

New York's Standout Gallery Shows Are on the Lower East Side
Benjamin Sutton, Wednesday, September 24, 2014



Detail of Ajay Kurian, *Comfort Zone #2 (Enlightenment)* (2014) at Rachel Uffner Gallery.
Photo: Benjamin Sutton.

The fall art season is off to a typically bloated start in New York, with many complaining of a lackluster lineup of shows at Chelsea galleries—but a stroll through the Lower East Side reveals this month's best exhibitions, with a verve unmatched elsewhere in the Big Apple right now. Herewith, a highly subjective selection of must-see shows on and east of the Bowery.

“Flat Neighbors” at Rachel Uffner Gallery, through October 19.

This Ajay Kurian-curated group show comes across as a refreshing playground for the senses, packing a real surrealist punch through improbable juxtapositions. The smoky, incense-like odor in the gallery comes from Elaine Cameron-Weir's huge sci-fi clam shell sculpture, rimmed in neon and with a small flame burning fragrant frankincense and myrrh where its pearl would be. Elsewhere, Kurian's own aquarium-sized sculpture, *Comfort Zone #2 (Enlightenment)*, offers a Power Ranger action figure seated in the lotus position amid a glimmering diorama featuring miniature paintings, a melting letter G, and mirrored decor that resembles a kid's playtime version of a strip club. But the most interesting works, for my money, are a pair of pieces by Dora Budor, jutting from the gallery ceiling and wall like big, flat TV monitors. One of these features dozens of fake frogs encased in translucent resin—they are the actual props that pour down on Los Angeles in the climactic scene of the Paul Thomas Anderson movie *Magnolia* (the artist knows someone who was involved in the production and was able to procure the props). Glimpsed from below, with light filtering through from the skylight above, this outstanding piece conjures a genuine sense of unease.