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ART & DESIGN

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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

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By Travis Diehl, Roberta Smith, Jason Farago and Will Heinrich
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Want to see new art in New York this weekend? Start in Chelsea to catch a retrospective of photographs by Diane Arbus that caused a sensation in the 1970s. Then head to Do Ho Suh's latest anti-monumental exhibition. And don't miss Albert-Laszlo Barabasi and Fernanda Gomes in SoHo.

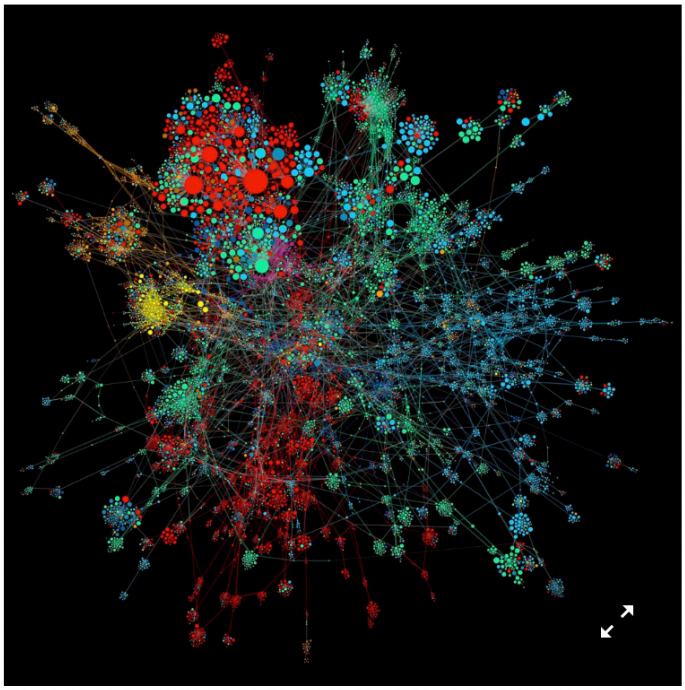
Newly Reviewed

Hours vary at galleries. Visitors should check in advance.

SOHO

Albert-Laszlo Barabasi

Through Oct. 29. Postmasters, 484 Broome Street, Manhattan; www.postmastersart.com.



"Art Network" (2018) a backlit canvas that reveals the links between museums and commercial galleries: The bigger "nodes" represent major nonprofits — New York's Museum of Modern Art, Tate in London —whose artists also show with major dealers. via Postmasters 5.0

Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, a scientist turned artist, promotes a movement he calls Dataism, documenting "invisible but objective societal processes, connections, associations, affiliations, correlations, causes, and consequences, aspects of reality that are simply not accessible to retinal art."

To that end, in this show called "BarabasiLab: Big Data (Networking the Artworld)," one wall at Postmasters features what looks like a suite of Bauhaus abstractions, but whose nesting rectangles actually represent philanthropic spending by foundations in the United States, from 2010 to 2019. (Art museums reap 0.5 percent of that spending, so the rectangle that stands for them takes up 0.5 percent of the total surface area of the suite's abstractions.)

A single canvas on another wall, bearing a squiggly abstraction in green, yellow, blue and red, might almost be a Kandinsky-inspired response to music; in fact it captures the connections among the few big artists, dealers and museums that dominate the art world.

But here's what's weird about Barabasi's information-heavy art: To squeeze the information out of his work — mostly paintings and prints, but this show includes one video and a sculpture — you can't just look; you need to read a web page with the back story. That makes me think Barabasi's work is more about capturing the vital feel of data in our lives than giving us specific facts.

Or maybe it's about an ancient function of art we've come to neglect: To simply point at important things in the world — a mammoth to kill; a god to worship — without regard to beauty or style or anything "retinal." All the work now at Postmasters could look pretty different and still capture the same information. Is it saying that deep down, all art wants to function that way? *BLAKE GOPNIK*