

HYPERALLERGIC

ARTICLES

Best of 2018: Our Top 20 Exhibitions Around the World

Hyperallergic's writers and editors around the world share their top non-US exhibition choices this year.



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Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Hunters in the Snow" (1565), oak panel, 117 × 162 cm (photo courtesy Kunsthistorisches Museum, © KHM-Museumsverband)

It's no coincidence that this year's best exhibitions comprise an assembly of attempts to survive in a world racked by atavistic politics and nationalistic fervor. That's not to say, however, that curators produced insipid elegies for the international chaos we face. On the contrary, they have tried to blaze an alternative path toward the future by looking at the radical

past. Artists like Kader Attia stood undaunted by the colonial sins of countries like France while innovators like Ryoji Ikeda continued their attempts to visualize our increasingly digital world. Similarly, large group

exhibitions and biennials built upon frameworks of freedom and equality to demonstrate the might of art in visualizing pertinent topics like migration, women’s equality, and LGBTQ rights. A few picks stood out for their encapsulating success and longevity that we’ve also included a few that started at the tail-end of 2017. Here are our top picks.

1. *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas (Afro-Atlantic Histories)* at São Paulo Museum of Art (São Paulo, Brazil)



Sidney Amaral, “Incômodo (Disturbance)” (2014), series of five drawings (photo by Seph Rodney)

June 28–October 21

The exhibition *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas (Afro-Atlantic Histories)*, mounted at the São Paulo Museum of Art, (MASP) and the Tomie Ohtake Institute, is breathtaking in ambition, scope, and display. It was one of those few exhibitions that

actually delivered what it said it would: a comprehensive and complex retelling of the expansion of the African diaspora among Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe between the 16th and 21st centuries. At its heart, the exhibition imagines that the historic influence of African people on Brazilian culture is to be both examined and celebrated. Curators Adriano Pedrosa, Ayrson Heráclito, Hélio Menezes, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, and Tomás Toledo used the occasion of the 130th anniversary of slavery’s abolition in Brazil — the last country to end the trade, which brought about 11 million Africans to this side of the Atlantic — to launch its critical investigation from the vantage of art. —*Seph Rodney*

2. *Hannah Ryggen: Woven Histories* at Modern Art Oxford (Oxford, United Kingdom)



Hannah Ryggen, "Blood in the Grass" (1966)
(image courtesy KODE-Art Museums of Bergen,
photo by KODE/Dag Fosse, © Hannah Ryggen /
DACS 2017)

November 11, 2017–February 18, 2018

Sometimes, an exhibition checks all of Hyperallergic's boxes. Here is an [excellently curated show](#) by [Ridgway and Stephanie Straine](#) about a little-known female artist from the remote hinterlands of Scandinavia, who created anti-fascist textiles, often with her own urine, to construct communist lampoons about migration and American presidents. What's not to

like? Hannah Ryggen is an audaciously honest artist, which makes her small retrospective at Modern Art Oxford all the more vital at a moment of political insouciance. An outsider artist fighting for justice in the world, Ryggen's off-kilter and humorous aspects of her naturally dyed tapestries is simply the vegan frosting on this superb flour-free cake of a show
—Zachary Small

3. [Buscas Aún, Nos Buscas Lugar](#) (You are still looking, you are looking for a place) at Museo Textil de Oaxaca (Oaxaca, Mexico)



Emilia Sandoval, *Buscas aún, nos buscas lugar*,
installation view (photo by Sarah Rose Sharp)

October 6–February 10

In a haunting (and perhaps haunted) body of work, [Emilia Sandoval](#) grapples with the loss of her mother by creating ghostly echoes of her worldly possessions in layers of fabric and shadow.

Sandoval is on a mission to recover what has been lost. She presents a spectral domestic ensemble, framed by midcentury furniture pieces (e.g. a

display case, a dining room set), that radiate a sense of use and history. From a painstakingly tidy square comprised of her mother's carefully folded handkerchiefs to an assortment of greeting cards and letters addressed to her mother, Sandoval seems to suggest that these possessions have taken on an otherworldly significance when stripped of their quotidian use. It's a subtle and moving [exhibition](#), curated by Mónica Castillo, about loss and memory. —*Sarah Rose Sharp*

4. *Bruegel: Once in a Lifetime at Kunsthistorischesmuseum (Vienna, Austria)*



Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Hunters in the Snow" (1565), oak panel, 117 × 162 cm (photo courtesy Kunsthistorisches Museum, © KHM-Museumsverband)

October 2, 2018–January 13, 2019

It's taken 450 years, but Pieter Breugel the Elder has finally received the honor he deserves with the world's [first major solo retrospective](#) of his work, curated by Sabine Pénotwhich. Already containing an exceptional collection of the artist's oeuvre (thanks, Hapsburg dynasty!)

Vienna's Kunsthistorischesmuseum

has assembled almost half of all the artist's known works, including examples of his paintings, drawings, and prints, for this four-month exhibition. A wry social critic whose frenetic peasant scenes, wondrous landscapes, and wintry tundras still attract the eye, Brueghel is a timeless master of his craft. —ZS

5. *L'Un et l'Autre (One and the Other) at Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France)*

February 2–May 13



Installation view of *L'Un et l'Autre* (*One and Other*) at the Palais de Tokyo (photo by André Morin © ADAGP, courtesy Palais de Tokyo)

In my opinion, the best show in Paris this year was *L'Un et l'Autre* (*One and Other*), curated by Kader Attia and Jean-Jacques Lebel with Jean de Loisy, at the Palais de Tokyo. This cunning, transcultural, and transgenerational collection of modern and contemporary artworks and fetishist objects presents a coterie of malevolent political atrocities. Meanwhile, the

curators have posed timely recommendations for mental recovery through their creativity. *L'Un et l'Autre's* generosity of recuperative, self-therapeutic vision rescues its semi-satirical art from replicating the heartbreaking cruelty it critiques. —*Joseph Nechvatal*

6. *Game Changers*, Public Art Munich 2018 (Munich, Germany)



Massimo Furlan's reenactment of an infamous 1974 soccer match between East and West Germany (© David Ulrichs)

April 30–July 27

Game Changers, the 2018 edition of Public Art Munich curated by Joanna Warsza, demonstrates art's capacity to camouflage as social praxis, signaling an experiential turn in public art toward affect and experience. The 20 commissions on view exemplify that art has the power to construct

meaningful relationships between society and politics. Notable projects included Cana Bilir-Meier's laying of a ceremonial foundation at the oldest mosque in Munich, which was once used by the CIA during the Cold War to radicalize members of the Muslim Brotherhood; a live drawing of current events in a public underpass by journalist and artist

Dan Perjovschi; and a whistleblowing infographic-installation depicting secret sites currently in use by the BND (the German secret service) by Franz Wanner. Above all, Public Art Munich reminded me that, in such remarkably bleak and desperate times, there has never been a greater need for radical, insurrectionary public art. —*Dorian Batycka*

7. *Petani Semasa* at ILHAM Gallery (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)



Installation shot of *Petani Semasa* in Ilham gallery (all images courtesy Ilham gallery)

March 25–July 15

Petani is a geopolitically fraught region that has been silenced, ignored, and abused for too long. With 27 artists, many of which are from the predominantly Muslim region in Southern Thailand, *Petani Semasa*, curated by Gridthiya Gaweewong,

Kasamaponn Saengsuratham, Kittima Chareeprasit, and Ekkalak Naphthesuk, offers a deeply complex window into life there. As borders around the world are tightened, and minority groups are pushed ever farther toward the fringes, [this exhibition](#) is a model for the role art can take in the world. The exhibition began at MAIIAM in Chiang Mai and traveled to Kuala Lumpur, where I was lucky enough to see it. —*Ben Valentine*

8. *Under Cover: A Secret History Of Cross-Dressers* at The Photographer's Gallery (London, United Kingdom)

February 23–June 3

Drawing on collector Sébastien Lifshitz's archive of amateur photography, [Under Cover](#) and curated by Karen McQuaid, this exhibition



Man in makeup wearing ring; photograph from a photo booth, with highlights of color (United States, circa 1920) (photo © Sébastien Lifshitz Collection, courtesy of Sébastien Lifshitz and The Photographers' Gallery)

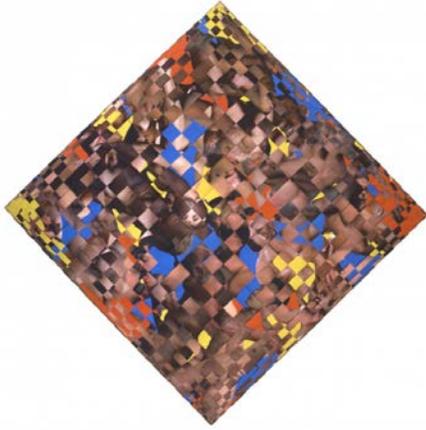
contains a litany of crossdressing subjects from the 1880s onwards. A triumphant success, this minimally curated exhibition allows photography to speak for itself. Like flipping through a long-forgotten family album, these images reminded me of Morgan M. Page's essay in *Trap Door* about gossip and access in trans history-telling. Page's essential thesis is that all history amounts to is hot gossip. A conspiracy theory: What if, searching through Lifshitz's archive of found photography, I stumbled across an image of my grandmother or grandfather in drag? What about my great-grandmother or my great-great

grandmother? How would these documents inform my identity as a genderqueer person? How could they change my life? If history is hot gossip, then photography is a juicy tabloid ripe for queer consumption. And unlike other LGBTQ-themed exhibitions in London this year, The Photographer's Gallery was the only institution I saw that treated its subjects with grace rather than judgment. —ZS

9. *Dinh Q. Lê: Skin on Skin* at 10 Chancery Lane Gallery (Hong Kong, China)

March 22–April 28

Nestled near the now-decommissioned Central Police Station in Hong Kong, Dinh Q. Lê's staff-curated [solo exhibition](#) at 10 Chancery Lane sought to vindicate heavily-policed bodies and sexualities. In his square collages turned curiously on their corners, Lê weaves together



Dinh Q. Lê, "Gay Mixed No.1" (2018), Epson archival inkjet print on Epson doubleweight matte paper, with acid-free double-sided tape and pH neutral linen tape, 110 x 110 cm (image courtesy 10 Chancery Lane Gallery)

photographs of queer pornography culled from the Internet as commentary on the ongoing sexual revolution in his native country of Vietnam, where the availability of high-speed connections have made taboo subjects more accessible. Lê also makes clear that heightened visibility for the marginalized has always been intertwined with a fear of erasure. Gazing upon the different glamorized bodies spliced together, of varying hues and indiscernible genders, one surmises that sexual attraction and love are

not dependent on identity, but perhaps melancholic longing is. —*Danielle Wu*

10. *Anthea Hamilton: The Squash* at Tate Britain (London, United Kingdom)



March 22–October 7

Every year, a contemporary artist is let loose in Tate Britain's gargantuan Duveen Galleries and allowed to transform it into their own private kingdom. The results are often mixed, but this year's commission, curated by Linsey Young, did not disappoint. Anthea Hamilton, who was nominated for last year's Turner Prize, decked the hall with white tiles, filled it with sculptures from Tate's collection

Tate Britain Commission: Anthea Hamilton 'The Squash' 2018 (photo: © Tate (Seraphina Neville))

and peopled it with mysterious, mobile, squash-headed beings. Mincing around the sculptures and sidling up to unsuspecting visitors, the fantastical creatures brought the museum's cold interior to life and somehow made you feel naked if you didn't have a pumpkin on your head.
—Naomi Polansky

11. *Debt* at Khalili Al Sakakini Cultural Center for The Qalandiya International (West Bank, Jerusalem)



Installation view of *Debt* (image courtesy Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center)

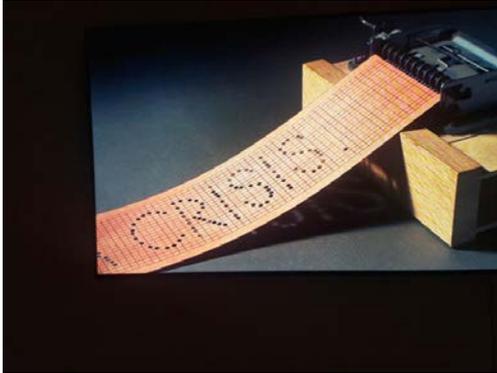
October 3–November 23

Can debt bind people together and generate a new form of solidarity? That was the question posed by this exhibition, which is featured in the fourth edition of the Palestinian *Qalandiya International* Biennial. *Debt's* curators, Reem Shadid and Yazan

Khalili, invited 17 artists — including Walid Raad, Jill Magid, Omnia Sabri, Casey Asprooth-Jackson, and Mujahed Khallaf — to reflect upon the notions of solidarity and debt through works that analyze and challenge existing institutional models in the art world and beyond. Large and expensive works, like Magid's *The Proposal* (2016) and Raad's *Walkthrough, Part I* (2014-2018), were represented in posters and wall-prints due to the exhibition's shoe-string budget and the implausibility of shipping art works into the walled-off and checkpoint-controlled city of Ramallah in the West Bank. Amid such stakes, *Debt* was an outstanding achievement for a community in desperate need for a new definition of solidarity.

—Hakim Bishara

12. *Tensão & Conflito (Tension and Conflict)* at the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (Lisbon, Portugal)



Still from *12 Short Songs* (2009) by Jorge Macchi, which shows wooden music boxes playing tunes from punch cards conveying newspaper headlines. Part of *Tensions & Conflict* at MAAT (all images by the author for Hyperallergic)

September 1, 2017–March 19, 2018

A massive survey of long- and short-form video art from the last 10 years, [this exhibition](#), curated by Pedro Gadanho, focuses on the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath. It is challenging not only for its content but in how it demands a viewer's sustained attention. Museum director and curator Pedro Gadanho presents work from a truly international

array of 22 artists from North, Central, and South America, Europe, Russia, and the Middle East, who reflect on the conditions of the financial crisis; their strategies include a range from real-world acts of political resistance to more abstract approaches. With some works running to the two-hour mark, it is unrealistic that any visitor could take in the entire exhibition in a single visit, but to pick and choose even just a handful of pieces still offers a complex, faceted, and overwhelming view of a world in the grips of late-stage capitalism. —SRS

13. *Kader Attia. Scars remind us that our past is real* at Fundació Joan Miró (Barcelona, Spain)

April 15–September 30

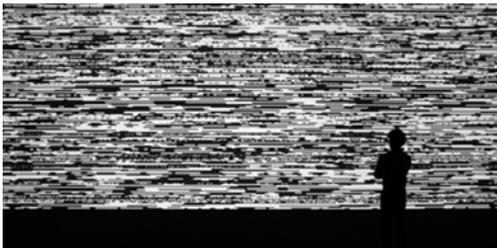
Trauma has no better masseuse than [Kader Attia](#), the wunderkind French-Algerian artist whose work traces the psycho-geographic terrains of pain through scars, big and small, in his Barcelona solo exhibition. Seen at the



"J'accuse" (2016), installation, wooden busts on metallic plinths, wooden sculptures on metallic supports, single-screen video projection (photo by Zachary Small for Hyperallergic)

Fundació Joan Miró, the artist-curated show was such a masterpiece that I still think about it many months later. A crucial observer of how art and architecture can convene new political realities for its viewers, Attia localizes his message for Barcelona by interviewing several working class people caught up in Spain's unfolding migrant crisis. —ZS

14. Ryoji Ikeda: *continuum* at Centre Pompidou (Paris, France)



Ryoji Ikeda, "code-verse" (2018) (photo by Joseph Nechvetel)

June 15–August 27

There are artists who want to visualize our digital environs with impressionistic song-and-dances or intrepid, analytical reportage. There are others, however, who just want you to buckle in and enter the

dang Matrix. Japanese artist [Ryoji Ikeda](#) belongs squarely to that latter group. Over the last year, his immersive multimedia sound and projection installations have enthralled Europe, from London to Paris. Tributes to experimental music's evolution alongside the rise of digital technologies, Ikeda's works deliver an experience worthy of their monumental size. Within the reams of audiovisual data he compiles, the artist allows us to see poetry, and in turn, the contrasting human and alien components that build the binary code of our digital lives. His exhibition at Centra Pompidou was curated by Marcella Lista. —ZS

15. *Fernando Portal: Bienes Públicos* (*Fernando Portal: Public Goods*) at Galería NAC (Santiago de Chile, Chile)



Ergonomic chairs in Fernando Portal's *Bienes Públicos* at Galería NAC (photo by Elisa Wouk Almino/Hyperallergic)

May 10–June 8

As I wrote in [May of this year](#), there is an effort among curators and scholars in Chile to uncover what was buried and erased during the dictatorship. The architect Fernando Portal recently learned about a group of young designers who developed ideas for day-to-day objects to be distributed by state

programs. But with the coup of 1973, their facilities were raided and prototypes were destroyed. For *Bienes Públicos* (“Common Goods”), curated by Nicole Andreu, Portal recreated these objects — including a record player, ergonomic chairs, a typewriter, and spoons — based on the drawings, photos, and notes left behind. —*Elisa Wouk Almino*

16. *Carlos Motta: The Crossing* at the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam, Netherlands)



Film still from Carlos Motta's *The Crossing* (courtesy the Stedelijk Museum)

September 16, 2017–January 21, 2018

“Think global but act local” has become a bromide suitable for bumper stickers, but it’s also the driving force behind Carlos Motta’s brilliant and heartbreaking [The Crossing](#) exhibition, curated by Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen,

which documents the plight of 11 LGBTQI refugees from North African

and the Middle East who immigrated to Amsterdam. From his subjects, Motta extracts harrowing stories of escape and struggle, compounded by how his queer subjects are often alienated or physically separated from other asylum seekers because of their genders or sexual orientations. For added flavor, the artist includes two vitrines showcases objects from the Netherlands' colonial past, exemplifying why the Dutch have a responsibility to harbor immigrants fleeing to their lowland country for better lives. —ZS

17. *Martha Wilson: Staging the Journals at MFC-Michèle Didier (Paris, France)*



“Mona/Marcel/Marge” (2014), lenticular photograph (all images, unless otherwise indicated, are © Martha Wilson, courtesy of Michèle Didier, Paris)

September 7–November 9

Martha Wilson’s [recent exhibition](#), curated by staff at Michèle Didier in Paris, brought together a survey of works beginning in the 1970s that examine the roles prescribed for women when Wilson was about to embark on her career as a young woman in a patriarchal world. She found the offerings on hand lacking. Her witty and deadpan observations began there and culminate in her ongoing impersonations of America’s first ladies, from Nancy Reagan to Melania Trump. With her video of Melania, there is a complex double entendre on aging as the forty-eight-year-old first lady tries to look twenty; the image dissolves into the face of Wilson, who has

recently turned seventy. —*Susan Silas*

18. Riga Biennial of Contemporary Art (Riga, Latvia)



Nikos Navridis, "All of Old. Nothing Else Ever..." (2018) (photo by Alpesh Kantilal Patel)

June 2–October 28

The theme of the first [Riga Biennial of Contemporary Art](#)

(RIBOCA) was tied to “Baltic-Nordic post-Soviet dynamics.”

While heavy-handed, the exhibition overall was a

success. Veteran curator Katerina Gregos selected a number of

compelling artworks by artists who

are not so well known outside — or even inside — the Baltic region. The works were scattered among eight different venues, but in a thoughtful matter. The curatorial team carefully considered the history of each site in relation to the works exhibited. —*Alpesh Kantilal Patel*

19. *Sophie Calle et son invitée Serena Carone* (*Sophie Calle and his invited guest Serena Carone*) at Musée de la chasse et de la nature (Paris, France)

October 10, 2017–February 11, 2018

At a time when the traditional retrospective has fallen out of style, French conceptual artist [Sophie Calle’s intervention](#) in a 17th-century mansion showcases the triumphs of hunting and offers a clever take. Scattered throughout all three floors of the museum’s permanent exhibitions, Calle’s works ranged from poems about her father’s recent death to, more whimsically, the museum’s taxidermy moose dressed in a red *négligée*.



Installation view of *Sophie Calle and his invited guest Serena Carone* (image by Rosey Selig-Addiss)

While Calle's actions are ripe with playful humor, this lightness should not be misunderstood as lack of sincerity. On the contrary, Calle has used this opportunity to invade the museum's physical space with her own mythological world, with the help of curator Sonia Voss. It is one in which the boundaries between life and death, man and animal, and reality and fiction are all confused. Through her play with the notion of "hunting," Calle offers a contemporary view on femininity that celebrates the power of beauty, desire, and seduction. —*Rosey Selig-Addiss*

20. *Rhee Seundja: Road to Antipodes* at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Seoul, South Korea)



Installation view of *Road to Antipodes* at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (image courtesy the museum)

March 22–July 29

The #MeToo movement has engendered robust discussion about gender equality in South Korea. In this context, *Rhee Seundja: Road to the Antipodes* at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art casts a spotlight on the titular artist. The

retrospective, curated by Park Mi-hwa, celebrated the centennial of Rhee's birth and traced her six-decade artistic career. In over 120 works, Rhee achieves a pure harmony of contradictory ideas such as East and West,

spiritual and material, natural and artificial, and life and death. Within her work, the artist continually embraces such oppositions to create a unity in her natural landscapes. Accordingly, the exhibition allowed us to read Korean modern and contemporary art from Rhee's unprecedented point of view. —*Hayoung Chung*