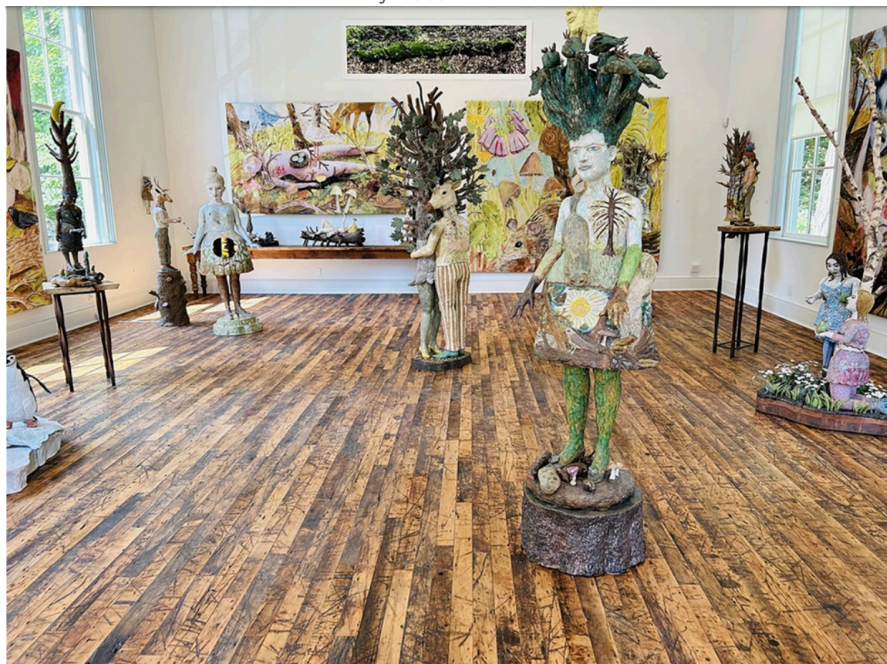


# Chronogram

## Blissed-Out Art-Overdose: Upstate Art Weekend 2023

By Taliesin Thomas



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Installation view of the Kathy Ruttenberg pop-up exhibition in Bearsville.

This year I consciously decided to overdose on Upstate Art Weekend. To prepare for this special “tune-in and drop-out into art” inundation trip, I dove into the comprehensive UAW website and visited all 130 listings that comprised this year’s program. The magnitude of the schedule boasts an Olympian-sized, biennale-level opportunity for seeing a cornucopia of art across 10 counties in the Hudson Valley, a testimony to the thriving arts ecosystem upstate. I devised a clear roadmap for my UAW vagabonding mission and clocked nearly 24 hours on the road over three days. Here is how it went.

The magic started on Friday with a visit to the Kathy Ruttenberg pop-up in Bearsville. Arriving upon the enchanting scene of her mythical ceramic characters lovingly installed in glowing studio space, I knew my art treasure-hunt psychedelia had kicked off well. From there I drove over to the Bard MFA Thesis exhibition “Stage Presence” in Red Hook. Buried in a big building off the road, this robust presentation of 23 artists captures the anxieties of a fleeting world and the ambivalence of the consumer era—works are big and bold but also searching and fragmented.

Next up was a dash through Alexander Gray Associates in Germantown, where the three-woman “I Spy” exhibition of paintings and ceramics by Jennie Jeun Lee, Carrie Moyer, and Betty Parsons was an encounter with biomorphic energies and melting chromatics. Heading onward to Hudson, I visited Turley Gallery and Kitty’s Backyard Sculpture Garden. At Turley Gallery, large sculptures resembling barren movie sets by Martine Kaczynski felt like a frozen theater performance in the main space, while graphic graphite drawings by Adam Liam Rose gave a meditative grounding in the back room. With the train depot in Hudson teeming with a city-bound crowd, a selection of sculptures and paintings in Kitty’s outdoor space was a bit of a mishmash.

Making my way further north, I ended my day-one overdose at Art Omi in Ghent to attend the Hudson Valley Intertribal Noise Symposium & Book Release (my review of the current Pippa Garner show is a chuckle). Pulling into the parking lot, I could hear the warm-up for the impending audio beat-down that was to come. I am a fan of intense sound-bath experiences, however, for me this one proved to be a smothering of my auditory capacity (no disrespect to the creators). I admired the ferocity of the “create and destroy sonic worlds” integrity of this event, but I had to bail after just two of the six artist performances for fear of blowing-out my nervous system.

On Saturday I tore down the highway to start the overdose journey with a visit to the exquisite exhibition at Visitor Center in Newburgh (my review captures the glory of the current three-woman show, "The Divine, The Passion, and The Magic"). My exploration then took me to the Atlas Studios building, where I encountered a range of delights in several open studio spaces, including a magnificent suspended sculpture by Judy Thomas and the “Torqued Jetty” project by Thomas Bregman plus a group show “A Pulled Thread” including several strong installations by women.

Afterward I headed down to the waterline to visit Elijah Wheat Showroom (a special spot somewhat buried on the map), where color-drenched photos of empty furniture in odd configurations by Alex Yudzon suggests a sensual interpretation of existential emptiness. Crossing the bridge and landing in Beacon, I stopped into Analog Diary to check out the "Chromazones" group exhibition, including colorful works by Polly Apfelbaum, Holly Coulis, and Ken Price, among others.

With the afternoon sun blazing strong, I made my way to the KuBe Art Center, home to Ethan Cohen Gallery and various artist studios (my profile details the ongoing program at KuBe). Welcomed by a series of large inflatable heads by Frank Hyder—his enjoyable “Beacon Janis Project”—and 200 pounds of clay being crafted into an ashtray and cigarette by Thomas Pilnik, the place was humming with art-ified energy of every variety. Several ongoing shows at KuBe shows are not to be missed this season: "Natalie White: The Last Shot" is a series of lush large format polaroid portraits; "Iconic Portraits: Photos by Rafael Fuchs" is a bold presentation of all-out celebrity glamour; and Margaret Innerhofer's "Shadowland" series of photos that investigate transitional spaces between physical and psychological is hauntingly beautiful.

Soon enough I was back on the road to hit-off the final phase of my day-two art influx: NADA at Foreland in Catskill. This event is the legitimate arty-overload that highlights some of the best that UAW has to offer. Coming upon the crowd of attractive hipsters sporting exaggerated sneakers, arbitrary tattoos, and sexy unisex aromatics, I felt a wave of art-star-fucker joy as I floated onto the scene. Foreland is an incredible place (my profile on the badass woman in charge, Stef Halmos, says it all) and a perfect locale to present NADA in upstate New York.

This cutting-edge art collaborative event brought together over 40 galleries and 60 exhibiting artists plus a community market (including on-site tattoo artists with Outpost Tattoo) and a line-up of live music, discussions, and performances throughout the weekend, making it the ideal venue to imbibe the total UAW art vibe. There was so much terrific work to see at NADA (including a compelling series of audio works in the stairwell) that a proper summary proves challenging. On the way out, works by Mirza Hamid and Daniel Giordano spoke to me on a spiritual level just as I snuck off before the evening performance and live DJ set.

The summer sun rose again on Sunday, and I barreled south on 87 straight to see the doyenne of UAW: Helen Toomer at Stoneleaf in Eddyville. There I encountered a serene landscape as Toomer—ever smiling and sparkling brightly in a pink sequined top—greeted her adoring fan club while three resident womxn artists welcomed visitors into their studio-worlds presenting work created during their current residencies.

A series of photos by Cheryl Mukherji, “Wanted Beautiful Home Loving Girl” offered an intimate look at changing roles for Indian women through brave self-portraits. As I reluctantly departed the sacred sanctuary of Stoneleaf—wishing to stay longer to enjoy the fruity beer and gorgeous cliques of humans arriving from Brooklyn and other far-flung lands—the overdose schedule propelled me toward an afternoon of art hits in Kingston.

First, I visited Headstone Gallery to see a terrific show of outrageously fun ceramic montages by Judd Schiffman and esoteric drawings by Joshua AM Ross. A short drive brought me to the Collar Works pop-up featuring Brenda Ann Kenneally’s “Upstate Girls” project about Troy, NY—a floor to ceiling installation of photos in a shipping container—and the lively Center for Photography at Woodstock’s first annual Kingston Photo Festival, which included portrait photographers on-site, a zine fair, and workshops. From there I made my way to Ferrovia Studios on Railroad Avenue to find only one artist with an open studio, painter Beini Huang.

She graciously chatted with guests, who like me, seemed puzzled about the lack of artists there to engage the public. Nevertheless, with the afternoon winding down, I scurried over ArtPort Kingston’s main space to see the director Laurie De Chiara “Joy Ride” group exhibition, a playful multi-sensory presentation of large-scale installations juxtaposed with more intimate works to create a cross-pollinated, lighthearted mood of aesthetic frivolity and fun, all while a Kundalini Movement and Tantric Perfume experience-performance took place. It was a charming ending to an outrageously inspirational three-day art gluttony.

As I drove north to my digs in the Capital District (just out of the official UAW territory), a post-overdose elation filled me with a genuine sense of place and purpose. The bonus of UAW is the ongoing Monday programming (notably an artist lecture at LABspace in Hillsdale), alas by then I would be back at my art-world office desk to recap my UAW exploit. Experienced in whatever way, UAW embodies the spirited interconnectivity of the arts community of the Hudson Valley while reflecting the integrity the dynamic arts scene upstate, indeed a celebrated art-overdose to nourish the psyche and soul.