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Christopher Knight, "The 10 best art exhibition at L.A museum in 2015," *Los Angeles Times*, December 12, 2015

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Best of 2015 The 10 best art exhibitions at L.A. museums in 2015



"William Pope.L: Trinket" at Geffen Contemporary was anchored by a monumental — and riveting — 2008 installation sculpture of an enormous American flag whipping in an artificial breeze. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)



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In chronological order, these are 10 top-notch exhibitions shown at L.A. museums in 2015:

"Charles Gaines: Gridwork 1974-1989," Hammer

Museum: Organized by the Studio Museum in Harlem, the show laid out the L.A. artist's intensive, 15-year deep-dive into rule-based systems.

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Scanning these big, gridded drawings is like watching the analog world give way to the digital universe.

"William Pope.L: Trinket," Geffen Contemporary: The show of recent work by the Chicago-based artist was anchored by a monumental — and riveting — 2008 installation sculpture of an enormous American flag whipping in an artificial breeze. Thrilling and terrifying, dangerous and exciting, "Trinket" is unforgettable.

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"Noah Purifoy: Junk Dada," Los Angeles County Museum of Art: Aside from having the best title of the year, the show unfolded the galvanizing effect the Watts rebellion had 50 years ago on the L.A. artist's work. Then, following his lengthy hiatus from art-making, it picked up on the desert poetry of the assemblage installations Purifoy made in remote Joshua Tree toward the end of his life.

"Perfect Likeness: Photography and Composition," Hammer Museum: Several dozen artists were surveyed in a surprising assessment in recent photography of the reemergence of pictorialism — not in imitation of painting, as photography did more than a century ago, but as something possible just in photographic terms.

"Power and Pathos: Bronze Sculpture of the Hellenistic World," J. Paul Getty Museum: Bronze was the reigning sculptural medium of Hellenistic Greece, although most of the art was melted down and repurposed (often for weaponry) in subsequent centuries. This unprecedented, once-in-a-lifetime survey brought together 50 examples,

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including several of the greatest that remain, in a show beautifully built around the famous Getty Bronze.

"The Art of Our Time," Museum of Contemporary Art: Loosely timed to coincide with the debut of the Broad, its new neighbor across the street, MOCA turned over the entirety of its Grand Avenue building to a permanent collection installation that is filled with unerringly smart and provocative juxtapositions. (It opens with a sampling of works made by artists who taught or studied at Black Mountain College, subject of a much-anticipated show coming to the Hammer in February.) The museum has never looked better.

Debut exhibition, the Broad: It takes time to learn how best to install art in new gallery spaces, so the inaugural show of blue-chip contemporary work at the new vanity museum opposite MOCA and next to Walt Disney Concert Hall has some hits and misses. But when it's good, it's very good indeed.

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"New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919-1933," Los Angeles County Museum of Art: After the gruesome brutalities of World War I, paintings and photographs dubbed *Neue Sachlichkeit* — New Objectivity — cast an ice-cold eye on the tumultuous realities of German life in the interregnum before the arrival of National Socialism. The show, by turns grim and eye-popping, beautifully unpacks an often misunderstood era in early 20th century Modern art.

"UH-OH: Frances Stark, 1991-2015," Hammer Museum: The enthralling survey of 125 of the L.A. artist's works — including drawings, collages, paintings, sculptures and video installations — focuses on her uncanny fusion of the analog and the virtual. An acute sense of alienated

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intimacy, which seems to characterize much of life today, is by turns poignant, wickedly funny and defiant.

"Woven Gold: Tapestries of Louis XIV," J. Paul Getty Museum: As I write, this exhibition of 14 sumptuous, mostly monumental tapestries from the collection of the Sun King, including rare loans and often little-known works from the French state, has yet to open. But if the catalog is any indication, it's on track to ring out the year in grand style.

The worst trend — museum exhibitions without a curator: LACMA this year presented two: a four-day "pop-up" show in July of a satisfactory if conventional nine-minute music video by artist and director Steve McQueen and pop star Kanye West, and the gimmicky "Rain Room" by London design firm Random International, currently on view. Absent curators, both feel like crude museum marketing moves.

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