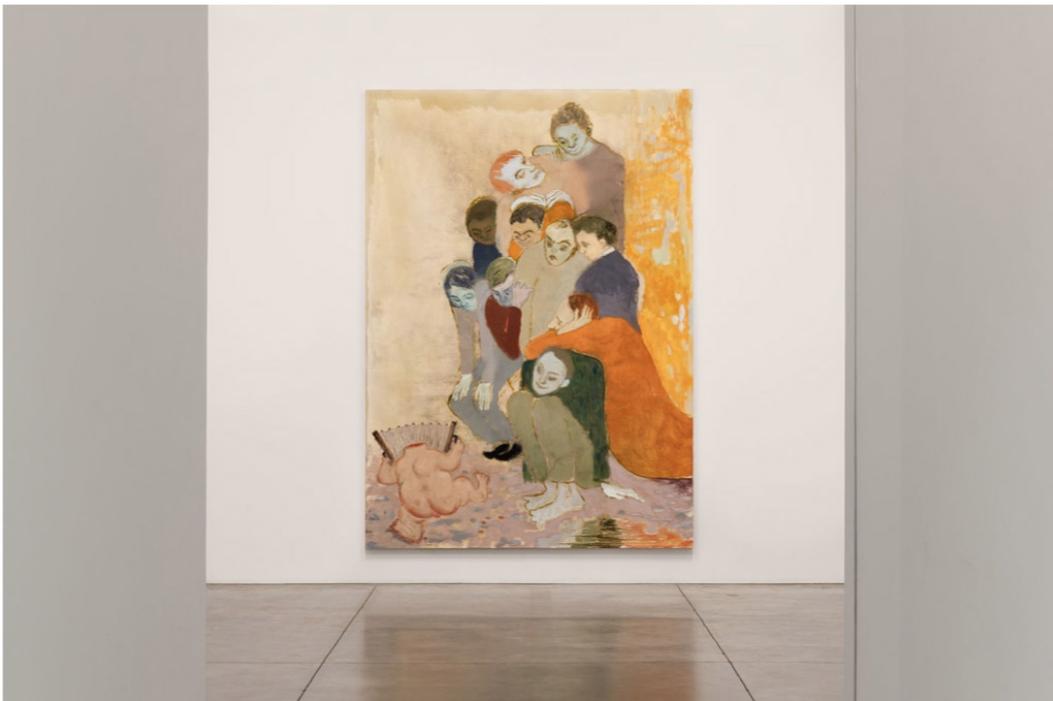


Tanya Leighton

The New York Times

What to See in Art Galleries Right Now

Sanya Kantarovsky's darkly funny eccentrics; Firelei Báez's empowered mythologies; Chris Ofili's Calypso; Tino Sehgal's interpreters; and Carolee Schneemann's cat collaborations.



Sanya Kantarovsky's painting "Life of the Party," from 2019, in his solo show at Lühring Augustine. Dawn Blackman

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Kurfürstenstraße 156, 10785 Berlin
+49 (0)30 21 972 220, info@tanyaleighton.com, www.tanyaleighton.com

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Sanya Kantarovsky

Through June 15. Luhring Augustine, 531 West 24th Street, Manhattan; 212-206-9100, luhringaugustine.com.

Specters and screwballs, bozos and boogeymen, populate the canvases of this Russian-born American artist, whose wily new exhibition, “On Them” — his first in New York in five years — is the best I’ve seen by a young painter this year. Mr. Kantarovsky paints disconcerting, darkly funny scenes of lovers, mourners, children and freaks, and intensifies their eccentricity through unexpected contrasts of oil paint with drippy watercolor. His figures are pinched and elongated, like Mannerist cartoons, and often limned with thick, confident outlines. Many have downcast eyes, though one mother, wearing Marian blue and cradling a nude man in some parody Pietà, looks skyward with the big, googly peepers of Cookie Monster.

Kai Althoff is a clear influence, though Mr. Kantarovsky has a stronger command of pattern and line than that dandyish German painter. So is Edvard Munch, whose [1895 self-portrait with a](#) skeletal forearm seems to have inspired a small, engrossing painting here that depicts a mauve-skinned nun framed by a quartet of bones. (Its title identifies the sickly subject as Miss Clavel, the matron of the “Madeline” books.) Yet Mr. Kantarovsky’s desolate humor, springing from Kafka and Soviet literature as much as American comics, is what gives these fantastic paintings their aesthetic and moral heft. In “Baba,” two women in A-line skirts walk past a sooty, half-thawed snowman, its top ball studded with cigarette butts and wearing a human moue. It knows the melting of its frosty body — so amusing, so pathetic — is also the way of all flesh. *JASON FARAGO*
