

See new exhibitions of large-scale art at the New Museum this summer

By SUSAN MORRIS • July 18, 2019



Lubaina Himid: *Work from Underneath*, 2019. Exhibition view: New Museum, New York. (Dario Lasagni)

The [New Museum](#)'s multiple summer [exhibitions](#) has work that could intrigue architects.

Starting with Turner Prize-winning artist Lubaina Himid, the exhibition title *Work from Underneath* refers to health and safety manuals that offer instructions for survival (the artist cites the Great Fire of London “that burned down half of the city in a single day...a fear of things collapsing on top of you”). She shows new work, including the large-scale painting *Three Architects* (2019) that depicts three female practitioners working on buildings of refuge. Models are placed throughout the red-walled room, which looks out onto the sea. A series of smaller-scale paintings, *Metal Handkerchief* (all 2019), depict tools that are stuck in a wall.



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Meanwhile, *Old Boat / New Money* (2019) is an installation of 32 leaning planks that invoke a ghost ship stuck in the building to suggest that history is embedded in contemporary spaces.

Marta Minujín: Menesunda Reloaded presents the iconic 1965 work, *La Menesunda* (slang for a confusing situation), an intricate labyrinth that confronts visitors with consumer culture, mass media, and urban life. Alongside works by her friends, who were other famous artists, Minujín made big art rooms, early precursors to the Instagram museums and retail pop-ups of today. *La Menesunda* is eleven rooms. Visitors ascend stairs, walk through neon signs in a tiny hallway, and visit a salon in the shape of a woman's head with makeup artists and masseuses ready to offer their services, among other fun experiences. *The Rotating Basket* with walls woven from vinyl strips, *The Swamp*, a corridor covered from floor to ceiling in foam, *The Forest of Shapes and Textures* with a plethora of materials, and an octagonal mirrored room with a transparent booth whose platform activates ultraviolet lights and fans that blow confetti when stepped on. This work was part of a wave of contemporary art after the overthrow of dictator Juan Perón in 1955, during Argentina's brief period of democracy in the 1960s that was ended by a military coup in 1966.

Mika Rottenberg: Easypieces (the title is taken from [Six Easy Pieces](#), physicist Richard Feynman's 1994 book on the fundamentals of physics for non-scientists) is set within sculptural installations that expand on her videos' narratives. Rottenberg's exhibition

ponders humans' interaction with nature.

At the entrance, viewers encounter *AC and Plant* (2018), a sculpture of a window AC unit that goes drip-drip-drip into a plant pot and a hallway installed with electric fans, *Ceiling Fan Composition* (2016) that activate the space.



Mika Rottenberg, *Cosmic Generator*, 2017 (still). Single-channel video installation, sound, color; 26:36 min. (Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth)

Her videos combine documentary and fiction, and people who work in factories. *Cosmic Generator* was filmed in two locations at opposite ends of the world: A Chinese restaurant in a US/Mexico border town, and a wholesale market in Yiwu, China. In the installation, viewers enter through a tunnel, much like the one seen in the video, and exit through a curtain of tacky, multicolored plastic garlands. A border wall is seen separating Mexicali from its US counterpart, Calexico. In fact, under this site is a network of underground tunnels called “La Chinesca,” where the Chinese immigrant population, originally brought to Mexico as workers by the Colorado River Company at the turn of the last century, housed casinos, brothels, bars, and opium dens. Abandoned in the 1970s, the tunnels nonetheless remain a hub for Chinese culture in Mexico. Rottenberg says, “Here is a plethora of Chinese restaurants adorned with imported plastic glitz [from China] and catered by bored waitresses devoid of customers. And then, inevitably, there is the wall, apparently unassailable as it marches across desolate sands to obstruct the mobility of human beings.” She goes on, “I created my work in the empty store right at the onset of Trump’s trade war with China. I wondered what would happen if world trade just stopped: How would that look? I never meant for that piece to be so topical, but somehow it is.”

Lubaina Himid: Work from Underneath runs until October 6, 2019, *Marta Minujín:*

Menesunda Reloaded runs until September 29, 2019, and *Mika Rottenberg: Easypieces* runs until September 15, 2019.