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Speed Round! 19 Critics Pick the NYC Shows to Add to Your Map This September

September 16, 2026

Regular contributors and an all-star slate of Critics' Table first-timers hit the ground running this season, delivering inspired single-sentence reviews for our biggest gallery roundup yet.

Covering last week's openings in Chelsea and downtown, as well as a few outliers and museum shows, our Speed Round offers something like a core sample, if not a comprehensive view, of the New York art scene. Writers, working against the clock, reviewed shows of our choice in one (sometimes quite long) sentence. But, though we raced around, you don't have to: Many exhibitions are open through Halloween.



Installation view of Michael E. Smith at Maxwell Graham, New York, New York, 2026. Image courtesy of the artist and Maxwell Graham Gallery.

Michael E. Smith

Maxwell Graham | 72 Walker, Floor 5
Through October 24

Michael E. Smith is back with an exhibition at the gallery's new Tribeca space, high up in an old, dusty building with a slanted ceiling and windows galore, each covered with a sheet or moving blanket, softening the atmosphere of the room to a kind of eternal twilight, and backlighting the textiles gridded stains and patterns, offering a backdrop for Smith to once again perform his own brand of trash magic, where instead of finding your card in the deck, he leaves your favorite childhood toy that you assumed was lost forever, right on your pillow at home: a tribute, a ghost, a return, a divination, or a damnation—who's to say? —*Ajay Kurian*