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BEAT THE HEAT WITH THESE 10 MUST-SEE ART SHOWS

By: Jeenah Moon
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The Studio Museum in Harlem is a movable feast these days. With a new David Adjaye-designed headquarters under construction on West 125th Street, the museum is distributing its exhibitions among various locations around town. Its annual artists-in-residence show has found a berth at MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, Queens.

Now 50 years old, the residence program has long had a reputation for being a career clincher, though it could be argued that this year's three participants — Allison Janae Hamilton, Tschabalala Self and Sable Elyse Smith — were already en route to stardom. It's also worth noting that, strategically and tonally, this year's edition, with its formally experimental, slow-release explorations into the politics of African-American life, is very much of a piece with the excellent, and overlapping, 2019 Whitney Biennial.

Ms. Hamilton attracted attention two years ago in the Studio Museum's new-artist survey "Fictions" with an installation evoking the uncanny atmosphere of the pine forests of northern Florida where she grew up, terrain with distinctive flora and fauna (now threatened by climate change) and a hard history of African-American labor. With an expanded use of sculpture, and video in her new work, she pushes the atmosphere of her

earlier work from merely dreamy to mystical in a suspenseful narrative that takes us deep into woods, far under water, to a realm where the force of nature is both baptismal and diluvial.

The mood — to use the show's title — turns rowdily ebullient in Ms. Self's "Street Series," textile-collage paintings of large-scale figures inspired by the black population of the artist's native turf, Harlem. Ms. Self — whose work recently produced sensational auction results at Christie's — draws on the formal example of artists past (Benny Andrews, Faith Ringgold, Bill Traylor) to conjure an urban scene that feels both archetypal and closely observed, and physically immediate in a wraparound installation.

The world evoked by Ms. Smith's mixed-media work is America's prison industrial complex, where hoarded food is a form of currency; every design decision is shaped by surveillance; and promotional material — coloring books made for the visiting children of inmates — promotes a promise of social harmony precisely the opposite of what incarceration creates. The title of her 2017 solo exhibition at the Queens Museum, "Ordinary Violence," captures the low-volume, high-intensity nature of an art that gets sharper and subtler show by the show, and looks particularly strong in this one.