

Artspace

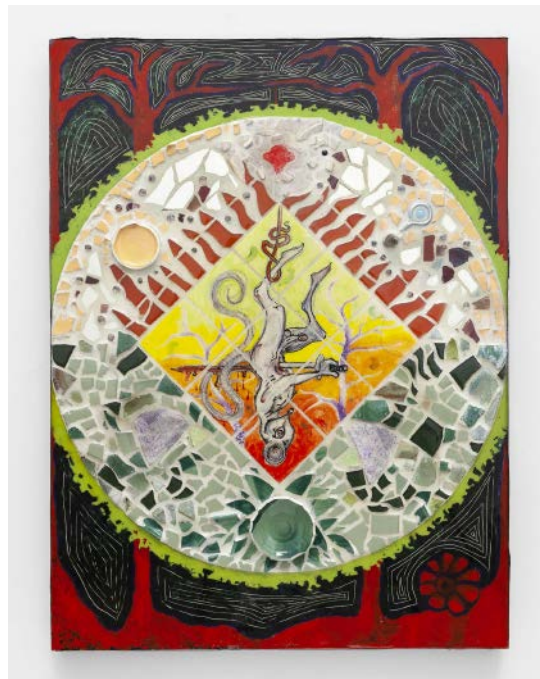
On View Now: 9 Not-to-Miss Artworks in Downtown NYC

By Artspace Editors

NOV. 17, 2018

This week, Artspace slugged through the snow to find some of the most intriguing artworks on view in the lower east side and downtown New York. Compelling works by a mix of emerging, mid-career, and historic artists are presented below—and all of them are worth making the trek to see in person.

JASON BENSON
Enter the green, 2018
Bodega



In *Enter the green*, an upside-down mouse suspended from a curled red tail stabs itself with a sword. This image (a crest for masochists?) has been painted on square tiles snuggled inside a mosaic. An industrially-produced metal hook is slipped into the top right corner. Enter the green is part of a larger mosaics show currently on view at Bodega. Benson mishmashes internet-era imagery with figures that could have been pulled from an illuminated medieval manuscript. *Involuntary Self-Immolation* (2018) features buff demons, a sun that wouldn't be out of place on a Sublime album, and small stock-image photographs of nature. In the press release, Benson's wife, Erin Jane Nelson, points out that mosaics appear in places of religious worship, but are also a home craft; Benson's pieces seek to hold both of these contexts at once. "From the vastness of fables through time and cultures to the smallness of the shards of failed ceramics we have made together, between the tenderness of love and sex and the inconceivable backdrop of environmental doom is where you will find the works in this exhibition."

Art in America



Jason Benson, *Shock Portal*, 2018, mosaic, pastel, and resin on wood panel, 40 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bodega, New York.

What to see in New York: Curator Phillip March Jones on shows up now

Jason Benson's work at Bodega is familiar for the same reasons. Benson makes wall pieces, filled with images of fantastical beings, which combine painting and mosaic. Looking at them, I couldn't help but think of vernacular artists who have also worked with mosaic—Simon Rodia in Los Angeles, Isaiah Zagar in Philadelphia, and Raymond Isadore in France, among them. I found the work discomfoting, but I ended up looking at it for a long time.

bodega

SPIKE

THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL: CONDO NEW YORK

Column
by Dean Kissick



Naoki Sutter-Shudo, *C'est la guerre!*, 2018

Bodega hosting Galerie Crève-cœur, Paris
2:39pm, 167 Rivington Street

A fantastic collaborative effort from both galleries. I particularly like Naoki Sutter Shudo's *C'est la guerre!* (2018), a dark, smoky, enameled C-print that brings to mind 17th-century Dutch still lives while also suggesting a much larger landscape through the play of light across its teapots and ceramics; Than Hussein Clark's *Julian Dreams of the Hudson* (Tissot: I do do don't want to be a doll) (2016), which is a folding transparent Perspex screen printed with patterns and slogans and smeared with a scene of naked figures in the river; and Jason Benson's *Noontide Demon* (2018), a painted mosaic of medieval spectres and dragons, one of whom blows the words "Cold Drynks" from a horn. Some say that Paris is flowering into a new European capital of art. Going by this show; let's move to Belleville.



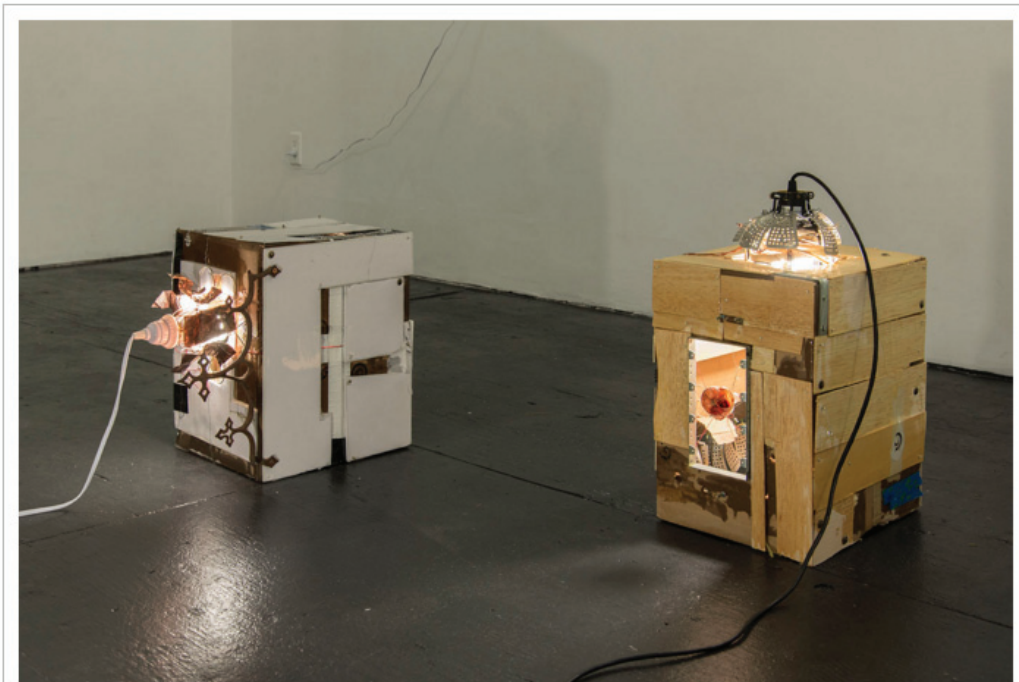
Jason Benson, *Noontide Demon*, 2018

FROM TIME BOMBS TO FRUIT BASKETS: GOINGS-ON IN LONDON, NEW YORK, AND LOS ANGELES

BY *Jamie Sterns* POSTED 10/27/15 4:53 PM

Sean Steadman at Project Native Informant, Jason Benson at Bodega, Eli Ping at Ramiken Crucible, Alex Chaves at Night Gallery, Elad Lassry at David Kordansky

What London can do sans irony New York also has been dipping into recently, but in NYC the reference to politics is bulldozed down and in its place is a new generation of grime mixed with re-acculturated punk. What do I mean by that? I mean that things are getting aesthetically grimmer and fleshier, but at the same time there is a self-awareness and a strict rigor of contextualization that career-driven artists in this city not only want to do but need to do for the sake of survival. Two shows caught my eye and did this very thing even in the madness that was opening week. First was [Jason Benson's exhibition at Bodega](#) and the other was [Eli Ping's show at Ramiken Crucible](#).



Jason Benson, 'Crawlers,' 2015, installation view, at Bodega.
COURTESY BODEGA

To start with Benson, the show was called “Crawlers,” and it was a collection of creatures, boxes, and assemblages that each possess a light, which feels like a life source, and an oculus that lets you look inside to see scrawled drawings and makeshift sculptures. The boxes seem to be exoskeletons for relics, message encoders, or prehistoric time bombs. It reminds one of the work of a hermit in the woods, a tinkerer, some sort of outsider wizard who still believes in alchemy, but it also has such a calculated and knowing use of material, construction, and form that you know that what you are looking at is made from someone extremely aware of their intentions and how they register.



A conversation with Erin Nelson and Jason Benson, the minds behind Species Gallery

Stephanie Dowda - Mar 1, 2016 in [Art+Design](#)



Species interior view 2, courtesy of Species Gallery.

Species — a gallery within a studio within a museum — opens within the usually locked gates of the Atlanta Contemporary Studio Artists courtyard. Its founders, **Erin Jane Nelson** and **Jason Benson**, recently moved to Atlanta. For Erin, Atlanta has the familiarity of home. For Jason, rooting here makes sense with the progression of his increasingly craft-influenced work. Nelson and Benson share a lot of things — a home, a studio, an interest in crafts that inform their work and a vision to hand over their working space to invited artists once a month, when Studio #4 transforms into its alternate personality — the pop-up gallery *Species*.

Nelson and Benson come to Atlanta via the Bay Area, where they nurtured a sense of community. They decided to make the leap to Atlanta, a much more financially accessible city where they could open their practice beyond their individual works and insert the network of artists they have grown to admire. To do so, they've gathered those artists and invited them to show work within an alternative space — their own studio at the Atlanta Contemporary.

Species opened on Leap Day this year, a nod to the fact that every once in a while an anomaly occurs, just in time to shake up our expectations. The premiere exhibition will feature the fiction-based work of Chicago artist Brook Sinkinson Withrow. *Species* just asks that guests RSVP to future events by emailing, info@inter-species.us.

Stephanie Dowda, ArtsATL, March 1, 2016

ArtsATL: *Do artists make better gallerists?*

Erin Jane Nelson: What defines a good gallerist is very different from other roles in the art world – what a collector considers a good gallerist is often very different than what an artist considers a good gallerist, or what an institutional curator considers a good gallerist... and so on. I feel there are all these different metrics of assigning value to a program, but I think what we have experienced as artists and what it feels like to not receive everything we want in a showing experience, so we are able to highlight those wants of an artist making a solo exhibition when showing at Species. So I don't think it's a better or worse, but it's just that we understand what it means to be on the other end.

Jason Benson: I was the co-director of an artist run space, **Important Projects**, in Oakland for a few years that was in the attic of a house I was living at the time. What we did that artists really enjoyed was that we made it clear that there was no ulterior motive, it was all about what the artist wanted to do — in terms of what the shows were, we were purely there to facilitate the artist's vision for their solo show. That principle model was something people artists found really refreshing.

ArtsATL: *How does your studio space transform into an exhibition space? What elements do you see as necessary to build an exhibition space versus a studio space?*

Nelson: Jason and I have shared a studio out of financial need for about three years now. It's always worked for us since we often share materials. And having an extra pair of hands, or if one of us has a show shipment, the other one will



Species interior, courtesy of Species Gallery.

pitch in. It really ends up being a great partnership. We can swap from being collaborators to being an assistant in the drop of a hat. And we both have similar ideas and politics in our approach to our work. And based on the spirit of the space being multi-use, it seems like an ideal space to have exhibitions. I think Atlantans take for granted how gorgeous the studio spaces are here. When we posted pictures to social media, friends in New York were blown away.

For *Species*, we decided that exhibiting artists are going to think about space first. It's the number one restraint. And based on other similar models, we are going to clean out the studio of our work for the duration of exhibitions. Out of 30 days in the month, 20 days are our studio days and 10 days are exhibition days. So it's mostly pragmatic, but we are 100 percent thinking about sustainability and growing from the ground up instead of biting off more than we can chew.

Benson: There are always expenses either way, but it makes a lot of sense to lump it into something we'd already be paying for — a studio space.

Nelson: A lot of the art world is based on how and which people have funds. And if more artists can work within their means to be as ambitious as possible in their studio practice and as organizers, it creates better platforms.

Stephanie Dowda, ArtsATL, March 1, 2016



Brook Sinkinson Withrow, Escape Plan, courtesy of the artist and Species Gallery.

ArtsATL: *Are there other artists who have inspired this model? Your premiere artist, Brook Sinkinson Withrow, ran a space called **Forever & Always** in Chicago. Were you involved in that programming?*

Nelson: Brook is a friend of mine that I met at Oxbow. When she started Forever & Always, she asked me to do a project. So there is a little bit of reciprocity. Sinkinson Withrow has an encyclopedic knowledge of contemporary art and does a lot professionally to champion alternative practices like video, performance and organizing in this editorial context; but hasn't had too many showing opportunities on her own. It felt like a good fit — someone we knew really well, where there is a mutual trust and mutual interest in each other's work.

Benson: Back when Joel Dean and I were doing Important Project, at the same time there was **Extra, Extra** in Philly, **Reference** in Virginia and **Bodega** also in Philly (now in NYC). There is **1857** in Oslo, and the Duck in Berlin. There are so many other artist-run programs we love and hope that Species can start to be in dialog with this international network of alternative spaces.

ARTFORUM

San Francisco

“Against Automatism”

FUSED SPACE

1401 16th Street

July 9, 2015–September 5, 2015

An astute visitor entering Fused Space—a two-year-old venue hosted by designer Yves Béhar and curated by dealer Jessica Silverman—might notice three small organic forms clinging to fluorescent lights like insects drawn to a glow. The tiny delicate structures are cast-bronze lavender stems patinated with iron by K.r.m. Mooney, one of seven artists in this visually eclectic group show of works loosely united by a focus on the intersection of the human body and the industrial world.

Like Mooney, Jason Benson combines natural and mass-produced materials—snail shells, cardboard, and plastic twist ties, for example—in his three resin collage lamps that conjure the somatic grotesque. Hanging at the artist’s ear height, three delicate shells painted in pastel colors by Alex Dordoy, all titled *Sleepwalker*, 2015, are an exquisite foil to Benson’s messiness. Thomas Wachholz’s abstractions also engage with unconventional materials: Scribbles evocative of Cy Twombly are actually residue from striking matches on phosphorus-coated wood panels. Nearby, the frenzied diagrams of a manic creative mind bring together skeleton reptilian heads, springs, screws, and gears in Abu Bakarr Mansaray’s large fantastical drawing *Hell*, 2015. Sydney Shen’s sensuous “F-Hole” series, 2015, an homage to Man Ray, and Paul Kos’s “Emboss” photographs, 1995, share a droll sexuality. Shen pairs F-holes cut from suede with Internet-sourced images of objects like a lamp and a martini glass, while Kos’s life-size black-and-white prints depict nude women, their backsides bearing the pattern of adjacent chairs. This desire to grant commonplace items greater significance resonates throughout.



View of “Against Automatism,” 2015.

— *Jeanne Gerrity*