

The Defining Exhibitions of 2022



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This year, after a series of delays, many of the most anticipated exhibitions of the past few years, coincided, resulting in a bounty of art to see. Prime among them were recurring shows, like the Venice Biennale in Italy and Documenta 15 in Kassel, Germany, which lured hundreds of thousands of visitors with the promise of cutting-edge art.

But, alongside those art festivals, which tended to hog the spotlight, a number of surveys and retrospectives continued to push at the limits of the canon and introduce new figures, all the while complicating the study of artists who are well-known. Many of these shows are still traveling and will continue to reshape art history as they venture to new venues.

Below, a look at the 25 exhibitions that defined 2022.



Installation view of "Black Melancholia," 2022, at CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art.
Photo : Courtesy CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art

A truly resonant group show is a rare thing in institutions, and so it is all the more pleasant when you come along one as idiosyncratic and perceptive as art historian Nana Adusei-Poku's "Black Melancholia," a survey of how sadness has been felt by members of the Black community over the past two centuries. To ponder such an epic topic, Adusei-Poku enlisted just 38 works, almost none of which are famous ones. The offerings spanned an 1885 painting of a moonlit ocean by Edward Mitchell Bannister to new glass works incorporating photographs by the promising young sculptor Charisse Pearlina Weston. No one aesthetic mandate prevailed here, and this was very much the point. After all, trauma does not express itself in just one form. —*Alex Greenberger*