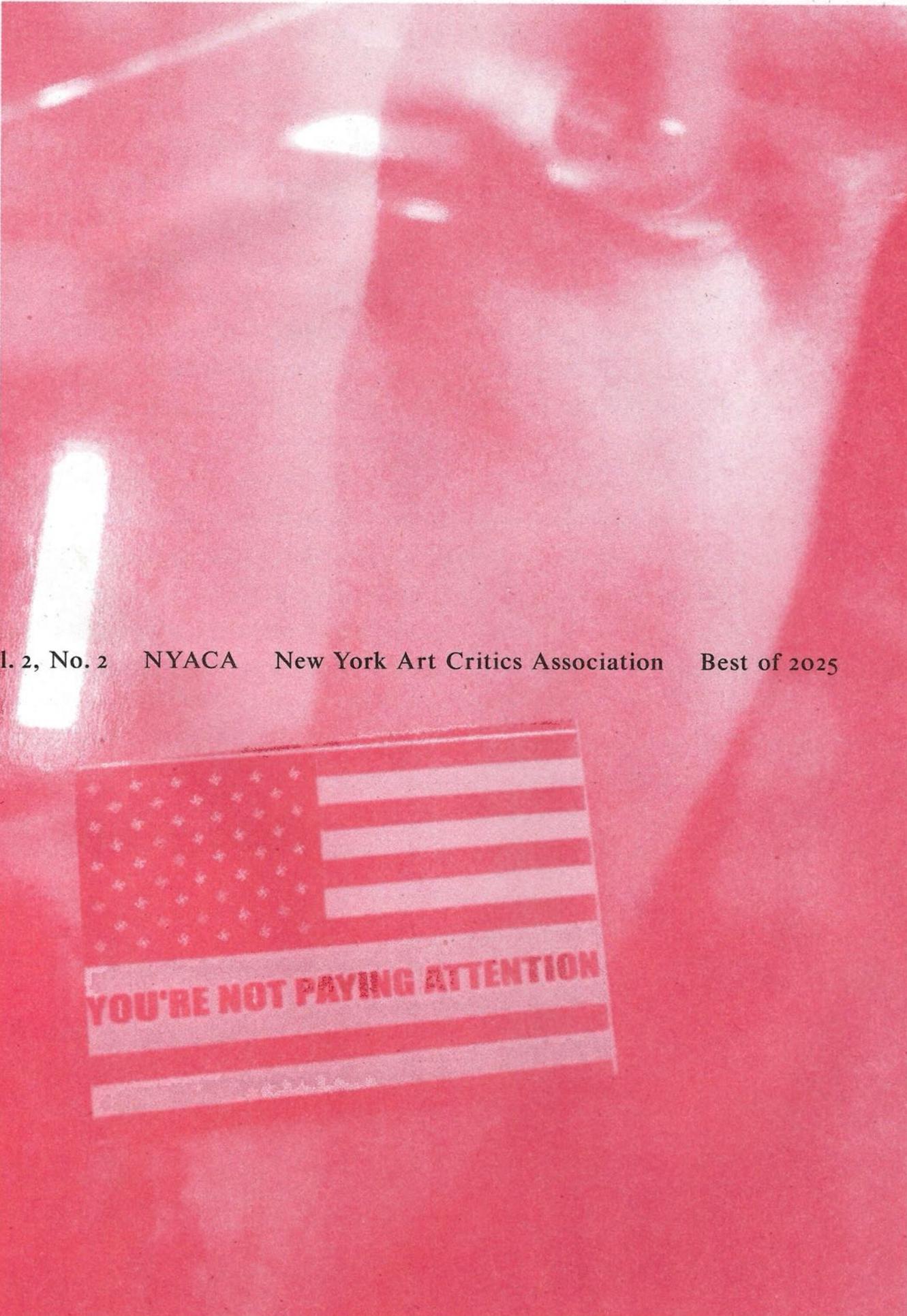


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A red-tinted photograph of a gallery space. In the foreground, a sign with a stylized American flag pattern (stars and stripes) is visible. The sign features the text "YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION" in bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. The background shows a dark, possibly black, wall or structure, with some light reflecting off a surface, suggesting a gallery or museum environment.

YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION

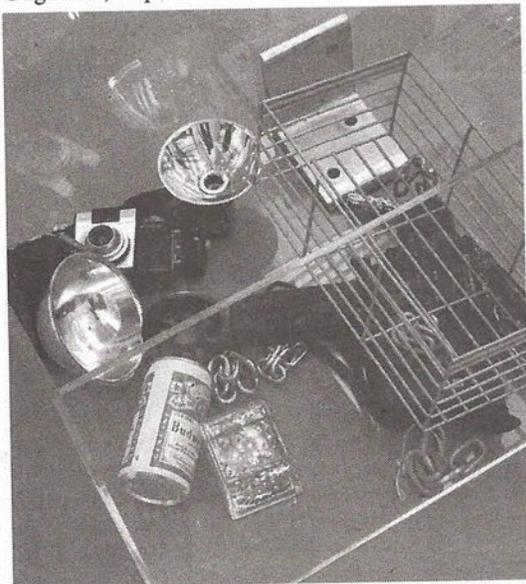
WOLFGANG TILLMANS, Nothing could have prepared us—Everything could have prepared us, Centre Pompidou, Paris, June 13–Sept. 22.

An immersive “Truth Study Center,” fitting for the space of the Pompidou’s library, now emptied ahead of major renovations to the museum, in a time when books are once again being banned, when information and images are easily manipulated, and not to be blindly trusted.

This show was absolutely spectacular. The very best, most comprehensive this artist has ever orchestrated in an institutional setting (and here across 6,000 square meters). A true achievement that met our moment politically, philosophically, and intellectually. Tillmans created intimacy, rhythms, reflections and correspondence within the architecture of this vast space. Who else would have handled it as sensitively and so deftly? A tour-de-force with much subtlety and passages of quiet beauty.

Of particular note: Tillmans’s *Memorial to the Victims of Organized Religion* (2006/24), one of the truly monumental works of our time. To have encountered our reflection in this broad black mirror, spread across two walls like an open book to be entered, was to be reminded of something this artist once astutely observed: “We are never just one person.”

CADY NOLAND, with works by STEVEN PARRINO, Gagosian, Sept. 10–Oct. 18.



With all its references to violence, derangement, guns, capital punishment, would-be assassins, and law enforcement, what were the chances this show would open on a day marked by a shocking political assassination?

This was the artist’s largest exhibition in New York in thirty years (at Paula Cooper in 1994), which many younger admirers of Noland’s, artists and critics, wouldn’t have seen, or only in pictures. They may also have been unable to travel to her retrospective in Frankfurt in 2018–19, or to the excellent presentation of her work at Glenstone last year. So this show would have been nothing less than an event for them. That’s something we don’t consider, those of us who have been around over the long haul: any number of shows by artists we know well should be considered as more for those who are engaging directly with the art for the first time. Even though much of what was on view here was new work, it was grounded in Noland’s longtime preoccupations, inhabited by figures from a personal “rogues gallery” that have previously animated, some might say

haunted, her now-classic, perceptive essays on a particularly American condition, a country born and steeped in violence, where sociopaths are as rewarded as reviled.

In a room which appeared almost as if her studio had been transported to the gallery—a filing cabinet, a rolling worktable, a mini fridge, wheeled Brute trash bins—there were images that might have been from an archival picture file along with photos taken as she considered various combinations and placement ahead of the installation: thought made visible. In the spareness of the objects and a palette pared down to black, white and red, in her reductive forms, industrial material, and repetition, Noland needs to be seen as a minimalist, albeit one with charged subject matter. This aligns with the work of her close friend, the late Steven Parrino, here represented by a number of his signature mis-stretched monochromes—the “purity” of an otherwise pristine canvas ruptured by a sign of violence, whether in its distortion or having been shot through with a large hole. Their works complemented one another in the gallery’s main room, and it was her suggestion that his paintings be included.

No great surprise that the show received a mixed reception, given that its audience would be comprised of those seeing so much in-person for the first time, and others who hold the artist to the “greatest hits” of the late ‘80s/mid-‘90s—not unlike fans at a Strolling Bones concert who only want to hear “Satisfaction” and “Jumpin’ Jack Flash.” One mid-level gallery owner, a super-fan, surely not without some measure of jealousy, publicly criticized the show: “Its bad. What a waste of a legacy.” Of course this is someone doesn’t have a legacy to stand on. And might he have pushed someone down a flight of stairs if it meant that he could show, and sell, some of her new work? (The art-dealer-as-case-study, and some animus, surely, for this show’s venue.) But then as now, no one holds Noland to a higher standard than she herself. For those surprised that this show was going to be on a Best of 2025 list, the fact that Noland is working again after what had been a long, Garbo-like suspension, and is willing to take risks, able to take on an unforgiving, oversized space, is nothing less than remarkable.

KIRA SCERBIN, Gaping Hole Live, King’s Leap, Sept. 12–Oct. 18.

These fascinating images remind us that art is in the details and painting is in its handling, or should be. Not true for many representational painters today, especially those whose figuration reminds us of color-by-numbers in grade school. But then what exactly is Kira Scerbin representing, and maybe she hovers over something closer to disfiguration? Proximity is required of viewers. The birds and beaks in these works, the gape of the avian throat, the ladybug in *Ladybug*, a painting which features a gently beguiling interspecies encounter. Look closely at the humanoid female form posed for *Thistle* and the stylized star on its breast. And the face, an ovoid balloon with a single circled “eye” in its forehead, mirroring an O-shaped mouth below, taken from where, a blow-up doll? Some of the figures appear to be on stage, performing, or have come out for a bow—the gowned diva in *Seagull*, all bosom and neck and over-inflated head, ready to burst on the highest note. The gorgeous *Here Comes Your Man* (*Surge*) may have been the show’s standout. It’s visceral and alive as painting, bright and dark contrast, smudged sky and scraped ground, velvety reds and blacks, acidic pink: an emotionally, chromatically charged image. Arms fully extended left and right beyond the frame, this is

a pictorial balancing act. And the dress at the bottom edge, is it about to dissolve? Are we?

This gallery, as others on the Lower East Side, continues to surprise and take chances from one show to the next. Others of particular note: Lorenzo Bueno and Max Guy; Joe W. Speier, *Making Space*.

GEORGES DE LA TOUR, *From Shadow to Light*, Curated by Dr. Gail Feigenbaum and Pierre Curie, Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, Sept. 11, 2025–Jan. 25, 2026. This was an exceptional opportunity to view more than thirty masterpieces—among only forty known paintings—by the great master of light. Often illuminated by a single candle, de la Tour gives equal reverence to saints and common people, from John the Baptist to the *Woman Catching Fleas*. In our time, when painting is all too often a poster-type illustration, here was cinematic revelation. You could almost feel the heat of the flame, see its flicker in the darkness beyond.

VAGINAL DAVIS, *Magnificent Product*, Organized by Jody Graf and Sheldon Gooch, MoMA PS1, Oct. 9, 2025–Mar. 2, 2026.



A force of nature barely tamed or contained by the seemingly inescapable capacity of institutions to “make nice” when niceties are never part of an artist’s equation, to present provocation as somehow less toothsome and biting. With Miss Davis you either go with the flow, at times a torrent, or wisely step aside. The curators bravely embraced the mayhem, magic, and irreverence that was her romp through the 1970s, ‘80s, ‘90s, and beyond. With ‘zines like *Fertile Latoya Jackson*, her bands ¡Cholita!, the female Menudo, and Pedro, Muriel & Esther (their Steve Albini-recorded ‘96 release, *The White To Be Angry*, is a classic), Miss Davis laid down the gauntlet for “anti-normative, anti-capitalist punk, and queer politics.” (thank you wall text.) Referring to herself as a Blacktress, turning wherever she was into her stage, always larger than life, playing the encore first, Miss Davis foregrounded race and sexuality with raucous humor and flowing innuendo.

The exhibition included three standout installations. *Naked on my Ozygoad: Faustus—Anal Deep Throat*, a collaboration with Jonathan Berger that takes the *Wizard Of Oz* into other realms, accompanied by wall paintings created with makeup; *The Wicked Pavilion: A Tween Bedroom*; and an archival extravaganza barely veiled by sheer curtains. There was also Miss Davis’s complete literary body of work. Rows of books lined high shelves, kept away

from tiny, prying hands. She didn’t even have to write them. She only had to imagine their hilarious titles. Our favorite: *Your Pussy Killed My Husband*. (The retrospective was initially organized by Hendrik Folkerts at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm in 2024.)

JOEL WYLLIE, *Aerial the Projectionist*, Foreign & Domestic, Oct. 9–Nov. 9. Otherworldly drawings of which photos barely do justice. Not to mention the unavoidable reflection of gallery lights, though they added to the strangeness of already mutant/poignant images. (They provided one of the darker, more ominous heads with what might be luminous horns.) Drawings are often about touch, the hovering hand of the artist, and these alien-appearing visages have a tenderness, even when what returns our gaze is an ovoid head with four eyes set North, South, East and West—*Silo* (2025). How light is the touch? Rather than visible pencil marks, these images might have been created with graphite dust blown across the surface of the paper by the breeze from an open window. The artist-as-medium.

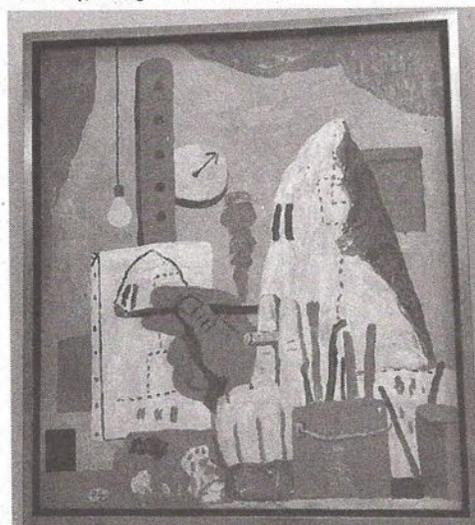
Other images, made with color pencils, soft pinkish tones, are more playful, having an architectural aspect, a balancing act where a ball sits atop a slender disc, tilting off of a cone-shaped structure. In one tall, narrow drawing, the disc elongates on a near vertical pitch, a face seen in sharp profile, the spherical, patterned ball prominently nosing its way forward.

Cynthia (2024) immediately reminded us of the scene in the movie *Brazil*, when an older woman who’s having her face stretched to appear years younger gets pulled tauter than taut, and then ... bang, explodes. Life can be like that at times. When going too far.

We weren’t familiar with the work of Joel Wyllie, British, born 1986. This was his first show in New York and it was a real discovery.

To our mind, Foreign & Domestic’s was consistently the most interesting gallery program across the year, with one engaging exhibition after another, among them: ... *aeronauts aimed for altitude, even ...*, curated by Marco Bene; Lee Brozgol, *1977–1981* (presented at 150 Barrow Street); Harris Rosenblum, *Hybrid Moments*.

PHILIP GUSTON: *The Irony of History*, Musée Picasso, Paris, Curated by Didier Ottinger and Joanne Snrech, Oct. 14, 2025–Mar. 1, 2026.



A great pairing of Guston and Picasso, and perfectly from the very first room with Guston’s *The Studio* (1969)