

GLADSTONE

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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in January

By Andrew Russeth

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This week in Newly Reviewed, Andrew Russeth covers retro video games, Mark Leckey's ecstasy and Roe Ethridge's photographic mischief.

CHELSEA

Mark Leckey

Through Feb. 15. Gladstone Gallery, 530 West 21st Street, Manhattan; 212-206-7606, gladstonegallery.com.



Installation view of "Mark Leckey: 3 Songs from the Liver." As part of the show, a video plays in a replica bus shelter. Mark Leckey and Gladstone Gallery, New York; Photo by David NRegen

Eight years after his deliriously inventive MoMA PS1 survey, the freethinking, genre-eluding British artist Mark Leckey is finally back in town with a new show, "3 Songs From the Liver." Ecstasy (spiritual, emotional and physical), a rare subject in contemporary art, is its focus, and a sequence of three topsy-turvy videos from the past few years is its heart.

In the best one, Leckey loops and remixes a 2017 viral video of a man smashing through a bus-stop window one (presumably boozy) night in Cardiff, Wales. Leckey's piece plays on two screens in, no joke, a bus stop inside the gallery: a mise-en-abyme of hooliganism. Higher-resolution footage made by the artist soon appears of a man similarly catapulting through a window. "Oh my God, you did it!" a voice cries. Leckey distorts those lines and brings in shimmering electronic music. As this brave, stupid jump repeats again, and again, and again, a bizarre sublimity wells up.

The artist, who is 60, is himself being transported in “Carry Me Into the Wilderness” (2022), which plays nearby. Wandering in a sylvan London park after the pandemic lockdown, he found himself overcome, and hit record on his cellphone. “Everything just fills me up and it’s too much, and it’s too great,” he says over blurry images, his voice quavering before it passes through filters that render it expansive, choral. Candles and a golden painting of a hermit’s cave (based on a Lorenzo Monaco piece from around 1400) soon transport us into the realm of religion.

Leckey’s own gold-leaf panels are also on view; one riffs on a city from a medieval painting that figures in the third video installation, “Mercy I Cry City” (2024). It plays behind a floor-to-ceiling wall, but it’s visible through small, oblique openings that recall squints, which allow churchgoers to glimpse an otherwise-obstructed altar. The video moves through a computer-generated rendering of the walled city, which is empty, oddly proportioned, unreal and out of reach. Soon everything is spinning, vanishing into light and then beginning again.

All these unlikely ecstatic experiences, these escapes, are fleeting — thrilling yet incomplete. But perhaps their effects accrue, which is art’s promise. They sneak up on you, or, like the Cardiff leaper, you pass through them.