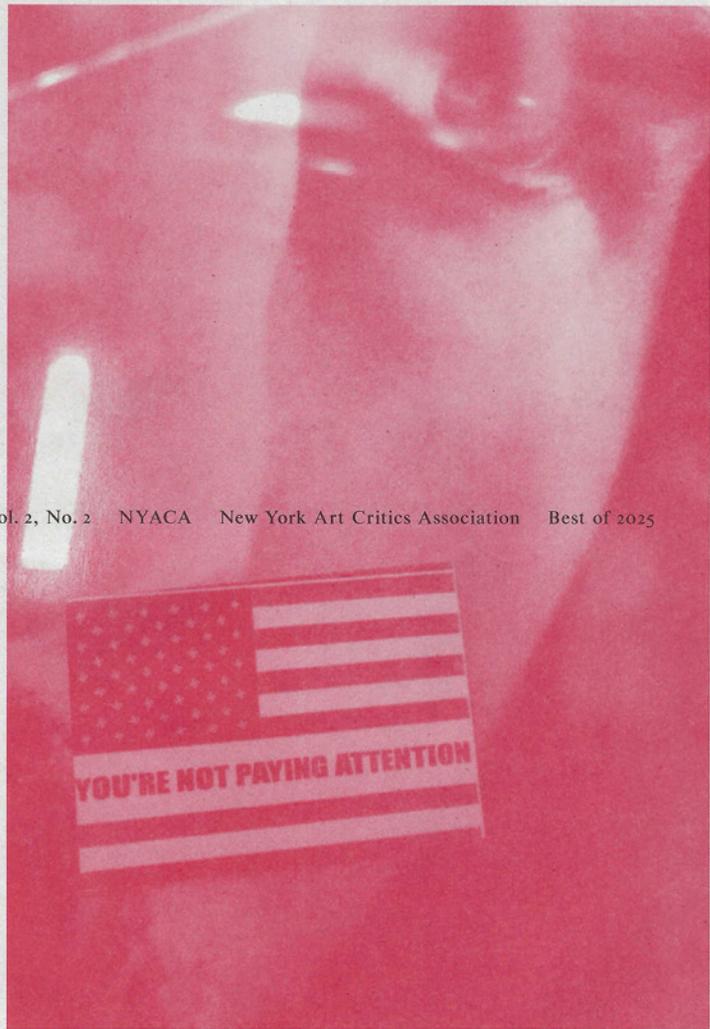


Best of 2025 New York Art Critics Association NYACA The New York



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listening pleasure, as is the mix of folk, pop, classical and avant-avant he elicits from the many remarkable musicians he works with. At the same time, his numerical deconstructions, e.g. of pop ratings in a given year, as a kind of hand-wrought algorithmic stop-start machine make for a hyper-conscious listening experience unlike any other I know. There's no mindless succumbing to the lull of melody or harmony, though there's plenty of both in the offering. Any one of these concerts would have been cause for hosannas; the full panoply offered up an entirely new recasting of retrospective as emphatically here, now, and live.

ON THE HIGHLINE

Open Group (YURI BILEY, PAVLO KOVACH, ANTON VARGA), Repeat After Me, July/Aug., evening hours. (Originally screened at the Polish Pavilion, Venice Biennale, 2024; also shown as part of a more complex installation, at 601 Artspace, June 2025.) A disconcertingly friendly, deeply unsettling karaoke, inspired by *In Case of Emergency or War*, a brochure distributed by the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy and the Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security, a Ukrainian government agency established in 2021, to ready Ukrainian citizens for anticipated attacks by recognizing and distinguishing between the sounds of various artillery. Full frame faces or casual portraits of a disparate array of Ukrainians mimicking those sounds were unexpectedly mesmerizing. Even in the heat and humidity of July, and despite its hours-long length, it was hard to stop watching.

GALLERIES (in associative, not chronological order.)

LAURA OWENS, Matthew Marks (522 and 526 W 22nd Street), Feb. 14–Apr. 19.

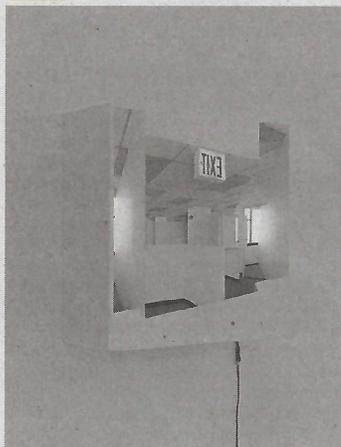
Owens's characteristically ambitious, inventive and exacting tour de force felt both expansive and tightly scripted, scenographic and immersive. She's so good at finding painterly correlates for her many imaginative flights and landings. I loved her tricked-out front desk and the incredibly moving mother-daughter convo, tucked into what felt like a closet behind the great wallpapered rooms. No one seemed to mind standing on long lines to get in, with more tricks hidden behind secret doors in the walls around us. I also loved the mood change in her reading room gallery next door.

SETH PRICE, *Redistribution*, 15 Orient, June 21–Aug. 2. One of my favorite gallery spaces, physically, and a favorite artist for the way he keeps his self-as-subject from veering to narcissism by giving equal attention to the systems within which he and we are made to operate, while making the body parts—in this case a series of tubular, “corrected arms” in a fluorescent day-glo mesh, wrapped in photo prints of Price's skin—abstract and weirdly attractive. Price's walk-in *Boite-en-Valise*, as beautifully laid out in its relaxed array of archival desks and chairs as Owens's aggregate of “looking-glass” rooms, also featured scenes of deeply affecting parent-child conversation, in this case, of Price and his daughter discussing mood-boarding amidst his ongoing, diaristic video. The unassuming emotional pull of the very varied daily life scenes, and the comfy couch offered for viewing, kept me and several others seated silently engrossed for well over an hour.

LIFE—a group show, curated by ARNOLD J. KEMP, Artists Space, May 29–Aug. 9. Arnold Kemp's homage to his friend and Chicago colleague, William Pope. L, who died quite suddenly in 2024. Kemp's group show, a call to life, was charged with the kind of deeply informed juxtapositions of much-loved artworks that only an artist, or a curator not bound up in notions of a public, can assemble. That Kemp is not only an artist but a longterm beloved teacher of artists only added to the impact his exhibition seemed to have on so many young artists who “made the trip.”

NICK MAUSS and KEN OKIISHI, *Images & Videos*, 303 Gallery, Mar. 7–Apr. 16; and **KEN OKIISHI**, *3 New Films*, Reena Spaulings, Sept. 14–Oct. 25. Two shows that literally, abstractly, obliquely take on the art/life tangle. At 303, showing together for the first time, Mauss and Okiishi treated mirrors as screens and screens as mirrors, subjecting both to painterly “chiasmic inversions”—top/bottom, front/back, flatscreen/deep image, opaque/transparent, surface/absorption—to ecstatic effect. At Reena Spaulings, Okiishi revisited his preoccupation with *Vital Behaviors* (title of an earlier 2019 film of his) in three films and two of his “Ur” contexts: domestic life (*Brian at Home*, 2020–25) and musical performance and recording (*The Chronicle of A.M. Bach*, and *Recording les Nations*, both 2025). Complex, impossible to condense into a few sentences, Okiishi is always in mental motion determined to accurately diagnose the immediate dilemma, and enable true spontaneity. His films are plaintive, critical, attuned to present-tense—especially Covid/post-Covid—vulnerabilities; gorgeous; musically transporting; pathetic; frustrated; critical; and ecstatic in turns. In *The Chronicle ...*, the hurdles created, jumped, exceeded and finessed make all kinds of unanticipated experiences and relationships possible.

MEREDITH JAMES, *The Exit*, Marinaro, Oct. 30–Dec. 13.



James's deadpan capture of “the architecture of the abandoned office”—a trope of post-Covid workspace—feels almost like a contradiction in terms: exquisitely hand-crafted 3-D scale reliefs which meticulously mimic the seemingly machine-generated interiors of these anonymous, now ghostly spaces. Her working photographs, also exhibited, underscored the smoke and mirrors those interiors rely on.