This Fall, Multiple Exhibitions Dedicated to ‘Soul of a Nation’ Artists are on View Throughout New York City

TEN DAYS AGO, “Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power” opened at the Brooklyn Museum. The groundbreaking traveling show “shines light on a broad spectrum of Black artistic practice from 1963 to 1983, one of the most politically, socially, and aesthetically revolutionary periods in American history.” This fall, two more New York museums are presenting major exhibitions dedicated to African American artists—both are solo shows.

In Manhattan, “Charles White: A Retrospective” will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art beginning Oct. 7, and at The Met Breuer, “Odyssey: Jack Whitten Sculpture 1963-2017” opened earlier this month. Charles White and Jack Whitten are among the
artists represented in “Soul of the Nation.” Additional artists with works featured in the monumental exhibition are the focus of solo shows at galleries throughout the city.

Frank Bowling and Lorraine O’Grady are showing at Alexander Gray Associates. Ed Clark is at Mnuchin. Works by Noah Purifoy are on view at Tilton Gallery, which is also presenting a parallel show “East Coast/West Coast” with works by Clark, David Hammons, John Outterbridge, Betye Saar and Timothy Washington. Meanwhile, a group presentation at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, “Truth & Beauty: Charles White and His Circle,” centers around White and also includes works by Hammons, Saar, and Outterbridge, among many others.

“Soul of the Nation” features some of the most thought-provoking and consequential artists making work, decades ago, in response to the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Feminism movements. (A good number are still working today.) The smaller, complementary shows foreground individual artists and offer an opportunity to see a wider selection of their works, gain a deeper understanding of their practices, and consider the arc of their careers.

Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power @ Brooklyn Museum | Sept. 14–Feb. 3, 2019

More than 150 works by 60 artists, working both individually and within collectives such as Spiral and AfriCOBRA, are presented in this show, which is dedicated to one of the most revolutionary periods in American history. Works produced between 1963 and 1983 by Benny Andrews, Romare Bearden, Dawoud Bey, Elizabeth Catlett, David
Hammons, Barkley L. Hendricks, Wadsworth Jarrell and Jae Jarrell, Faith Ringgold, and Jack Whitten, among others, are featured. After its presentation at the Brooklyn Museum, “Soul of a Nation” will travel to The Broad in Los Angeles.

FRANK BOWLING, “Elder Sun Benjamin,” 2018 (acrylic on collaged canvas, 119.29h x 203.54w inches / 303h x 517w cm). | via Alexander Gray Associates

Frank Bowling: Make It New @ Alexander Gray Associates, New York, N.Y. | Sept. 6–Oct. 13, 2018

Painter Frank Bowling, whose practice is “defined by its integration of autobiography and postcolonial geopolitics into abstraction,” joined Alexander Gray Associates earlier this year. His first exhibition with the gallery features 10 recent works made between 2016-2018. Born in British Guyana, Bowling splits his time between studios in New York and London. The Tate Britain is hosting a major retrospective of his work in 2019.