

BEST OF THE ARTS 2020

# 10 memorable museum shows from the year everyone wants to forget

By [Murray Whyte](#) Globe Staff, Updated December 18, 2020, 10:00 a.m.



"Six Crimee" by Jean-Michel Basquiat, 1982. COURTESY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

The year seemed normal enough when it started, with the typical slate of major openings in January and February and a laundry list of more big things for the year ahead. But who could have imagined a year like this? Over many months of pandemic disruption, museums closed, re-opened, [and some closed again this month](#), pitching in to stanch the rising second wave we were all warned about. Before and in-between, they gave us what we needed: Joy, relief, and reflective moments to consider a world seemingly transformed in a flash — but one that was really festering with discontent all along. In no particular order, my favorites of 2020 were:

[Writing the Future: Basquiat and the Hip Hop Generation](#). *Museum of Fine Arts*.

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*Boston*

[Tschabalala Self](#). *Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston*

[J.M.W. Turner: Watercolors from the Tate](#). *Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn.*

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[Jacob Lawrence: The American Struggle](#). *Peabody Essex Museum, Salem*





Panel 10 from Jacob Lawrence's "American Struggle" series. This one is titled: "We crossed the River at McKonkey's Ferry 9 miles above Trenton . . . the night was excessively severe . . . which the men bore without the least murmur . . . -Tench Tilghman, 27 December 1776, 1954." © THE JACOB AND GWENDOLYN LAWRENCE FOUNDATION, SEATTLE / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

[Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System.](#) *Tufts University Art Galleries, Medford*

[Norman Rockwell: Murder in Mississippi.](#) *Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge*

[Blane de St. Croix: How to Move a Landscape.](#) *Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams*





From Blane de St. Croix's "How to Move a Landscape" at Mass MoCA. KAELAN BURKETT

[Reckoning with 'The Incident: John Wilson's Studies for a Lynching Mural.](#) *Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn.*

[Adam Pendleton: Elements of Me.](#) *Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston*

[Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke: Children of the Large-beaked Bird.](#) *Mass MoCA, North Adams*

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