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Roberta Smith, "A Resurgence in Chelsea," *The New York Times*, October 8, 2020.

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ART REVIEW

A Resurgence in Chelsea

In the face of economic unknowns, the message from the city's galleries is: we're not taking this lying down. Roberta Smith on 16 of the neighborhood's most riveting painting shows.



Walter Price's "A breeze filled with determination wafted towards us" (2018) at Greene Naftali Gallery. "This may be the most exciting painting show in Chelsea right now," our critic says. Walter Price and Greene Naftali

After several months of forced inactivity because of the pandemic, New York's art galleries are back, with a vengeance. Since Labor Day, they have collectively mustered one of the better fall seasons of the last several years, with more to come in the weeks ahead. Yes, there have been changes. Unfortunately, some galleries have closed, while others are being worryingly slow to reopen. Yet fewer have gone missing than seemed likely in March or April. Others have sought new leases on life by relocating from Chelsea to TriBeCa, or from SoHo to the Upper East Side, and so forth.

In the face of the economic unknowns, the collective message from galleries sounds something like: we're not taking this lying down.

The sense of resurgence is especially tangible in Chelsea, where my running list of shows to see has reached 74. A good number form a fractious conversation about painting.

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The differing viewpoints about the medium can be dizzying, ricocheting off each other. They range from **Pieter Schoolwerth's** demonically choreographed "[Shifted Sims](#)" series at [Petzel Gallery](#)— where figures and interiors from the Sims video games, printed on canvas, intersect with mannered applications of paint, forming a disturbing netherworld of social and art-making rituals — to **Julian Schnabel's** latest forays into Romantic abstraction at [Pace](#). In them, great flourishes of white and blue unfurl across slightly shaped stretchers with a dusty pink tarp serving as canvas. And they are bookended by shows of crisp new Minimalist paintings from **Robert Mangold**, and **Yoshitomo Nara's** unendingly cute, wide-eyed innocents, brought forth with consummate ease in paint and colored pencil.

Mr. Schoolwerth's fastidious craft finds some echo in **Kyle Dunn's** work at [P.P.O.W.](#), where the paintings build on the homoerotic realism of Paul Cadmus and the stylized figuration of Tamara de Lempicka — once-overlooked talents of the 1930s. His beautifully carved wood frames ripple around and sometimes interrupt the images.

At [Berry Campbell](#) you can see the all-but-forgotten fusion of Minimalist boldness and Color Field staining that **Edward Avesidian** achieved in the mid-1960s. And [Michael Rosenfeld Gallery](#) has brought together a large, stunning group of **Benny Andrews's** portraits primarily from the 1970s and '80s which have not been seen together before. The psychological realness of Mr. Andrews's Black subjects contrasts strikingly with the more polemical go-for-the jugular approach of a younger generation exemplified by the strong new paintings in [Titus Kaphar's first show at Gagosian](#), two blocks away.

Taken together these eight shows, and the four reviewed below — with four more very honorable mentions — demonstrate how completely open painting is right now, how distant are the illusions of dominant styles that once squeezed out all but major players.

There's not much agreement among these 15 shows about what painting should be right now. But they all have their own challenging energy and clarity. They portray the medium as a Tower of Babel, where artists invent their own languages by combining bits of traditions with things only they know. That's quite a healthy situation.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/08/arts/design/chelsea-art-shows-to-see-now.html>