they would all be huddled around one another, smoking, talking about something I don’t quite get. But they make me want to be cool too. So I won’t ask. But I’ll hang out until I catch on.

- **CARMEN WINANT**



Sofía Córdova (JOAN, Los Angeles)

Like the Adrienne Rich poem from which it draws its title, Sofía Córdova’s solo exhibition “The Wreck and Not the Story of the Wreck” at JOAN in Los Angeles visualized the process of sifting through the underground ruins in pieces and parts. In Córdova’s case, the site of the wreckage was specific: the colony of Puerto Rico, where she grew up. Through experiments in video, text, choreography, light, ceramics, and taxidermy (among other forms of media; they were wild and unbound in this way), Córdova unscrewed history, rearranges its telling. Her storytelling was nonlinear, fantastical, and unfixed; she wove narratives of the Black Panthers and the Sandinistas with those of Indigenous and Black fugitives, sometimes setting them to the score of writings by Caribbean intellectuals and poets such as Derek Walcott and Luis M. Díaz Soler. Córdova’s project was one of revolutionary imagination.

- **RYAN GANDER**



Pierre Huyghe (Punta Della Dogana, Venice)

For me, an artist's greatest achievement is to defy expectation. Going to a show and getting what I imagine I'll get doesn't do it for me at all. It's kind of mad to think that we operate in the only part of society where you can do anything and not be considered insane. The art world is a place where anything is possible—the unbelievable and the unimaginable. Mercury ice cream, redesigned drive-thru-attendant uniforms, the invention of words, dog shit on a stick . . . but still 90 percent of art is conformist enough to be flat with four corners and made to be put on the wall.

Entering Pierre Huyghe's worlds is like seeing a color for the first time. Places, moments, relationships, and collisions you never would have thought possible. Feelings that stay with you on the bus home whether you want them to or not. In this new world of art, there is McDonald's and there is omakase, the two distinctly separated by two audiences: those who want to be pleased and those who want to be challenged. Pierre for me is the maestro of omakase, making universal work that is inclusive and open to all, because it is about the very thing we all have in common: what it is to be human. He is one of a handful of artists left who still inspire me to go to the studio with a healthy jealousy.

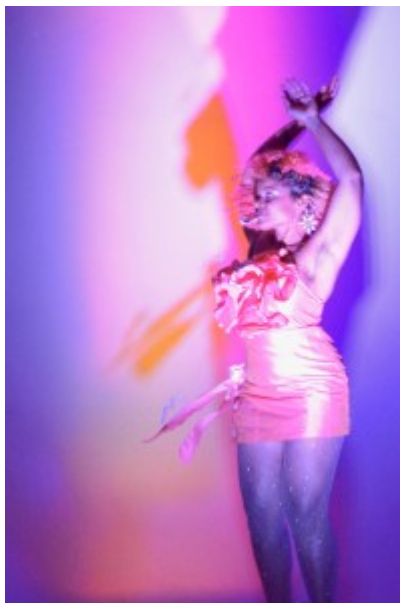
- **MATAAHO COLLECTIVE**



“Te Rā: The Māori Sail” (Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Aotearoa New Zealand) and “Te Rā: Navigating Home” (Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, on view through August 17, 2025.)

It has been incredibly special to see Te Rā, the only known customary Māori woven sail, return for the first time in over two hundred years to our shores in Aotearoa. On loan from the British Museum, it was first shown at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū and then toured to Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, where it is currently on display. The Auckland exhibition contextualizes Te Rā within the revitalization of weaving, situating it between Hine Marama and Māhere Tū ki te Rangī, two recently woven sails by the master weavers of Te Rā Ringa Raupā. Mentored by Dr. Maureen Lander, the group spent years researching Te Rā in the collection storage of the British Museum and figuring out how the intricately woven sail was made. They are currently sharing this invaluable knowledge with multiple weaving collectives throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, teaching them how to make their own sails. A prerequisite for these groups is that the sail must be made to go on a waka and on the water. It must be used!

- **ROSE B. SIMPSON**



India Sky (Albuquerque Museum of Art, on view through March 2, 2025)

I have been a longtime fan of India Sky's creative musical abilities, but to see her live performance at the opening of the exhibition "Broken Boxes: A Decade of Art, Action, and Dialogue," which incorporated her video work and fashion sense, felt like hope in a hopeless and foundering world. India brought grace, courage, and a childlike joy to her presentation delving into the eros of the supernatural and mysterious. She (and those she brings along with her) empowers femme presentation without a thread of victimhood or effort; she goes beyond in all the ways "beyond" should be gone. The sense of multidimensionality was visceral as her live voice permeated the large theater while a filmed portrait of her silently mouthing the words was projected on-screen behind her. My seven-year-old daughter made her way to the edge of the stage, enraptured. Afterward, she waited for a picture with India and received a gift of a pink feather boa. I am learning and allowing my own definition of queerness to evolve. Thank you, India, for the teaching.

- **ARCHIE MOORE**

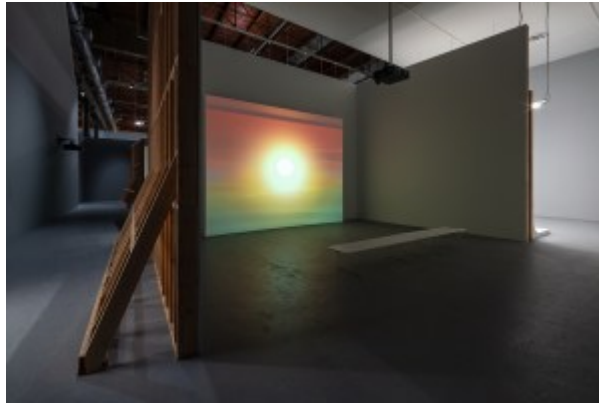


Lutz Bacher (Raven Row, London)

Walking in through the front door of Raven Row, I felt immediately embroiled in and surrounded by the world of Lutz Bacher—whoever she was. Has her true identity been revealed yet?

Enveloped by sound and light, moving through sand to view cathode ray televisions flickering back, I wondered what was around the corner and through the next door. One cannot avoid the features of the eighteenth-century building distracting the eye—the disused fireplaces, the creaking wooden floorboards—but they seemed to work well with Bacher’s transistor radios, old organ, and soundproofing foam. With Leonard Cohen’s unremitting appeal of “please” on loop in the background, I wondered what unified all the objects, sounds, and visuals in this “cornceptual” (to use a term coined by the late New York gallerist Colin de Land, but adopted by Bacher) installation. I decided it didn’t matter, because the pleasure of going from room to room was enough and I could think about it later, as I was sure the sensory experience would continue to pop up in my mind.

- **JES FAN**



Paul Pfeiffer (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles)

Good cinema makes you question whether you're still inside the movie once you leave the theater. Paul's show at MoCA, "Prologue to the Story of the Birth of Freedom," did just that. I visited twice, and each time, I felt the exhibition's frequencies continue to linger as I left the museum.

- **JORDAN NASSAR**



Wafa Ghnaim

Though not an artist in the usual sense, Wafa Ghnaim, a Palestinian dress historian, researcher, curator, and educator, is my pick for the most inspiring cultural producer of the past year. In 2024 she completed a yearlong stint as the senior research fellow in the Antonio Ratti Textile Center and the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where she researched and documented the origins of the over forty Palestinian embroidered items in the museum's collection. Her work to connect Palestinian oral history, the ancient world, and scientific analysis of material culture is, I believe, crucial at this moment, when Palestinians, as well as our culture and history, are under threat of erasure.

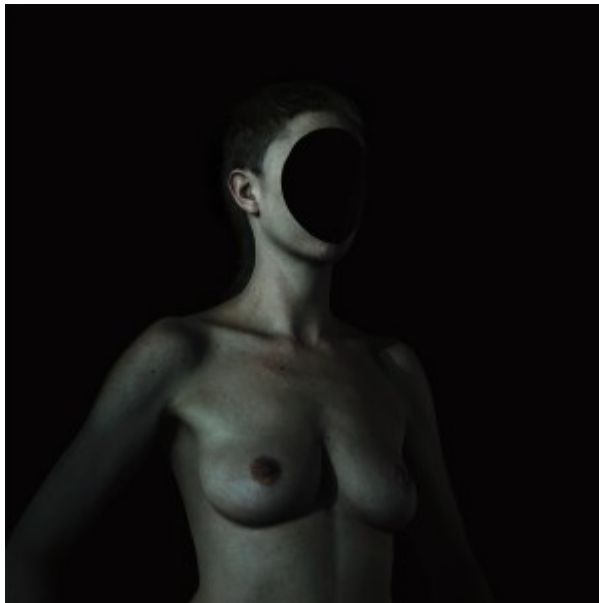
- **LEYLA YENIRCE**



Chantal Akerman (Jeu de Paume, Paris, on view through January 19, 2025)

At age nineteen, I saw my first Chantal Akerman film, her debut short, *Saute ma ville* (Blow Up My Town, 1968), and it turned my world upside down. Encountering Akerman now as an independent artist myself, I was able to distance myself from my former idolization. This show, which traveled from Bozar Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, includes photographs (some quite funny), scripts, articles, audio, and press clips relating to her major films. I wish I'd had a whole week to study it all. A mesmerizing multichannel video installation based on her 1993 film *D'Est* (From the East), originally adapted for a 1995 exhibition, allowed me to fully immerse myself in Akerman's elliptical and melancholy material. The film documents a journey from East Berlin to Moscow following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Particularly memorable was a night scene accompanied by a delicate voice-over by Akerman, followed by a Hebrew song. It was moving and beautiful.

- **YUAN GOANG-MING**



Pierre Huyghe (Punta della Dogana, Venice)

The most impressive exhibition I've seen recently was "Liminal" by Pierre Huyghe at Punta della Dogana in Venice. The exhibition not only showcased Huyghe's major works from the past decade, but also included new commissions created specifically for this show.

His new piece, *Liminal*, 2024–, was located at the show's entrance. The projection was enormous in scale, making the viewer feel diminutive in comparison. In the video, a naked woman covers her face with one hand, and through the gaps between fingers, her face is vaguely discernible. Her visage resembles a black hole, evoking a sense of mystery and the feeling that something is hidden or yet to be revealed. As observers, we are transported into a parallel dimension, sensing the presence of the "other." The audience is naturally led to contemplate the self, identity, existence, and the boundaries between reality and illusion.

- **MARIANNA SIMNETT**



Käthe Kollwitz (Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Whether depicting a clandestine lover's embrace or a mother gripping her dead child close, the intensity of Kollwitz's gaze in 1900s Berlin completely floored me. Even through the greatest pain, she refused to look away. Her exquisite lines resonated with me deeply, in a rare, once-a-year-if-you're-lucky type of way, when art truly takes hold of you.

- **ASAD RAZA**

Tino Sehgal (Sanssouci Palace, Potsdam, Germany)

Tino Sehgal's strongest exhibitions often counterpose iconic architecture—the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Gropius Bau in Berlin—with the movement, speech, and song of his interpreters, creating a resonance between a building and a fountain of human actions. In *This joy*, 2020, his first new piece I've seen since 2015, the contrast is there inside the work: It's a "Tino version" of the ur-canonical landmark of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, featuring unassisted voices and choreography. I went with two children, aged five and one. They were focused and placated right away by the atmosphere of charged thickness created by the movements and singing of two interpreters (Sandhya Daemgen and Hanako Hayakawa). The familiar symphonic themes appeared and disappeared within moving improvisations. Choreography passed from one body part to another; the hand and eye motions mesmerized. As the interpreters sang the "Ode to Joy," they danced as full humans, a catharsis, while singing the titles of past Sehgal works. The two-hundred-year-old composition became timelessly contemporary. The five-year-old remarked, "They're like robots, and they never stop!" while the one-year-old sang Beethovenian notes to herself in her stroller for an hour afterward. Ludwig van, a professional improviser, would have approved.