

Best of 2012

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Dia Saïah, *Fontaine*, 2012, sandstone, 110 x 47 x 31". (Photo: Maxime Leri)

AMID GENERAL TIGHTENING of purse strings in Europe, 2012 was a big year for Paris museums. The Palais de Tokyo unveiled a \$25 million renovation that tripled its size in April, the Louvre opened a new Islamic wing (its largest expansion since L.M. Pei's glass pyramids) in September, and "Hepper fever" made the Grand Palais's retrospective (the American painter's first in France) a true blockbuster this fall. However, the Musée de l'Art Moderne still has on view the best show of the year. Honoring MAM's seventieth anniversary, "L'Art en guerre" (Art at War) delivers on its ambitious objective with nearly 400 works made in France before, during, and after World War II. Well-known story lines are reiterated—Braque and Picasso in their Paris studios; Matisse, Bonnard, and Rouault retreating to the south; Léger, Chagall, and Duchamp fleeing to the US—but underexplored narratives are also elucidated. Works by French internment camp prisoners constitute a significant portion of the exhibition, including drawings by Wolk, Ernot, and Bellmer as well as artifacts like a series of miniature prison cell tableaux inside sliding matchboxes by the little-known artist Roger Poyen. A room dedicated to Parisian dealer Joanne Becker, who, incredibly, continued to exhibit and sell Nazi-condemned "degenerate" artists during the Occupation, makes a striking comparison with a reconstruction of MAM's inaugural show in 1942—an eerie alternate art history purged of "undesirables" and filled with Vichy-approved French artists. The show runs until February 11, 2013.

Paris is always great for public art, and FMG's 2012 "Hors les Murs" (Outside the Walls) program treated the city to a range of eclectic offerings this past October—from Jeremy Deller's infatigable Stonehenge at Les Invalides to a performative reading of Oh Kawara's ongoing *One Million Years* at the Jardin des Plantes. A few of the most notable works (some sassy, others whimsical) could be found in the fountains at the Jardin des Tuileries: Dia Saïah's ceramic anthropomorph *Fontaine*, 2012, appeared to piddle into the Louvre-facing Vivier Nard basin while Marc Quinn's suggestive polished-bronze coach *The Origin of the World* (Cécile MacGaughran's) *Leslie Cowan*, 2012, paid tribute to the famous Coubet nude residing just across the Seine at the Musée d'Orsay. Honoring the fountain's traditional denizens, Susumu Hirasu's playful floating neobles (*Sinfonietta of Light*, 2012) bobbed like toy sailboat bird hybrids.

Rushing even further hors les murs, Louis Grélaud's twenty-eight-minute film *The Snorkel: A Concert for Creativity*, 2012, witnesses a musical escapade at the bottom of the ocean. *Art Pro: Concretism*—whose music was broadcast through a hydrophone in an experiment to trigger a deep-sea bioluminescent bloom—provides the sound track for Grélaud's surrealist narrative starring Charlotte Rampling and David Lynch. Following the film's Paris premiere in October (which included a surprise live performance by APC), *The Snorkel* is now screening as part of the band's worldwide concert tour. Having seen sea life glow and dance to hip-hop in 2012, I can only imagine what new frontiers will be claimed for art in 2013.

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