

ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

BEST OF
2015



BEST OF 2015 ARTISTS' ARTISTS



Tala Madani, *Love Doctor*, 2015, oil on linen, 16 × 14 1/4".

GAVIN KENYON

Tala Madani (David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles) "Smiley has no nose," a show of idiosyncratically grotesque paintings, was one of the year's strongest presentations. I'm so impressed by Madani's ability to stick to a single topic and sustain a rigorous yet playful approach. She has a talent for working consistently across a range of scales, and this crowded exhibition gave equal consideration to her intimate canvases and her sprawling ones. Replete with depictions of degraded or imperiled male figures (including one who's about to get his nose cut off), the paintings also feature lots of smiley faces, whose noselessness, in this context, feels disturbing. The framing allowed the viewer to recognize, beyond the works' cartoonish pranks, complex narratives that extended from one painting to the next.

DEANA LAWSON

"The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now" (Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago) This truly dynamic exhibition traced the 1960s African American avant-garde to present-day cultural practices. I felt immediately charged by unexpected conversations between the archival materials of Chicago art and jazz organizations AfriCOBRA and the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians and contemporary artworks such as Jamal Cyrus's *Cultr-Ops*, 2008, a graphite-on-paper reference to FBI files created under the bureau's infamous COINTELPRO surveillance program. I took pleasure in the space-travel paintings by Ayé Aton, a former percussionist and mentee of Sun Ra's, and delighted in the photo documentation of his cosmic murals. *Rio Negro II*, 2007/2015—a "robotic-acoustic" sound installation by Douglas R. Ewart, George Lewis, and Douglas Repetto consisting of rain sticks, chimes, and bamboo, among other components—totally activated my senses.



Ayé Aton, *Untitled*, 1964, acrylic on paper, 27 1/2 × 22". From "The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now."



Richard Ibgby and Marilou Lemmens, *The Golden USB*, 2014—, multichannel video, sound, mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view, vox, Centre de l'Image Contemporaine, Montreal, 2014.

BASIM MAGDY

Richard Ibgby & Marilou Lemmens, *The Golden USB* (La Biennale de Montréal) Entering the first room of this ambitious project, I was overcome with joy. I was standing in a dark space scattered with video projections and objects from what the artists called "A Trade Catalogue of Everything." *The Golden USB* is intended for travel to other worlds to promote and trade our earthly "goods." Behind the seriousness on the artists' faces as they silently present our merchandise in the videos is the obvious humor of both the futility of the task and the way our world is portrayed. Water is poured onto a tilted tray, funneling into a bag that is then punctured with a handsaw, becoming a possible showerhead. I walked out thinking about a lot of things differently.

JENNIFER ALLORA AND GUILLERMO CALZADILLA

Marble *sekoma*, Hellenistic period, Delos, Greece Our highlight of 2015 was taking in the massive settlement on the island of Delos, a religious and commercial center in ancient Greece. Viewed from the top of Mt. Cynthus, the island's radiant gneiss conjures the presence of Apollo. Inside a small archaeological museum is a marble *sekoma*—an instrument for measuring liquids that was essential in the regulation of the ancient marketplace. Presented among statues of gods and rulers, the object reminded us that formal standards are defined through relations of power. We pondered it in light of the current debt crises in Greece and Puerto Rico. The gap between seemingly irreconcilable political situations and historical spaces was, for a moment, suspended.



Sekoma, Hellenistic period, marble, approx. 8 × 40 × 20".