

ARTnews

Through a Black Lens: 10 Institutional Shows of Work by Black Artists to See This Month

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Suzanne Jackson, *Hers and His*, 2018

Photo : Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Artwork copyright © Suzanne Jackson. Photo: Timothy Doyon, courtesy of Ortuzar, New York, and SFMOMA.

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.

“Suzanne Jackson: What Is Love,” San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

At 81 years old, Suzanne Jackson has finally been given a major museum retrospective. “Suzanne Jackson: What is Love?” comprises over 80 works spanning a 60-year art career, from Jackson's ethereal paintings of the late 1960s to the early 1970s that celebrate humans' connection to the nature, to recent three-dimensional pieces that suspend paint in midair—her groundbreaking contribution to the art-historical canon. The exhibition also features a commissioned piece, *¿What Feeds Us?* (2025), which addresses our global environmental crisis. Part of a West Coast community of Black artists in the 1960s, Jackson ran an art gallery—the storied Gallery 32—between 1968 and 1970 out of her Los Angeles studio; a section of the show brings together artworks originally exhibited there by Betye Saar, Senga Nengudi, David Hammons, John Outterbridge and Emory Douglas, among others. Throughout, “What is Love?” highlights the interplay between Jackson's visual art and her multifaceted career as a poet, dancer, theater designer, and advocate for Black art.

Through March 1. The show will travel to the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, May 14–Aug 23, 2026