

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in January

By Andrew Russeth and [Jillian Steinhauer](#)

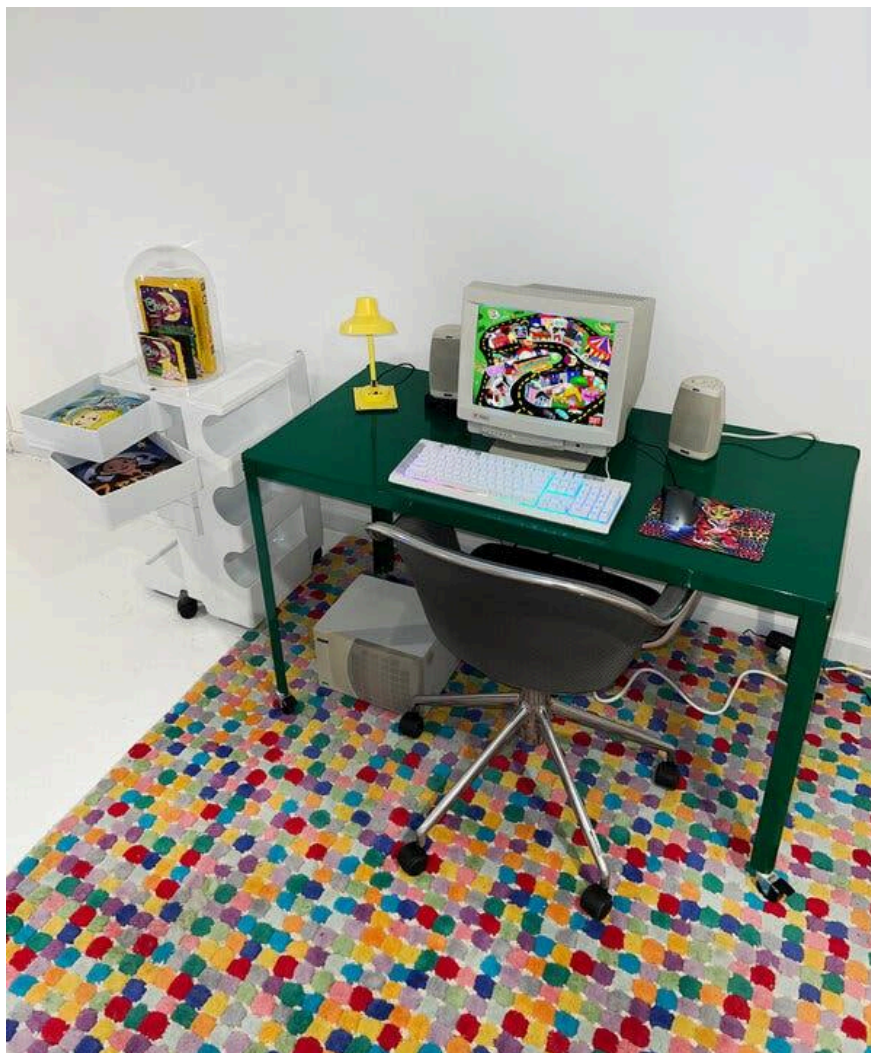
Published Jan. 2, 2025 Updated Jan. 23, 2025

This week in Newly Reviewed, Andrew Russeth covers retro video games, Mark Leckey's ecstasy and Roe Ethridge's photographic mischief.

East Village

Theresa Duncan, Cory Arcangel, Oliver Payne

Through Feb. 22. Smilers, 431 East 6th Street, Manhattan; 646-389-0884, smilers.nyc.



Theresa Duncan and Monica Gesue, "Chop Suey," 1995. The video game is part of a group show at Smilers gallery. Credit: Theresa Duncan, Monica Gesue and Smilers.

This new basement gallery from the artist-curators Laura Tighe and Mark Beasley is currently set up as a 1990s childhood fantasyland, with unusual video games glowing from cathode-ray-tube computer and TV monitors.

On one you can play "[Chop Suey](#)" (1995), an interactive storybook-like game for girls created by Theresa Duncan with Monica Gesue. Click around a hand-drawn map of tiny Cortland, Ohio, to query a fortune teller, grab food at the local Chinese restaurant and listen to the poetic ramblings of a loquacious moon. The adventures just keep coming. It's a dreamy, multifarious work, with charismatic illustrations by the musician Ian Svenonius, music by Brendan Canty (of the post-hardcore band Fugazi) and narration by the writer David Sedaris. The only objective here is to wander, completely free.

Mario, though — the famous plumber and ubiquitous video game star — is far from free. Instead, in [a 2003 classic](#) that Cory Arcangel made by hacking a Nintendo cartridge that's plugged in nearby, he is onscreen and stuck atop a block. A blue sky surrounds him, and he can look only left and right as he awaits a savior that will never arrive.

An adjacent room holds a vintage-looking, black-and-white shoot 'em up, "[Crust Shmup.](#)" which Oliver Payne released last year. My fighter jet kept getting destroyed in vicious dogfights, almost immediately, until I learned (spoiler alert) that pacifism promotes survival.

Surprises abound in this show — joy, too. Museums should take it as a model. Instead of hosting inane [digital spectacles](#) to draw new audiences, why not try something like this?

Chelsea

Mark Leckey

Through Feb. 15. Gladstone Gallery, 530 West 21st Street, Manhattan; 212-206-7606, gladstonegallery.com.

Image

Installation view of "Mark Leckey: 3 Songs from the Liver." As part of the show, a video plays in a replica bus shelter.

Credit...

Mark Leckey and Gladstone Gallery, New York; Photo by David N. Regen

Eight years after his deliriously inventive [MoMA PS1 survey](#), the freethinking, genre-eluding British artist Mark Leckey is finally back in town with a new show, "3 Songs From the Liver." Ecstasy (spiritual, emotional and physical), a rare subject in contemporary art, is its focus, and a sequence of three topsy-turvy videos from the past few years is its heart.

In the best one, Leckey loops and remixes a 2017 [viral video](#) of a man smashing through a bus-stop window one (presumably boozy) night in Cardiff, Wales. Leckey's piece plays on two screens in, no joke, a bus stop inside the gallery: a mise-en-abyme of hooliganism.

Higher-resolution footage made by the artist soon appears of a man similarly catapulting through a window. "Oh my God, you did it!" a voice cries. Leckey distorts those lines and brings

in shimmering electronic music. As this brave, stupid jump repeats again, and again, and again, a bizarre sublimity wells up.

The artist, who is 60, is himself being transported in “Carry Me Into the Wilderness” (2022), which plays nearby. Wandering in a sylvan London park after the pandemic lockdown, he found himself overcome, and hit record on his cellphone. “Everything just fills me up and it’s too much, and it’s too great,” he says over blurry images, his voice quavering before it passes through filters that render it expansive, choral. Candles and a golden painting of a hermit’s cave (based on [a Lorenzo Monaco](#) piece from around 1400) soon transport us into the realm of religion.

Leckey’s own gold-leaf panels are also on view; one riffs on a city from [a medieval painting](#) that figures in the third video installation, “Mercy I Cry City” (2024). It plays behind a floor-to-ceiling wall, but it’s visible through small, oblique openings that recall [squints](#), which allow churchgoers to glimpse an otherwise-obstructed altar. The video moves through a computer-generated rendering of the walled city, which is empty, oddly proportioned, unreal and out of reach. Soon everything is spinning, vanishing into light and then beginning again. All these unlikely ecstatic experiences, these escapes, are fleeting — thrilling yet incomplete. But perhaps their effects accrue, which is art’s promise. They sneak up on you, or, like the Cardiff leaper, you pass through them.

Tribeca

Roe Ethridge

Through March 1. Andrew Kreps Gallery, 22 Cortlandt Alley, Manhattan; 212-741-8849, [andrewkreps.com](#).

Image

Roe Ethridge “This Is Not a Cigarette,” 2023, UV cured pigment print.

Credit...

Roe Ethridge and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

As [slop images](#) generated by artificial intelligence pollute social-media feeds, Roe Ethridge’s photographic mischief feels at once quaint and refreshing. He commingles fashion shoots, apparent snapshots and seemingly staged compositions, which dodge classification as they tantalize. He challenges you to ascertain exactly what you are seeing.

The 20-odd recent pictures in “Shore Front Parkway” feature, among other subjects, a faint rainbow above nondescript beachfront apartment buildings, flower bouquets (in a pizza-sauce can, a copper pot, a translucent vase) and a basket of perfectly plump grapes. Corals and ambers are prominent, and a certain rustic-chic sensibility prevails. There are also famous female models, as there usually are: Irina Shayk grins as she tips a captain’s hat (Ethridge fans may recall it from [a 2007 self-portrait](#)), and the artist Anna Weyant leans out a window, looking down as if she is welcoming you back from war.

Ethridge, 55, has long delighted in inhabiting and tweaking clichés, courting questions about his sincerity while shrugging them off. One photo, “This Is Not a Cigarette” (2023), has a reclining woman in a black gown brandishing a long pipe painted to resemble a cigarette.

Like other all-American artists, including [John F. Peto](#) and [John Wesley](#), he portrays people and things that we think we know with impish élan and candor, beguiling even as he confesses. Look at the tiny, heartbreaking blemishes on those luscious grapes. Look closer at Weyant’s gaze. It just may be passing over your shoulder, to someone else.