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Critic's Choice: Glasstire.com's Christina Rees On Visual Art to Look Forward To

[Anne Bothwell](#) | December 29, 2014 8:00 AM

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Our Critic's Choice series continues today. Christina Rees of Glasstire.com shares some highlights from 2014 and looks ahead to 2015.

You see so much work. Did any one piece continue to resonate with you this year?

The one historical piece was in *The Age of Picasso and Matisse* show at the Kimbell, which actually opened in 2013, but I didn't see it until January of this year. It was a large, painted self-portrait by Max Beckmann. He's standing it looks like probably in the lobby of an opera house or ballet, he's wearing a tuxedo. You've got to understand that this was just a few days before the Nazis opened the Degenerate Art show. The fact that Max Beckmann and his cohorts would be considered degenerates and that they had to flee and that over 500 of his pieces were gathered up by the Nazis and either destroyed, reallocated or sold, that's a really super-loaded thing, and the painting embodies that psychological space. You can almost feel it. There's a kind of self possession in the way he's standing, there's a defiance in it, but it's very quiet.

And work from North Texas?

As far as local art, there was the Dallas Biennial or DB 14. The warehouse show in the springtime. In the back of the warehouse, in the big cavernous space, [Darryl Lauster](#) had hung a disco ball, a real disco ball, up high in the space. [[A similar piece](#) by Lauster was [shortlisted](#) for ArtPrize in Grand Rapids this year] It really held the space. I still think about all the time. There was also a soundtrack that went with it and it was very political. It was hard to hear that night, and to me the impact was much more about this small gesture and the way it held this big brutal space. The warehouse itself was this crazy post-apocalyptic nightmare of a space, but there was all this sophisticated artwork tucked throughout and you had to find it.

Michael Mazurek and Jesse Morgan Barnett started the Dallas Biennial. This year was the second installment. They are both busy working on their own artwork as well. That's what happens with all these artists. They're supporting one another, they have to wear so many hats. That's what exciting about the art scene in Dallas and Fort Worth is how organically things are changing and moving and there's a lot of shifting going on. Artists have to have so much energy to be able to put on something like the Dallas Biennial as well as maintain their own careers and exhibition schedules. And they're both doing that.

The Dallas Art Fair turns five in 2015....

I was one of the doubters. But I was also a founding member of CADD [Contemporary Art Dealers of Dallas] and I had an art gallery back when John Sughrue and Chris Byrne first approached CADD to talk about putting together a Dallas Art Fair. So I was a skeptic but now with every year that goes by, I check it out and I'm impressed. I think it's a very professional, dignified affair. It's not just successful, but it's getting more successful every year. Ultimately Houston's always had a couple rivalrous art fairs. But it almost seems like Dallas could be the answer to that. Now that international galleries want to exhibit somewhere in Texas, I do think the Dallas Art Fair could be the one that really takes over.

What else are you looking forward to in 2015?

The DMA has a new curator of contemporary art and his name is Gavin Delahunty. And his first two exhibitions for the DMA [are ahead]. One is Frank Bowling. He was a black artist, originally from South America, educated at art school in England, part of the '60s avant-garde in New York. These are giant 20-plus-foot-long paintings, the Map paintings. The DMA recently acquired one. And they are bringing the others together from private collections to reunite these paintings at the DMA. It will be the first time they've all been shown together since the early '70s at the Whitney.

I've met Gavin, and his hopes and his plans for the DMA are very strong because it's about originating shows. He's putting together this show of the Black Pourings, which is a kind of overlooked body of work by Jackson Pollock and that will be in the fall.

Anything that binds working artists in North Texas together?

Since coming to work for Glasstire full time, one of the things I'm most buoyed by is how stubborn and independent and enterprising Texas artists are. They have to be. It's an interesting culture in which to choose to be an artist, it can be incredibly conservative here, it can be very libertarian here. I feel like we have a little more scrappiness maybe. Texas artists are really good at making work that is not particularly polite. And not apologizing for that. I like that. I like the mischievous quality in a lot of Texas artists.

There seemed to be a lot of new galleries opening this year.

I think we're bouncing back from the recession of 2009. There were some closures at that time, we lost at least a half dozen galleries. This year we've seen And Now, James Cope's kind of smaller, nearly private gallery open; Beefhaus, Cydonia, Erin Cluley just opened a space. It feels like things are returning to a level I was familiar with. With the arts district being more high profile, and we're getting more press in general, it seems like the gallery scene needs to step it up and be part of that larger dialogue.

Yet, some of the year's most noteworthy shows – Dallas Biennial, Deep Ellum Windows –took place not in galleries, but in warehouses and alternative spaces.

I think these things can rise together. I have tremendous respect for the CADD galleries. I think they've been very consistent in their quality. Dallas keeps growing. There are more artists willing to stay here rather than move on. They have to be able to be resourceful about finding spots. There are almost really

too many artists to be showing in the number of galleries we have right now. So they need to find places to show.

We'll see what happens when the Art Prize comes in. People will really have to go out and search for the right spot to show their work.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2014

Central Trak: Central Trak is one of my favorite places in Dallas. I think Heyd Fontenot is just tearing it up over there. He's been in place for about 2 years there. He's also curated shows. The residency program, the residents have solo shows. Jeff Gibbons had a show. Chris Blay's show. *Draftsmen of the Apocalypse* was definitely one of my favorite shows this year.

The thing about Central Trak, it's getting great residents in – Sally Glass, Jeff Gibbons. It's a very responsive space. It seems like it can move quickly. Part of that's Heyd though. He's a fast mover. It's an agile limber space that's able to take advantage of what's happening in the moment. Museums can't do that very well. Central Trak has an agility that I admire.

Deep Ellum Windows: Greg Ruppe did this fantastic show as part of the Deep Ellum Windows with light and sound and television screens, monitors. There was something quiet and meditative about the way he used that space. That was another warehouse thing, another kind of wasteland that was just used very well by an artist. A way to fill up space more psychologically than physically.

"Satellites," at Central Trak. Blay is a Fort Worth based artist but he came over to do a residency at Central Trak and he's always had this tremendous sense of humor. I knew him as a smart joker. The show had a pieced together, junky quality. It was meant to look very DIY – the "satellites" that he built out of tinfoil and tape and umbrellas. To me it was a very moving show, it was a very sad show. It was about communication breakdown and the artist desire to communicate something profound about the way the world works and maybe the message not going through. I thought it was beautiful and poetic and subtle.

The Reading Room: One of the galleries that just kind of quietly does its thing in an intellectual smart quiet nice way. Karen Weiner's space is on the edge of Fair Park. She doesn't try to overpromote. But it's always worth a look in.

The Nasher Sculpture Center: Nasher is just such an exemplary place in terms of how to be very popular yet be very dignified. It benefits from being a smaller space, its jewel-like size. But the programming has been excellent, the exhibitions have been great. Everyone over there is just fully committed, they seem to love their audience and they love their art. I love how engaged they are with the community. Nasher has been the one to watch in terms of the regional museums – I think they all do a good job – but that one, there's something in the way it's run, that other museums should look at their model, for the kind of people they hire, the kind of PR work they do, the way they program their space. It needs to be studied a little more in depth because it's so successful.