

Opinion

# David Ebony's Top 10 New York Gallery Shows of 2016

David Ebony looks back at his favorite shows of the year.

**David Ebony**, December 24, 2016



Pavel Kraus, *Time Capsule*, 1992-2016.  
Photo Thomas Wilson, Courtesy Project: ARTSpace.

## 8. **Pavel Kraus at Project: ARTSpace December 7, 2016–January 7, 2017**

The Czech-born, New York artist Pavel Kraus marks his 70th birthday with this handsome survey in an East Chelsea venue, featuring some twenty-four sculptures, and several major installations spanning 1976 to 2016. Kraus's primary concerns are with process and materials. Throughout his career he experimented with novel combinations of marble, wax, resin, lead, and glass in large-scale abstract sculptures. And he favors encaustic techniques in his richly nuanced abstract paintings, such as a recent series on view titled *Candies*. Among the earliest works here are figurative pieces on reverse-painted Mylar panels from the early 1980s, including a series of neo-expressionist "self portraits." In another group of Mylar works, with crisp, super-graphic designs, such as *Blade* (1980), a spare image of a safety razor blade, and the eponymous text piece, *Made in America* (1983), Kraus seems to have established his identity as an American artist.

Like many Czech artists and intellectuals of his generation, Kraus fled his homeland in 1969, at the end of the Prague Spring, and in the wake of the Russian invasion. He settled in Chicago, attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and eventually made his way to New York. There is a sense of urgent displacement, deconstruction and reconstruction in many of Kraus' works, including "Fresh Marbles," a series of loosely assembled structures on pedestals, made of numerous small bars of white marble topped here and there with layers of colorful resin.

There is also a feeling of great expanses of time in the work, as in the series "Offerings/Redemption." These bifurcated egg shapes of inlaid marble, which Kraus created in his studio in Rajasthan, India, appear as archaeological relics. Emblematic of the show, *Time Capsule* (1992–2016) consists of a large, vertical slab of white marble covered in lead and copper, which Kraus created in 1992, and "reactivated" recently by adding a white marble bar punctuated with a layering of colorful resin. Placed atop the main element, the addition could be regarded as either a rudimentary steering device or a futuristic time gauge.