

The Top 10 Shows in the UK of 2021

These are the best exhibitions of the year – from a chronically overdue retrospective of Paula Rego to a debut offering of obfuscated, sexualised sculpture by Jack O'Brien

This selection represents – in my opinion – a smattering of stand-out moments in a sea of exceptional insurgent, resurgent and staple practices. In a recent chat with my colleagues Chloe Stead and Terence Trouillot, we discussed how 2021 was a year of recovery for galleries and artists alike. As we teeter on the edge of remission, I invite you to look back over some of the shows and works that persisted, flourished, even, despite the odds – from a chronically overdue retrospective of Paula Rego to a debut offering of obfuscated, sexualised sculpture by Jack O'Brien.



Rhea Dillon, 'Nonbody Nonthing No Thing', 2021, exhibition view. Courtesy: the artist and V.O Curations, London

Rhea Dillon

V.O Curations

London

You may have deciphered that, in the last year, understated but reverent works have most compelled me. I think it's because they do something to

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communicate the economy of the present moment – where materials and resources are scarce or curtailed. As a result of intermittent isolation, we have more time, perhaps, to consider the objects around us and their attendant meanings and relations. Donna Marcus Duke – a participant in our inaugural Frieze New Writers programme – addressed the layers of ancestral energy imbued in Rhea Dillon’s show (curated by Kate Wong) at V.O Curations: ‘Affecting, abstracted and, at times, mystical, Dillon’s family history becomes a tribute to the ignored and unseen manual work of the Windrush Generation.’



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