

VULTURE

FALL PREVIEW 2019 | 8:00 A.M.

The Best and Biggest Art Shows to See to This Fall From JR, Amy Sherald, Pope.L, and more.

By Jerry Saltz and Carl Swanson

The once-mighty Drawing Center reawakens this fall under new director Laura Hoptman, who has mounted a virtuoso exhibition of over 140 drawings, “The Pencil Is a Key: Drawings by Incarcerated Artists.” The selections are beautiful, rage-inspiring, tragic — a testament to the power of drawing as tool, survival skill, memory theater, and weapon to fight for justice, gain agency, and allow the imagination to soar. The artists range from those imprisoned during the Terror of the French Revolution, to Native Americans confined in horrible conditions working for slave wages and selling drawings for pennies to soldiers’ wives and white tourists, to so-called outsider visionaries who spent the bulk of their lives in mental institutions producing some of the most powerful art of the 20th century. There are also works by Japanese-Americans the U.S. government interned as “enemy aliens” and by numerous political prisoners who taught themselves to draw while locked up in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Sudan, Assad’s Syria, Nazi Germany, and post-9/11 Guantánamo Bay — where even top-priority “confirmed” terrorists have been cleared for release after more than 15 years of torture and privation. “In this moment in our country and around the world,” Hoptman says, “when all kinds of freedoms are being called into question, this show is about the ability of drawing to articulate our humanity and express our determination to be free even in the most dire circumstances.” She’s right. This work will make your heart soar, your stomach retch, and your fists clench. — *Jerry Saltz*

SEPTEMBER



Pope.L, *Thunderbird*. Photo: Courtesy of Artist

Pope.L (*Public Art Fund*, “*Conquest*”; 9/21. *Whitney*, “*Choir*”; 10/10–winter 2020. *MoMA*, “*member*”; 10/21–2/1/2020)

After winning the Whitney’s \$100,000 Bucksbaum Award in 2017, Pope.L hits the New York institutional trifecta with an extravaganza of three upcoming shows. The Museum of Modern Art will mount a retrospective of the activist-sculptor-painter-provocateur’s work from 1978 to 2001 — including videos of the epic crawls he did on his belly through the streets of New York City dressed as an African-American superhero. Also stay tuned for a mass performance of over 100 volunteers of all races crawling together through the Washington Square arch to Union Square.