

MNUCHIN GALLERY

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Since the 1960s, artists have created paintings that strain against the medium's seemingly innate two-dimensional nature. "Off the Wall," a show at Mnuchin Gallery, examines experiments in pulling painting from the wall by five Black artists—Sam Gilliam, David Hammons, Suzanne Jackson, Al Loving, and Joe Overstreet. There are fine pairings of works along formal lines: Little Dude (1971), a pinwheel-shaped Gilliam, shares a color scheme with Untitled (2015), a dawn-hued Hammons around the corner, in which a heavily impastoed canvas is loosely covered with a fringed tarp. And there are placements that take advantage of the gallery space: as viewers ascend the winding staircase, they move along the length of Untitled (1970) a pink and blue Overstreet cotton-rope contraption, straining like a kite in the wind and catapulting its strings overhead.

Contemporary works demonstrate that the effort to lift painting off the walls continues to bear fruit. Jackson, for instance, contributes one electric and architectonic work after another, incorporating sundry materials from around her studio such as curtain lace, laundry lint, and shredded mail; fine art paper and bogus paper (a set-building material); as well as more industrial materials like PVC pipes and D-rings. And, for instance, Alice playing harp, her veils in the wind (2017) looks like the Sistine Chapel torn asunder, the grandeur of bold and translucent golds, reds, and blues laid bare upon the canvas, the wall behind peeking through.