

TRAVELMAG

LIKE A LOCAL: TOP 10 ART GALLERIES IN HARLEM

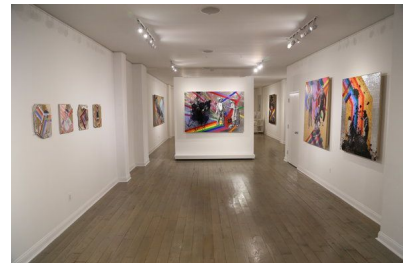
BY CHRIS KOMPANEK | PUBLISHED MAY 15, 2017

Harlem has a storied history of creation. The uptown New York neighborhood is known for being the birthplace of bebop jazz and home to luminaries like Billie Holiday and Langston Hughes. It should come as no surprise that Harlem also contains a thriving art scene, with galleries often tucked into brownstones and unassuming storefronts. Here are ten of the best.



Long Gallery Harlem

It would be easy to miss this tiny gallery. Squeezed into a narrow storefront on one of the neighborhood's wide classic avenues, Long Gallery doesn't announce its presence. Inside, the limited wall space is consistently filled with provocative art like Delano Dunn's pointedly titled exhibition *No One Can Be This Tomorrow*, which uses vibrant, colorful mixed media collages to explore pivotal moments in black history. An electric tension courses through Dunn's work, which contrasts the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil Rights Movement with the realities of everyday oppression.



2073 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Blvd.

Contemporary African Art

Technically in the northern reaches of neighboring Upper West Side, this gallery has been dedicated solely to exhibiting the work of contemporary African artists for the past three decades. The recent group show *West African Stew* examined French influence on artists like Quattara, who uses dark pastels in his mysteriously evocative "Spirit King." Other highlights include Fode Camara's "Witnesses Passing in Turn," which echoes the whimsy of Matisse.

2808 Broadway

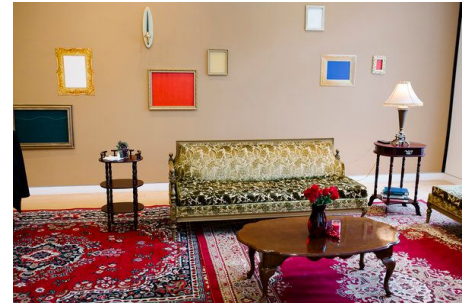
Essie Green

Founded in Park Slope, Brooklyn, in 1979, this gallery moved to Harlem a decade later and has built its reputation for exhibiting 19th and 20th century black artists along with exhibiting work at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., among other national museums. Highlights include Kimberly Becoat's abstract mixed media collages like "Honey and Chaos," which evokes the freewheeling wonder of Jackson Pollock and the layered complexity of Jean-Michel Basquiat.

419 Convent A Ave.

Hunter East Harlem

Housed on the ground floor of Hunter College's Silberman School of Social Work, the college's gallery aims to exhibit socially-minded projects that resonate with the community of East Harlem. Recent exhibitions at the cultural and academic art space include a *mise-en-scène* homage to The Incoherents, the French social satire movement that created parodies of famous art works to highlight the absurdities of the established class. Another show, *Visions of Confinement*, explored the experience of women in prison through a range of mediums including painting, diorama and photography.



2180 3rd Ave.

Gavin Brown's Enterprise

Housed in a former brewery, the gallery is the latest space for its enterprising eponymous UK dealer, who lives just a few blocks away. Cavernous, artfully unfinished rooms house exhibitions by cutting edge artists like fellow Brit Ed Atkins. A recent show of the video artist projected eerie images of altered reality on large panels that were either suspended from the ceiling or placed at angles that invited wandering through them like a maze.

439 W 127th St.

Elizabeth Dee

After fifteen years in Chelsea, Elizabeth Dee's eponymous gallery moved uptown to this 12,000-square-foot space in 2016. Located next door to the National Black Theater, the expansive digs were the original home of the Studio Museum in Harlem. This rich history has informed curatorial choices. A recent show assembled by Larry Ossei-Mensah included the work of four emerging artists based in the area and neighboring South Bronx. One of many highlights was Kenny Rivero's kinetically charged collage "The Fire Next Time," which abstractly detailed people fleeing a burning building.



2033/2037 Fifth Ave.

Heath

Housed in a historic townhouse near Mount Morris Park, this gallery was founded by husband and wife artists Thomas Edwin and Sandra Alexis Heath in 2002, with a mission to exhibit Harlem-based artists. On the last Friday of each month, they host a salon-style evening called Hang Night where anyone can bring art to exhibit. An open mic for poetry, music and just about any other form of creative expression adds to the warm and inclusive vibe.

24 W 120th St.

Alex Adam

Founded in 2009 and named in memory of a young artist who died tragically young, this gallery doubles as a working studio for New York artists and donates profits from work sold to help emerging artists realize their dreams. Highlights include Fumiko Toda's surreal landscape paintings that conjure a lush world filled with wonder, but on the precipice of a dreary abyss.

78 W 120th

Gitler & _____

This intimate gallery focuses on emerging artists from around the world. Recent highlights include Damien Hoar de Galvin's dynamic show, with the sly and understated title (*wot's...uh the deal?*) taken from a Pink Floyd song. Each of the small sculptures is displayed on its own miniature white shelf. Their geometric shapes meld into amorphous, yet intricately designed busts, bursting with imaginative color. Another show focused on the interplay of light and shadows through works like Graham Preston's oil painting "Headlights," which ominously depicts an approaching car on a desolate road, in a style reminiscent of filmmaker David Lynch.



3629 Broadway

Martinez

This gallery gives graffiti art its due with well-curated shows that highlight the artistry and diversity of the DIY movement that incubated on street corners, not in conservatories, seeing the world instead as its canvas. One recent highlight was a solo exhibition of the German and French couple Mina and Bruce, who met in Paris and have etched their works across Europe, as well as on buildings here in New York. Their colorful characters exude a cartoonish ebullience and seem poised to burst through any surface on which they appear.

3332 Broadway

[art-galleries-harlem](http://art-galleries-harlem.com)