SPOTLIGHT

The Exhibitions to See Around the World in October

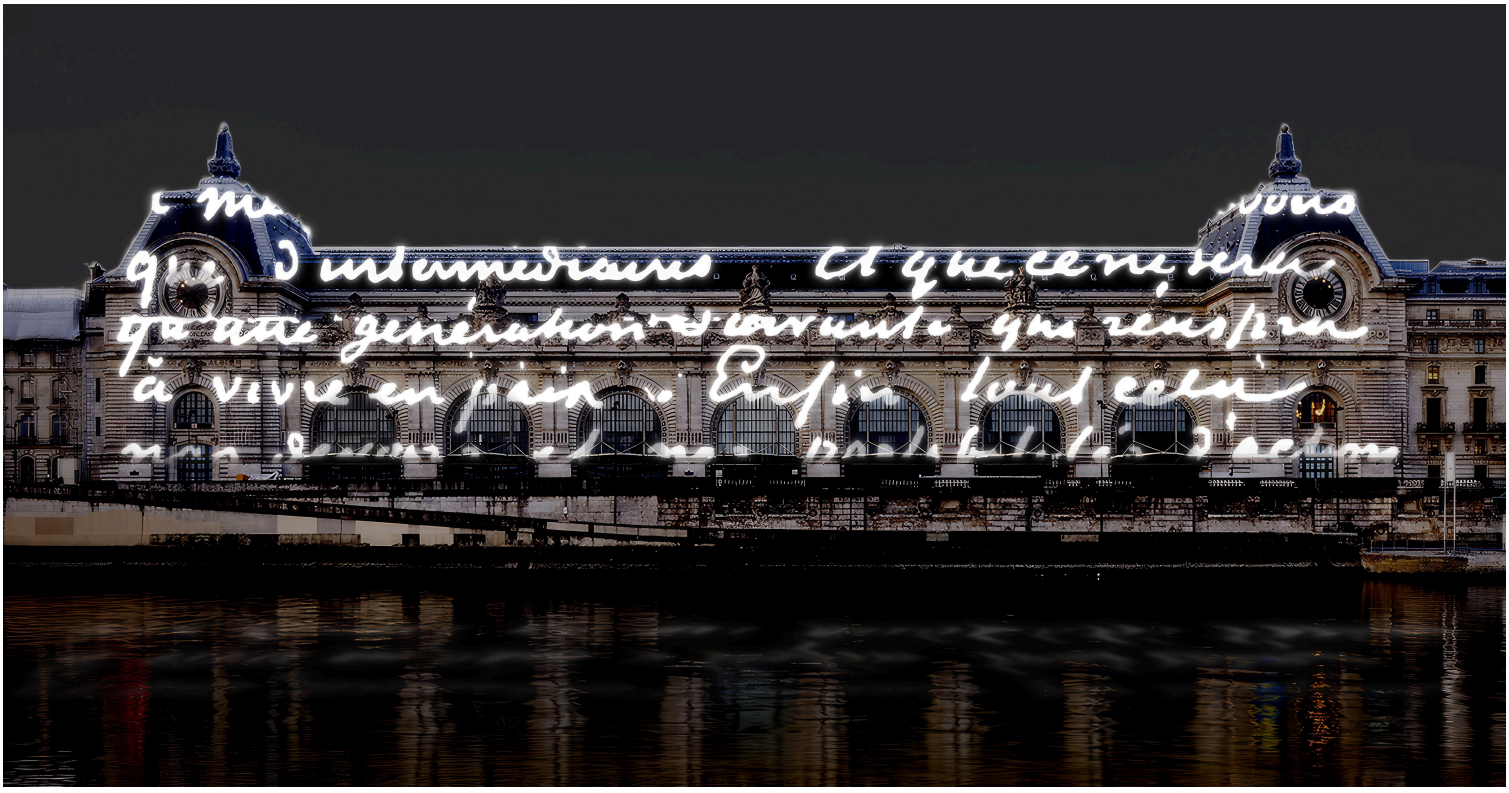
By Ocula Editors – 1 October 2026

From queer nightlife on the US-Mexican border to the Congolese biennale asking how the Earth can survive when we take its resources, via a stop at a former Paris station to see the works of a Praemium Imperiale laureate, *Ocula*'s editors have collated the exhibitions not to miss during October.



Roy Lichtenstein: Like New (11 October 2026–10 May 2027) at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City

In an age in which thousands of AI slop images are created each second and photographs, memes and illustrations circulate via the infinite scroll of global social media platforms, it could be seen as a surprising decision by the Whitney to frame Pop Art pioneer Roy Lichtenstein's work as a key precursor to this noise. Yet the New York artist's preoccupation with how images are copied, enlarged, circulated and altered as they travel chimes with the new possibilities for appropriation that have emerged with a growing literacy around the cropping, sharing and remixing of images online. *Roy Lichtenstein: Like New* brings together the artist's distinctive repurposing of imagery from comic books and newspapers with works by artists who similarly have engaged with questions of authorship, including Sturtevant and co-curator of the exhibition Alex Da Corte. This is the first retrospective of Lichtenstein's work in New York City for 33 years, offering a renewed focus on the work of an artist who, since his death in 1997, has himself been remixed endlessly on T-shirts, watches, bags, mugs and posters. In choosing to focus on the hypervisibility of Lichtenstein's pop-infused work, the Whitney successfully repackages Lichtenstein once again.—*Louise Benson*



Jenny Holzer, *Lettre de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard, 2 novembre 1888* (2026). © Jenny Holzer, member Artists Rights Society (ARS), New-York (ADAGP), Paris.

Jenny Holzer, *J'ai vu* (20 October 2026–21 February 2027) at Musée d'Orsay, Paris

It will come as a surprise to few that Jenny Holzer, winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 1990, recipient of the Officier des Arts et des Lettres from the French Ministry of Culture in 2016 and, this year, a Praemium Imperiale laureate (better known as "the Nobel prize of the Arts"), should be honoured with an exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay. Opening on 20 October, just in time for the great and the good of the art world to descend on the French capital for Art Basel Paris, the show will see the colourful streams of text for which Holzer is best known projected onto the Parisian institution's 19th-century façade. They will not, however, be her own words, but excerpts from the letters of other artists, taken from the museum's archives, combined with contemporaneous literary and political commentary. While these light installations will "offer time travel for passersby", inside, more LED works, alongside the artist's gold, platinum, and palladium-leafed paintings, will transform the space into a version of a bustling train station, mirroring the function for which the Gare d'Orsay was originally designed.—*Philippa Kelly*



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *The Sixty-Nine Stations of the Kisokaidō: Kyoto, Nue, Taibi (The End)* (1852). Courtesy Yumoto Koichi Memorial JAPAN YOKAI MUSEUM (Miyoshi Mononoke Museum).

Myths and Monsters: The Art of Fantasy in Asia (17 October 2026–4 April 2027) at M+, Hong Kong

The new show at M+ traces the evolution of monsters and fantasy in Asian art, spanning work from the 19th century to the present day. There is the Frankensteinesque figure of Nue, a monster which is part tiger, part snake, part dog and part monkey, painted by Japanese woodblock artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi in 1852; there is the original *Godzilla*, released in the wake of the Second World War, which tells the story of a monster awoken by America's nuclear bomb tests, and a manga- and anime-adjacent video

fantastical, and what that interest reveals about the various cultures at different times, from the 19th century, when such work reflected a collective desire for safety and protection, to present-day anxieties over rapidly developing technology.—*Baya Simons*



Maria Lassnig, *Married Couple* (2001). © Maria Lassnig Stiftung / 2026, ProLitteris, Zurich.



Edvard Munch, *Two Human Beings. The Lonely Ones*, (c. 19

Maria Lassnig & Edvard Munch, *Flow of Paint = Flow of Life* (2 October 2026–21 February 2027) at Kunsthaus Zurich

A nude figure turns their head towards the viewer, the motion captured in the painted strokes depicting two sides of the face as it swings around, as if to evoke the multiplicity of personas contained within. *Die gelbe Hand* (*The Yellow Hand*), a painting made in 2000 by Austrian artist Maria Lassnig when she was 80 years old, is a self-portrait. Lassnig's interest in what she called "body awareness" frequently saw her turn her gaze upon herself. In this, she addressed not only the physical make-up of her body as it aged over the decades but how the nuances of self-presentation (even when undressed) can speak to the inner states of human experience. A new exhibition at Kunsthaus Zurich draws a line of connection between Lassnig's unflinching inward gaze and the Expressionist work of Edvard

experiences of mental illness and the death of his mother when he was just five years old. Both artists were careful observers of our interactions both with others and, significantly, with ourselves.—*Louise Benson*



Umi Ishihara, *Nocturnal Melody* (2026) (still). Courtesy the artist.

Umi Ishihara, *Nocturnal Melody* (10 October 2026–17 January 2027) at Esea Contemporary, Manchester

I saw Umi Ishihara's *Nocturnal Melody* (2026) at the Busan Biennale, and its portraits have stayed with me. Filmed in a gentlemen's club in Shibuya, Tokyo, it follows dancers Eri and Catalina through work, performance and the hours in between. Ishihara lets them tell their stories in close, luminous interviews, and intercuts the footage with clips of women with glowing eyes and long claws stalking the city at night. Shot in night vision, the creatures are playful and unsettling; they seem to move with a freedom the women have had to fight for. At Esea Contemporary in Manchester, the film is joined by sound and another video installation in which the creatures take over. It is a chance to enter more fully into a world I found both exhilarating and unexpectedly tender.—*Zian Chen*



Sabine Moritz *Erde II* (2026) © Sabine Moritz. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Max Hetzler Berlin | Paris | London | Marfa. Photo: farbanalyse, Georgios Michaloudis, Köln.

Sabine Moritz: *Rot Gelb Blau Staub* (until 31 October 2026) at Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin

The elements fire, air, earth, and water appear in ancient Greek and Indian mythology, as well as Bamanan cosmology, which originated in Mali. Sabine Moritz explores this quartet through colour and touch in her first exhibition at Galerie Max Hetzler. Twelve large canvases have been arranged into four groups of three: red flames at the centre of the *Feuer* (Fire) paintings; blue, pink, green and yellow move across *Luft* (Air). Painted without preliminary sketches, the strokes thicken, break and run into one another. In a monumental quadriptych, female bodies emerge from the more recent fields of colour. Their outlines come into focus, then slip back into the brushwork, almost seeming to play with the strokes around them. Upstairs, works on paper return to the figuration of her early practice: flowers, helicopters, apartment blocks and a solitary child. *—Shanyu Zhong*



Elizabeth Magill, *Distal (1)* (2026). Courtesy the artist and Kerlin Gallery.



Elizabeth Magill, *Grean* (2025). Courtesy the artist and Kerlin Gallery.

Elizabeth Magill, *Northern Sky* (9 October–21 November 2026) at Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

Foxes gathered under a full moon, glowing blue-white in the light; a sludgy green field, the sky above grumbling, flecked by white dots that evoke the first drops of rain, with a path wending mysteriously into the distance. The paintings by Irish artist Elizabeth Magill depict the world in a recognisable form, but there is always the suggestion that something unusual might be about to occur. In one painting, part of a new body of work on show at Kerlin Gallery, she paints the tops of trees against looming mountains, with a sky of fizzing sherbet green and dappled peach. Its title, *I've never felt magic, crazy as this* (2026), tells us what we're looking at: real landscapes so strange that they feel magical. This exhibition is accompanied by a new book featuring a text by Irish novelist Colm Tóibín. "What is plain sits uneasily beside what is visionary," he writes of Magill's work. "There is no simple meaning; instead there is much ambiguity and strange, coiled beauty. Something might be about to happen, but that possibility is contained."—*Baya Simons*



Lynn Hershman Leeson, *CybeRoberta* (1995). Courtesy the artist and Hoffman Donahue Gallery.

Lynn Hershman Leeson, *First Person Plural* (21 October 2026–21 February 2027) at Seoul Museum of Art

Through her long career as a filmmaker and artist, Lynn Hershman Leeson has always embraced the newest of technologies. Yet at no point has this enthusiasm dulled her ability to expose their limits and dangers. Leeson's telerobotic doll *CybeRoberta* (1996), one of her best-known works, drew on then-emerging surveillance and hypervisibility tech. With the doll's eyes doubling as video cameras and webcams, gallery visitors were positioned in limbo, between the observer and the observed. An upcoming survey at the Seoul Museum of Art looks at six decades of Leeson's cyberfeminist practice, staging a confrontation with the technological developments that both preceded and followed her telerobotic cyborg. This is the artist's first solo museum exhibition in Asia; at SeMA, particular attention is given to Leeson's engagement with digital infrastructure and AI, technologies against which the anxieties of *CybeRoberta* appear at once prescient and brutally outmoded.—*Maja Renfer*



Ibrahim Mahama, *Strangers to Lines* (2019). Installation view at Lubumbashi Biennale, Institute of Fine Arts, Lubumbashi, 2019. Courtesy Picha. Photo: Julien De Bock.

Ninth Lubumbashi Biennale: *manger la terre / ku kuria bulongo* (15 October–15 November 2026)

After meeting photographers from across Africa at the Bamako Biennale in 2007, artists Sammy Baloji and Gulda el Magambo Bin Ali imagined such an encounter in their own city of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The first *Rencontres de l'Image* took place the following year and grew into the Biennale de Lubumbashi, organised by the artist-led collective Picha ("image" in Swahili). Directed by Belgian-Congolese curator Sorana Munsya, the ninth edition looks to the knowledge and ways of living that persist in a landscape shaped by extraction. The title, meaning "Eat the Earth", recalls a name given to Katanga's industrial workers in the 19th and 20th centuries, known as "copper eaters" and whose knowledge of the land and ore preceded industrial mining. It



Martine Gutierrez, *Clubbing* (2012) (still) © Martine Gutierrez. Courtesy the artist and RYAN LEE Gallery, New York.



Martine Gutierrez, *Clubbing* (2012) (still) © Martine Gutierrez. Courtesy the artist and RYAN LEE Gallery, New York.

***Visiones Nocturnas: Queer Nightlife in Contemporary Art* (until 17 January 2027) at Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego**

The opening night of *Visiones Nocturnas*, an exhibition of art about queer nightlife by Latin American artists working from the 1990s to the present, opened with DJs, salsa and a dance competition held on a runway that included a category called "Storm the Institution". I wish I'd been there. The show, at Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, takes its title from artist and curator Andres Payan Estrada's project documenting 10 years of queer nightlife along the US-Mexico border. It brings together Latine and Latin American artists exploring queer life in clubs, bathhouses, bars and backyards. Featured are Teresa Margolles's photographs of worn dance floors (*Pistas de Baile*, 2016) and a video work titled *Clubbing* (2012) by Martine Gutierrez, in which the artist plays six different dancers. I'm looking forward to seeing the traces and glimmers of joy from nights past inside the gallery.—*Zian Chen*

Main image: Umi Ishihara, *Nocturnal Melody* (2026) (still). Courtesy the artist.