

Can't-miss shows at galleries and museums this spring

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Crain's Chicago Business



**ALEX KATZ: "PRESENT TENSE"
THROUGH APRIL 22**

In Richard Gray Gallery's stable of living artists, there are several with arguably larger international reputations than Alex Katz—Jaume Plensa, Jim Dine and Magdalena Abakanowicz—but none who embodies the gallery's aesthetic as perfectly as Katz. There's something in both his choice of subject and his style—portraits of Ralph Lauren-ish, Northeastern types that manage to be both elegant and rugged, happy and haunted, intimate and oddly distant—that whispers of contentment and, yes, money but also of the pitilessness of time and the ability of art to freeze it in its tracks. "Present Tense," the 88-year-old artist's fifth show at Gray, focuses on his largely realistic though loose-knit drawings, always the basis of his more finished paintings. It's an impressive document of sustained effort and vision, nurtured over six decades. Free | Richard Gray Gallery | 875 N. Michigan Ave. | 312-642-8877

**ROBERT AND SHANA PARKEHARRISON: "PRECIPICE"
THROUGH APRIL 30**

The most interesting thing about this husband-and-wife duo, aside from the absence of a hyphen in their conjoined last names, is the way they bring the catchphrase "You complete me" into the art world. With her background in dance and metalsmithing combined with his focus on photography, the ParkeHarrisons have become a contemporary art power couple with their photographs of invented settings and scenarios illustrating our relationships and responsibilities to the environment. "Precipice," the latest of several shows at Catherine Edelman Gallery, is photographed performance art in which a series of characters struggle, often symbolically, to balance the need to consume the world with the need to preserve it. In "Nature Morte," for example, we see a table covered with dying flowers, along with someone hanging a framed image of the flowers when they were fresh. And in the title piece, a man stands on the edge of a cliff, in awe of the vast tree before him, as if it were the last tree on earth. Perhaps it is.

Free | Catherine Edelman Gallery | 300 W. Superior St. | 312-266-2350

**SANFORD BIGGERS: "THE PASTS THEY BROUGHT WITH THEM"
THROUGH APRIL 2**

In his first solo exhibition at MoniqueMeloche in the West Loop, New York-based interdisciplinary artist Sanford Biggers uses videos, transformed quilts and repurposed, deconstructed sculptures (bought from street vendors in Harlem) to suggest the ways African-Americans have preserved their culture and transmitted it from one generation to the next. It's a homecoming of sorts for Biggers, who got an MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and whose work was seen locally in an earlier show at the Renaissance Society. Biggers is a fresh, urgent new voice in contemporary art—a voice to listen to.

Free | MoniqueMeloche | 2154 W. Division St. | 773-252-0299

**TONY TASSET: "ME AND MY ARROW"
MARCH 18-APRIL 23**

Sometimes an arrow is just an arrow. Sometimes it ain't. The question of which is which, in "Me and My Arrow," a grid of 66 arrow paintings and some additional sculpture by Chicago artist Tony Tasset at Kavi Gupta Gallery's Elizabeth Street space in the West Loop, will be up to the viewer. Could the artist, in his wily, open-ended way, be referring to fluctuations in markets (including the art market)? Could it be a reference to political fortunes in the age of polling—who's rising, who's falling—or to who's trending on the Internet? Or is he commenting, slyly, on criticism (including art criticism), with its off-the-cuff judgments and reductive, thumbs-up/thumbs-down dichotomies? Or, more generally, on our national obsession with evaluating everything that comes before us? You be the judge—in which case, perhaps, you've just made the artist's point.

Free | Kavi Gupta Gallery | 219 N. Elizabeth St. | 312-432-0708

**DIANE SIMPSON: "WINDOW DRESSING"
THROUGH JULY 3**

It's nice to see the Museum of Contemporary Art—an institution that has struggled at times to balance its international art-world ambitions with a desire to showcase local talent—giving some love to Diane Simpson, long a fixture of the Chicago art scene. As part of its "Chicago Works" series, MCA is featuring four of Simpson's six installations for Wisconsin's Racine Art Museum, which is housed in a former department store. Each window features a sculpture, related objects and backdrops that evoke the art deco style. You might be reminded of actual Depression-era store windows, the sculptures suggesting mannequins in the fashions of the time; you

might also be struck by the admiration and nostalgia Simpson clearly feels for the art of commercial window dressers, a dying breed in the age of e-commerce. She misses them already, and standing before her beautiful assemblages, so do we.
\$7-\$12 | Museum of Contemporary Art | 220 E. Chicago Ave. | 312-280-2660