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In Museums, Masters Old and New

By HOLLAND COTTER SEPT. 3, 2014

On paper, the 2014-15 art season looks unusually well balanced, with no foreseeable leaps in the dark, but not much dead space either. It's anchored by a substantial old-master lineup, including a big blast from Spain. "Goya: Order and Disorder" opens at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, on Oct. 12, and in early November acres of El Greco roll out at the Metropolitan Museum and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, commemorating the 400th anniversary of that ever-popular artist's death.

Speaking of popularity, "Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs," opening at the Museum of Modern Art in New York on Oct. 12, is sure to be a draw; for the last weekend of the show's London run, the Tate Modern staged a "Matisse all-nighter" because of overwhelming ticket demand. The show is just a late-style slice of a long career, but what a slice! And as for superlatives in advance, the Met's "Cubism: The Leonard A. Lauder Collection" deserves them. We'll see, through supreme examples, not only where 20th-century European modernism began but also what a truly magnanimous private gift to a museum can look like (Oct. 20 to Feb. 16).

Newish masters are on the docket, too, this fall. MoMA opens a midcareer retrospective of the American surrealist Robert Gober on Oct. 4, followed by a life-span survey of work by Elaine Francis Sturtevant, who professionally used her last name only (Nov. 9). Ms. Sturtevant, who died at 89 this year, specialized in creating funky duplicates of other artists' work, including Mr. Gober's, in order to turn the idea of originality, that sine qua non of masculine genius, on its head.



"Leg With Anchor," by Robert Gober, whose mid-career retrospective begins Oct. 4 at the Museum of Modern Art. Robert Robert/Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

The New York Times

Interestingly, her conceptualist copying gambit might have been sorely tested if she'd tackled the work of a style-hopping younger contemporary like Nicole Eisenman, who moves from Impressionism to Social Realism within any given painting and will have a sure-to-be-brilliant retrospective of her own at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia in September. Latin American art has recently had an outstanding presence in New York, with a half dozen fine and very different shows over the summer. And the trend continues nationally this season, with a solo show of paintings and drawings by the Cuban-born modernist Wifredo Lam (1902-82) at the McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College (through Dec. 14) moving on to the High Museum in Atlanta in February, and an overview of the Colombian sculptor Doris Salcedo, debuting on Feb. 21 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, followed by a summer 2015 stint at the Guggenheim. MoMA is in the picture yet again in March with "Latin America in Construction: Architecture 1955-1980," a rethinking of its own exhibition on the same subject six decades ago. Meanwhile, on Nov. 4, the Museum of Arts and Design lands right in the present with "New Territories: Laboratories for Design, Craft and Art in Latin America," an up-to-the-minute report, organized by the museum's chief curator, Lowery Stokes Sims, of globally conscious, genre-bending work being produced in several Latin American cities today.



Interactive Feature: Fall Arts
Preview — Times 100

Genre bending itself is the main event in "Fiber: Sculpture 1960-Present," a long-overdue historical consideration of so-called textile art, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston as of Oct. 1. Pioneers like Lenore Tawney (1907-2007) and Claire Zeisler (1903-91) will ground the show at its early end, joined by generations of younger practitioners, some of whom (Sheila Hicks, Elaine Reichek, Haegue Yang, Robert Otto Epstein) will also appear in "Thread Lines" at

the Drawing Center in SoHo (Sept. 19), which will view fiber work through the lens of draftsmanship.

The New York Times



"Maquette for Red Chasuble," by Henri Matisse, is part of "The Cut-Outs," the Matisse show that was wildly popular in London and arrives at MoMA in October.
Succession H. Matisse/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

And the subject will be literally wrapped up at the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in "Judith Scott: Bound and Unbound," a show of sculpture in October by an American artist who was born with Down syndrome and for the last two decades of her life — she died at 61 in 2005 — created extraordinary sculptures from objects swathed in lengths of cloth and twine.



15th-century Burmese demons made of glazed earthenware, will be on view at Asia Society Museum as part of "Buddhist Art of Myanmar," which opens in February.
Sean Dungan

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One of art's jobs is, of course, to enlarge our view of both the past and the present by presenting alternatives. For example, the nasty pagan bits in "Piero di Cosimo: The Poetry of Painting in Renaissance Florence," which lands at the National Gallery of Art in Washington from the Uffizi on Feb. 1, should do something to change the impression that Italian Renaissance art was all madonnas and putti. Yet by the same token, "Sanctity Pictured: The Art of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders in Renaissance Italy," opening at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville on Oct. 31, will argue how insistently spiritual — and political — religious art from the period was.

And if you'd like to broaden your horizons about the meaning of Modernism, by all means see the gorgeous abstract paintings by the Indian artist V. S. Gaitonde (1924-2001) that will go on view at the Guggenheim on Oct. 24. Or consider the eye-boggling spectrum of styles and subjects enfolded by the title "After Midnight: Indian Modernism to Contemporary India 1947/1997" at the Queens Museum (March 1). Among several seasonal shows with South Asian themes, one called "Experiments With Truth: Gandhi and the Images of Nonviolence" at the Menil Collection in Houston (Oct. 2 to Feb. 1) especially attracts me. I'm not quite sure exactly how the show will revisualize Gandhi's existential politics from the past, but the very idea of a show dedicated to imagining a nonviolent world sounds irresistibly restorative in the murderous global present.

Correction: September 8, 2014

An earlier version of picture credit with this article misspelled the surname of the photographer. He is Sean Dungan, not Dunga.