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## Head north and follow the signs of contemporary times

Another piece takes the catalogues and booklets for Starling's many shows and reproduces them as all-white mock-ups of themselves, as though the simple fact of their publication matters as much as what they are about. This is precisely the case. Through Dec. 19. <http://www.caseykaplangallery.com>.

### Dan Flavin at David Zwirner

This literally dazzling [show](#) at Zwirner re-creates an installation from Dan Flavin's first museum solo, presented in 1967 in Chicago. It also gives us smaller works spanning the years from then until 1990, six years before the artist's death. At their best, Flavin's fluorescent-tube sculptures seem weighty and thought-filled. At other times they are equally impressive, but on the showy side. That means he straddles the same range as the contemporary art he did so much to influence. Through Dec. 23. <http://www.davidzwirner.com>.

### Charles Ritchie at BravinLee Programs

The best watercolors and pencil drawings by this artist -- who also happens to be a curator at the National Gallery of Art -- document the view through the window of his suburban living room. His observation is so evenhanded that he manages to strike a perfect balance between the outside seen through the glass and the domestic interior reflected in it. It's nature's own double exposure, caught without the help of film. Display cases full of notebooks show Ritchie's close recording of another aspect of his daily life -- the artworks in the shows at his workplace. Through Nov. 28. <http://www.bravinlee.com>.

### Mike Kelley at Gagosian Gallery

In his first all-painting show in New York, this master of abject installation art shows he can do more than shock. Just in terms of the classic painterly values -- composition, color, surface -- Mike Kelley turns out to be highly skilled. In some unnamable way, these paintings simply work. On the other hand, long-term fans of the artist's abjection will not be disappointed:



BODY OF WORK: "Project for a Temporary Public Sculpture (Hiroshima)." (Photo By Cary Whittier/courtesy Of Simon Starling And Casey Kaplan)

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A painting called "All Pink Inside" shows a dissected frog with a woman's vagina for entrails; another, called "Yummy Puffy Mommy Yoni," shows a brown faun mounting a pink unicorn. Through Dec. 23. <http://www.gagosian.com>.

**Moyra Davey at Murray Guy**

Moyra Davey's photos can be so subtle they're almost opaque. When they hit home, however, they're compelling. One series in her current show consists of extreme close-ups on the almost obliterated face of Lincoln on used pennies. The pictures were made after the stock market collapse of 1987, but they resonate even more strongly now. A more recent photographic series simply captures 54 bottles of booze in Davey's home, at the moment each one's last drops were poured. It's a trivial instant in anyone's life, but there's something poignant in marking it each time it happens. Like most still lifes, these are as much about what is gone or fleeting as what is there. Through Dec. 24. <http://www.murrayguy.com>.

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**Bill Viola at James Cohan**

This [two-decade survey](#) of Bill Viola's video art displays all its virtues, and also its flaws. When Viola's at his best, he achieves a simple, direct force. A single-monitor piece called "Old Oak (Study)," from 2005, points a camera at an ancient tree as the sun slowly rises behind it. Six hours get compressed to 30 minutes, so we get to watch as total darkness gives way to clear visibility, which gives way to an all-consuming, bleaching light.

Another strong piece is "Pneuma," begun in 1994 and cleaned up recently

to take advantage of the latest in projection technology. Hugely grainy images, shot with a low-res, pre-digital security camera, succeed each other across the walls of a room, like a suite of disconnected memories. More recent, much-celebrated pieces include works in Viola's "Transfiguration" series, in which actors play out strong emotions as they pass through a wall of water in ultra-slow motion. These technophilic works seem too much about special effects. Through Dec. 19 at James Cohan Gallery. <http://www.jamescohan.com>.

**Alighiero e Boetti at Gladstone Gallery**

The Italian artist born Alighiero Boetti -- he added the Italian word for "and" between his names as a conceptual gesture -- came up with the idea for his famous "Mappa" series in 1971, on a trip to Afghanistan. From then until his death in 1994, he got Afghan women to embroider huge maps of the world, with each country filled in with the colors of its flag. Each of these pieces took years to make, as the needleworkers had to overcome the difficulties of the task Boetti gave them, as well as the vicissitudes of life in their torn-apart land. This first-ever [survey of the series](#) lets us watch as the world's borders shift and its flags change colors. And still the women are there, pushing thread through fabric. Through Jan. 23. <http://www.gladstonegallery.com>.

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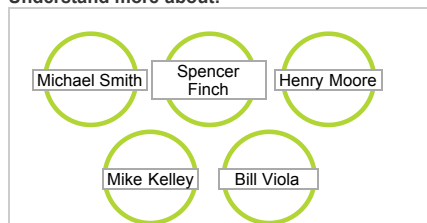
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