

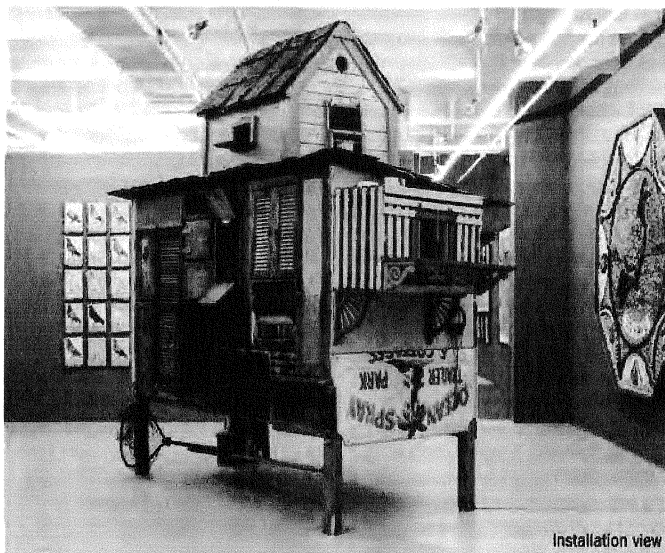
Duke Riley, "See You at the Finish Line"

★★★★

Magnan Metz Gallery, through Sat 11 (see Chelsea)

A storyteller at heart, Duke Riley challenges the powers that be with complex art projects that involve no small amount of personal risk. His latest show presents two such endeavors: one revisiting a legendary contest that determined the order of the Chinese zodiac; the other probing the history of trade—often illicit—between Havana and Key West.

The former is represented by *Rematch*, an installation combining video documentation and handmade props left over from Riley's witty performance-intervention staged in Zhujiajiao, a canal-side Chinese community. Beginning with the myth that the rat became the zodiac's first symbol by cheating in a river race against the other animals of the calendar, Riley engaged local schoolchildren, artisans, herders, opera singers and boat handlers to reenact the original competition, employing imaginative stratagems to achieve a new end—and thus, upending centuries of time-honored tradition.



Installation view

Meanwhile, Riley spent eight months breeding homing pigeons for his second piece, *Trading with the Enemy*. It, too, involves a performance of sorts, in which 50 rock doves (25 carrying contraband and 25 equipped with video cameras) journeyed across the Straits of Florida. Small painted portraits of the pigeons, plus aerial footage, detail their treacherous

crossing. A coop cobbled together from materials salvaged around the Keys houses the surviving birds, and stands in the gallery: a technically illegal amenity that Riley uses, once again, to thumb his nose at the Man.—Paul Laster

THE BOTTOM LINE Riley's work wryly takes aim at authority and tradition.

Museums & Institutions

◀ **Brooklyn Museum** 200 Eastern Pkwy at Washington Ave, Prospect Heights, Brooklyn (718-638-5000, brooklynmuseum.org). Subway: 2, 3 to Eastern Pkwy–Brooklyn Museum. Wed, Fri–Sun 11am–6pm; Thu 11am–10pm. Suggested donation \$12, seniors and students \$8, children under 12 free. First Saturday of every month 5–11pm free.

* **"Behind Closed Doors: Art in the Spanish American Home, 1492–1898"** The good life as led by the elites in Spain's New World colonial empire is the subject of this roundup of fine-art objects and furnishings. Through Sun 12.

* **"Wangechi Mutu: A Fantastic Journey"** Although she employs a number of artistic mediums, Wangechi Mutu is best-known for large-scale collages on Mylar, depicting chimerical female figures that are part plant, part animal and part human. Through Mar 9.

* **"WAR/PHOTOGRAPHY: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath"** The relationship between war and photography is the subject of this survey, covering 166 years of military history. Through Feb 2.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum 1071 Fifth Ave at 89th St (212-423-3500, guggenheim.org). Subway: 4, 5, 6 to 86th St. Mon–Wed, Fri, Sun 10am–5:45pm; Sat 10am–7:45pm. \$22, seniors and students with ID \$18, members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult free. Sat 5:45–7:45pm pay what you wish.

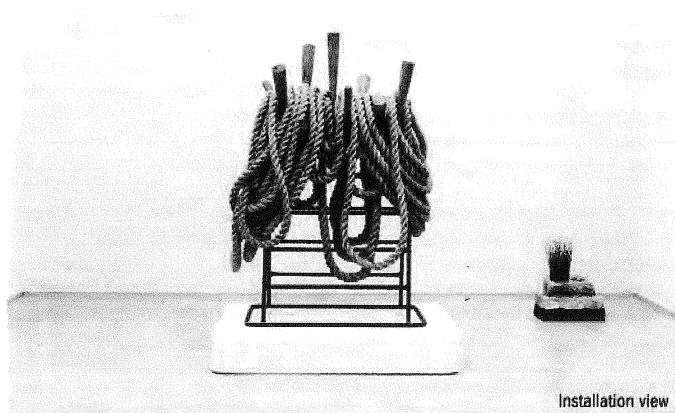
* **Christopher Wool** The painter gets the run of the Guggenheim rotunda in this survey of his 30-year career. Through Jan 22.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1000 Fifth Ave at 82nd St (212-535-7710, metmuseum.org). Subway: 4, 5, 6 to 86th St. Mon–Thu, Sun 10am–5:30pm; Fri, Sat 10am–9pm. Suggested donation \$25, seniors \$17, students \$12, members and children under 12 free.

* **"Piero della Francesca: Personal Encounters"** See Critics' Picks.

* **"Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China"** The 35 contemporary Chinese artists in this exhibition have all, in one way or the next, found a model for their work in some aspect of China's rich cultural legacy. Through Apr 6.

Terry Adkins, "Nenuphar"



Installation view

★★★★

Salon 94 Bowery + Salon 94 Freemans, through Sat 11 (see Lower East Side)

While Terry Adkins's latest assemblages are evocative, his

real medium is history. He attempts to draw parallels between George Washington Carver and Yves Klein. The points of intersection between them are largely tenuous (for instance, that in 1935, Carver synthesized a blue pigment, recalling Klein's blue

paintings), and Adkins uses them to launch his pieces into poetic flights of fancy.

Little-known biographical details serve as jumping-off points for works like *Progressive Nature Studies*, in which a grid of Klein-like monochromes is juxtaposed with the title page of a book by Carver, also called *Progressive Nature Studies*—the point being, perhaps, that the two men shared a dogged pursuit of knowledge, whether esoteric (Klein) or difficult to obtain (as it was for most African-Americans in the Jim Crow South).

Difficult as they are, the pieces sustain enough visual interest to make ascertaining their meanings as enjoyable as it is roundabout.—Merrily Kerr

THE BOTTOM LINE Adkins explores the unlikely affinities between a noted African-American and a French artist.