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This Week: Must-See Arts in the City WNYC's Arts Datebook: September 1 - 7, 2011.

By Carolina A. Miranda

The centennial of collagist Romare Bearden's birth receives tribute at the Met, a New Orleans-born artist shows her sinewy assemblages downtown and a Chelsea gallery displays the demure, 9/11-inspired drawings of a former Beat. Here's a little art to be checking out this Labor Day weekend.

Romare Bearden, *The Block*, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art To mark the 100th anniversary of artist Romare Bearden's birth, the Met is putting one of his key works back on display: an 18-foot, six-panel collage depicting a single block in Harlem — Lenox Avenue between 132nd and 133rd Streets. The scene was inspired by the sweeping views that Bearden saw from a friend's window and captures a wide array of city life. Children play. An old lady gazes on a sleeping homeless man. Through a window, we see a figure resting on a bed. All of it is rendered in bright bits of metallic paper, cut photographs, watercolors and ink, among other materials. It is less a literal portrait of a street than a riff on one. The structures are unlikely colors, like green and fuchsia. A dead soul is carried by angels into the heavens. It is a tribute, in a way, to the forced intimacy of urban living. It's in a fragile state, too. So be sure to check it out. If for some reason, you can't make it to the museum, there's a good explanation of the piece here. Through January 2, on the Upper East Side.

Brown Baby: Lorna Williams, at Dodge Gallery Using beads, branches, wood, bits of paper and other pieces of discarded materials, this New Orleans-born artist creates assemblages that take on the appearance of otherworldly fauna, bits of viscera and human forms that are colorfully grotesque. Opens on Thursday, on the Lower East Side.

9/11 and All That

I'm going to be honest: I'm feeling plenty wary about the glut of 9/11-themed art shows that are about to descend on the city. I wonder how much poignancy there will be in such an avalanche of programming — if all of the memorializing will be more histrionic than contemplative. That said, we are a culture that can't resist an anniversary (especially those of us who work in media). So, over the next couple of weeks, I'll do my best to cherry pick the exhibits that I think (hope?) will be the most insightful and interesting. Starting with this one:

Bruce Conner, *Falling Leaves: An Anonymous Memorial*, at Paula Cooper Gallery. One of my favorite artists, Conner is an old San Francisco Beat who was a master of the trippy video montage (he did Devo's "Mongoloid" video back in 1976). He also did a cut-up of mushroom cloud explosions that once kept me glued to my seat at the California Biennial and he produced reams of surreal drawings and collages. In the wake of the attacks in 2001, Conner, as his alter ego "Anonymous," produced a series of drawings on Asian-style paper scrolls. The pieces are simple and elegant: leaves floating and slipping through the air in that ephemeral moment where they transition from life to death. Through September 24, in Chelsea.



At Dodge Gallery, downtown, artist Lorna Williams will be exhibiting her organic-looking assemblages. Shown here: 'trap(ped),' a work from 2011.

Courtesy DODGEgallery and BiankaBee



A detail from Romare Bearden's 'The Block,' an 18-foot collage of a Harlem street going on view at the Met to honor the centennial of the artist's birth.

Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art