

GLADSTONE

Shantay Robinson, "Through a Black Lens: 10 Institutional Shows of Work by Black Artists to see This Month", *ARTnews*, February 13, 2026.

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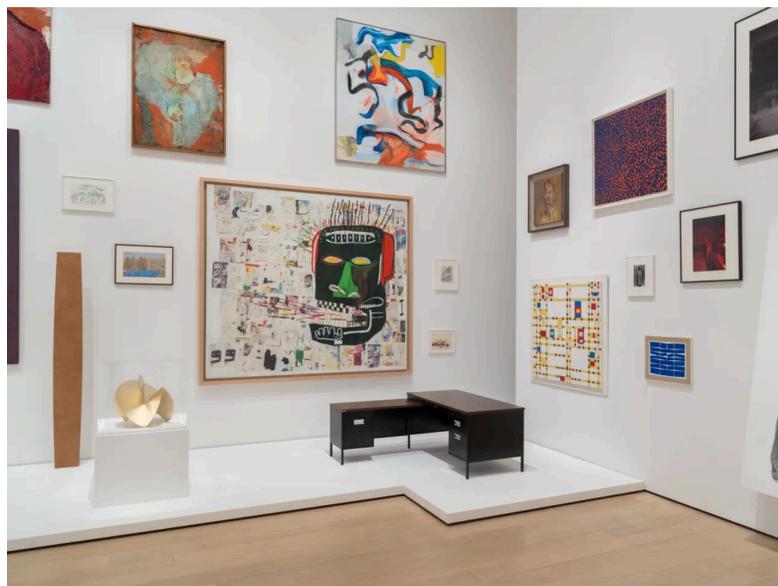
BY **SHANTAY ROBINSON**

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Up until the 1950s, many American museums, particularly in the South, held separate days for Black people to see art and artifacts. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC), whose members included artists Faith Ringgold and Romare Bearden, protested the exclusion of Black artists and Black curators in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art. It wasn't until the latter part of the 1970s that Black artists started to have a significant presence in museum programming, and only in the last decade has Black art seen widespread representation in museum collections.

Now, at the end of this century's quarter mark, museums are increasingly exhibiting comprehensive and nuanced shows of Black art that introduce important concepts like Negritude, Black Power, and Afrofuturism and acknowledge and articulate the complexities of Black life. This Black History Month, cultural institutions across the country have mounted shows examining how Black artists see nature, technology, and humanity. Here are ten of them.

"Artist's Choice: Arthur Jafa—Less Is Morbid," Museum of Modern Art, New York



Installation view of "Artist's Choice: Arthur Jafa—Less Is Morbid," Museum of Modern Art, New York, November 19, 2025–July 05, 2026

Photo : The Museum of Modern Art. Photo by Jonathan Dorado.

MoMA's "Artist's Choice" series, for which an artist is invited to curate an exhibition of works from the museum's collection, was founded in 1989 and is open to the public without a ticket. For the 17th iteration of the series, artist and filmmaker Arthur Jafa follows Grace Wales Bonner (2024), Yto Barrada (2022), and Amy Sillman (2020) as organizer of the show. Known for using montage and collage to present the complexities of Black reality,

Jafa has selected over 80 pieces, often juxtaposing them in illuminating ways—a Piet Mondrian composition, for example, is hung near a quilt by Gees Bend quilter Lutisha Pettway. The title of the exhibition is a riff on the saying "less is more," the mantra of Bauhaus architect and modernist icon Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, one of whose whose steel columns—the underpinning for modernist architecture—is included here. Jafa's show, however, argues for an alternative to modernist rationality, often used to "other" Blackness, queerness, and femininity, finding it in what the artist calls "affective capacity," or the emotional power of association.

Through July 5.